

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY AND BURA MANO CAMPAIGN

MenEngage Delhi Network – Ek Saath Campaign

Venue: Shivaji College, Delhi University

Date: 08th March 2017

Programme:

- Session with students on 'International Women's Day' regarding safety of women during the festival of Holi
- Students led the campaign themed Bura Na Mano Holi Hai– (**Don't Take Offence**) by reversing it into Bura Mano (**Do Take Offence!**) as on the pretext of Bura Na Mano Holi hai women and girls are harassed on Holi festival.

Objective:

- To sensitize college students especially men students about Holi being taken as an excuse to harass girls and the need to campaign against such behaviour which restricts girls' freedom, mobility and enjoyment and involving them in campaign "Bura Mano
- To encourage students by focusing on boys to initiate discussion on ending Sexual Harassment of Women and Girls on Holi and to celebrate consensual Holi

Campaign Report

On the eve of International Women's Day 8th March 2017, The MenEngage Delhi collaborated with Women's Development cell (WDC) of Shivaji College to initiate campaign themed "Bura Na Mano Holi Hai" to sensitize the college youth about the nature and type of celebrations in which for many Holi is an excuse to harass women.

The aim of the campaign was to motivate young generation to be a part of the campaign against gender based violence and to sensitize them on the issue of sexual harassment that

is very common during Holi. Two representatives of MenEngage Delhi Mr Badar and Ms Zohra facilitated the session and mobilized a total number of 61 students including boys and girls to be a part of the campaign. Setting the background, Mr. Badar discussed the need to create awareness and resonance among general public about the nature of celebration which people undertake during the time of Holi. Students acknowledged that Holi is not just one of



the biggest festivals in India, but also the most colorful one. Being a joyous festival of color and bonhomie, there are many women who don't feel safe enough to play Holi. A lot of people try to take advantage of the occasion as they think they get the license to transgress boundaries in public space and mute all voices of protest. **'Bura Na Mano Holi Hai'** is the refrain. As a result, women and girls prefer to quietly recede to the security of their familiar territory till the colors have faded away. The manner in which the celebrations seek to exploit their vulnerabilities, the patriarchal order makes them away from the celebration. Women love Holi but they have no trust in men who play with them. Humiliation and misery can't be the defining colors of a vibrant festival. Holi added by *bhang* is taken as an excuse to grope women. Is it not a violation of human rights to humiliate one physically by throwing colors without his/her consent?



Students were told that on this backdrop, MenEngage Delhi seeks to engage volunteers in creating public resonance on the issue and emphasized why shouldn't women be angry? Why do masculinity and aggression propel some men and boys to use colours and *the pichkari* to have 'fun' even if women and girls do not want it? Some of the girl students came forward



and shared how they restrict their movement during the time of Holi. Holi is not only the festival of colors but it is also an opportunity for miscreants to violate others people's rights and consent.

Ms. Abha, associate professor, Shivaji College, shared how a few days ago some boys threw water balloons at her on the road. She also shared that people generally use water balloons, eggs and cow dung to throw as a way of 'celebrating' Holi. Mr. Badar put the focus on seeking consent before applying or throwing colors on others and

ensuring consensual celebration. Students took ownership of the campaign by taking it around the campus; many of them came forward to take actions under the campaign both within and outside the campus. The students divided into five subgroups and went outside their college campus to interact with youth, other men and women, auto rickshaw drivers, government school-students and also with people in malls around the area.

With all of them the students opened a discussion on how one could ensure a safe Holi for everyone which does not result in immense trauma for women and girls.

They discussed with the men and boys in particular that on the pretext of 'Bura Na Mano Holi Hai' people indulges in deviant behavior culminating in violence against women. Vishnu, a core team member of the WDC shared that he interacted with auto rickshaw drivers who shared that the way we celebrate Holi is unethical. After drinking, we lose our consciousness and our misbehavior which leads particularly to crimes against women which are disturbing society greatly.

Perveen, a student, said after participating in the campaign she realised how important it was to discuss the issue with various people as responsible citizens; she opined that such a dialogue should also be initiated at home and not only on the streets.

