



WORKSHOP

on

GENDER SENSITIZATION

ORGANISED BY

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK (PG)

ST. EDMUND'S COLLEGE

DATE: 1ST APRIL, 2022

INTRODUCTION

The National Commission for Women was set up as statutory body under the National Commission for Women Act, 1990 with a mandate to safeguard the constitutional rights of women. In keeping with its mandate, the Commission has, from time to time taken various initiatives for gender awareness and sensitization in the society regarding rights of women. It has been experienced that gender-based discriminations exists in all walks of life and every part of society, including everyday interactions at the workplace and public space.

Gender sensitization refers to raising sensitization of gender equality concerns. It facilitates people in examining their personal attitudes and beliefs and questioning the realities of both sexes. Gender sensitization makes people understand the difference between sex and gender, and how gender is socially constructed with the stereotypes around its gender roles. It enables them to determine which assumptions in matters of gender are valid and which are being stereotyped. Hence, there is a need to bring awareness among individuals about gender sensitivity.



This concept is necessary to understand because “the gender question is not just about women and men and how they interact (Human development report, 2000) but understanding the concept of Gender would help in sensitizing people about curbing the gender biases prevailing in the society and would help in empowering girls and women to achieve their goals.

Therefore, it is believes that introducing Gender Sensitization and Legal Awareness Programme at school and college level would facilitate inculcating values of equality, inclusivity and diversity, which are essential for building a healthy society among the adolescent boys and girls. Moreover, knowledge of laws relating to women and gender sensitization is not only crucial for balanced development of young minds; it will also help students in building correct values, self-discipline and national spirit

OBJECTIVES

- To understand gender as a social construction and can be reconstructed.
- To investigate the causes of gender disparity and analyzing the structural, cultural attitudinal factors.
- To sensitize both men and women students and managers in recognizing the multi-dimensional roles played by women.
- To facilitate the effective participation in various vicinity of the society.
- To develop gender sensitivity among the youth through men, women students and managers.

ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

The workshop on Gender Sensitization was conducted on the 1st April, 2022 at 1:30pm and it was organized by the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) in collaboration with the Department of Social Work (PG), St. Edmund's College at the Auditorium of St. Edmund's College. The resource person for the programme was Prof. Stremlet Dkhar from the Department of Khasi, North Eastern Hills University (NEHU).

The event was graced with the presence of Dr Sylvanus Lamare, Principal of St. Edmund's College, Br Simon Coelho, Dr. BW Nongbri, Dean St. Edmund's College, the faculties of the Department of Social Work (PG&UG) and the students of the college. The programme was hosted by Miss Hazel Wahlang, Fieldwork Coordinator of the Department of MSW.



On the onset of the programme, a bouquet was presented to the resource person, Prof. Streamlet Dkhar by the Head of the Department, MSW, Dr Rituparna Rajendra and followed by the Welcome Address conveyed by the Principal of St. Edmund's College Shillong, Dr. Sylvanus Lamare. In his speech he emphasize that gender is a sensitive topic in today's world and we all need to know about it so that we do no cross any barriers because ignorance does not allow anyone of us to reach anywhere. However, it is important to be aware of the needs that we need to know particularly for the students in the field of social work where they need to study and learn about gender sensitization.



In this program, Br. Simon delivered a few words of encouragement and wisdom to the students and faculties He also ponder upon the main question to the audience was “Can we make space for women safe?” it was further mentioned in his speech that we know what men can do and what boys can do, but sometimes for the women it is a call they have to make so deliberately. Often they question themselves whether it is okay or not to do certain things.. This is only a start as the world cannot be changed in a day. He cited few examples as to how there are small ways which can make a difference like giving way to female students while walking up the stairs so that they can make their way faster or when a man is in the canteen who is it to be expected to be served first.

The programme was taken over by an eminent Khasi poet, a dramatist, a play writer and a dynamic academician, Professor Streamlet Dkhar from the Department of Khasi in NEHU. Professor Streamlet Dkhar has received many awards such as the Award of Honour for the contributions to Khasi literature, State Literary Award 2009 for the best book of the year “Na Thwei Pyrkhat u Longshwa”, she was also awarded A Daughter of Himalaya in the 9th International Poetry meet held in 2012 in Nepal and many more.



The topic for the workshop is “**Promoting Gender Sensitization and Development for the Youth**”. The reason she chose to include “Development for the Youth” because it is important for the students in building up their career and also to develop their attitude towards gender sensitization.

To begin with the discussion on Gender Sensitization, an activity was conducted by a simple free association exercise, whereby the students were asked to participate in the activity and made the audience to think of the word ‘Man’ and ‘Woman’ and to jot down the qualities or characteristics which is associated with a man and woman. Hence, this allows the students to participate in this exercise.

She further put out a few questions to the audience like “Why are men and women expected to behave this way?”, “Should they fill their specified roles because they have different likes and dislikes and react to the world differently?” In order to understand this we need to explore the concept of gender. There are qualities that are meant for men and those which are



meant for women and this needs to be understood that the differential expectations have nothing to do with the biological sex of the individual. However, the biological differences between women and men, boys and girls are limited to their sexual and reproductive organs and functions. Thus, when we come to “Sex and Gender” we have to understand how these two terms are different from one another whereby Sex is unchanging and universal, however, in today’s world it is

possible to change the gender of an individual. Thus, the social norms and expectations on the do’s and don’t’s of women and men.. Culturally, through generations we possess a different way of thinking on our cultural norms whereby one culture may differ from another culture or even from one family to the other.

Professor Streamlet Dkhar also talks about the process of gender socialization where it starts as soon as a baby is born, the parents or loved ones will ask whether the baby is a boy or a girl. She cited some practical examples like, girls are encouraged to play with dolls and model themselves in the image of their mothers and are considered to be home-makers, and parents would buy her a kitchen sets to play. Whereas boys on the other hand, are given toy guns, motor cars and “warrior” games where they can show their aggression and internalize the importance of protecting and defending what belongs to them.

Certain concepts of Gender Sensitization which has been emphasize on this workshop:

- **Understanding the concept of patriarchy:** Patriarchy is the most fundamental as it forms the basis for understanding many concepts that deal with women’s status. Fundamentally, it believes that women are viewed and interpreted in terms of a male dominated society and its interest whereby women’s lives are governed by a concept of power that controls and subordinates women and these curtail the individual’s aspiration. However, it may differ from one family to the other and from one culture to the other.
- **Fear of success:** Inequitable and hierarchy power Many women for one reason or another voluntarily renounce various opportunities to move upwards or demonstrate their potentials. Fear of unsettlement or reveal of her capacity may upset the stability at home.
- **Equal and different:** Conservative views of gender relations between Men and women were created equal and gifted with equal mental capabilities, but their roles and responsibilities in the family and society are different. Both Men and women are not identical but complimentary as their operational areas are different and women are strong and bear sufferings and are capable of making sacrifices.



- **Biological determinism:** The hierarchy of unequal and hierarchic power, based on the relationship between men and women. Women have the capacity to be creative, bear children and contribute to the human race. Women have been restricted too much; they have been denied access to their constitutional and political rights and to free movement and association. Women are held vulnerable, weak and soft. Thus, biological aspects has acquired a total image of women’s to exclusion of her other skills and aspirations.

- **Participation, decision-making, empowerment:** Significantly, this is critical points in conceptualized the concept of gender sensitization on how one must comprehend and recognize the participation of men and women at equal at time and the decision making is something that is related with people with higher status. Thus, women can empower themselves in order to overcome barriers.

Prof Streamlet Dkhar spoke about the implications of gender sensitivity on how these recognize the reality of women subordination and being aware of the differences on how men and women behave differently and have different needs and concerns, acting in ways that takes account of the reality of gender inequality. Being gender sensitized at the family structure, requires changes by both men and women and educating of what is right and wrong should be done at the childhood level.. Equal status means that men are not subordinate to women and neither are women subordinate to men. Both men and women are equal and they have equal responsibilities Thus, there is a need to understand the importance of equal status between men and women. The social, economic and political structure has been fought globally especially with the acceptance of women representatives in all associations. Women fighting for women's rights have stressed on the issue of equal wages. In contemporary, men desire to be a part of the Women's Movement to break the biasness and discrimination; Eventually, it has been accepted the social reality that women are competent enough in all spheres of life, apart from the physical differences. Therefore, it is a need for the representation of women in civil societies to voice the various issues in our society.



In conclusion of the programme, Prof. Streamlet Dkhar concluded the programme by creating gender sensitization, gender development and gender equality. This requires the transformation of the structure and the system and also the transformation of people's attitudes, behaviours and value systems. Therefore, changes in these three domains which are intricately interconnected, can be mutually sustaining and thus, changes also need to take place at multiple levels.

Towards the end, a momento was presented to the resource person, Prof. Streamlet Dkhar by Dr. B War Nongbri, the Dean of St. Edmund's College and followed by Vote of Thanks shared by Dr. Rituparna Rejenra, the Head of the Department of MSW.