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### ONE BILLION RISING CAMPAIGN - SILIGURI CHAPTER



The one billion rising campaign, Siliguri chapter was organized at Shivam Palace, Siliguri on 14<sup>th</sup> February, 2017. The campaign was organized by Darjeeling Mary Ward Social Centre in close partnership with leading NGOs like Child in Need Institute, World Vision India, Duars Express, Salt and Light Alternatives, Impulse NGO Network, Human Life Development and Research Centre, Seva Kendra, We Care, Marg, Prerana Educational Centre, North Bengal St. Xavier's College Rajganj, Salesian College, St. Mary's School, Loreto School Panighatta, Good Shepherd School, Mahbert High School, Delhi Public School Siliguri and St. Joseph's School. Marina's Bagdogra, Versatile Creations, Shivam Palace, Saluja Hotel and Glenary's Darjeeling were among the business houses to partner the event.

The day began at 10.00 A.M with the registration of guests and invitees. Sr. Leena Lakra, Director (DMWSC), Fr. Dennis Soosai, Vice Principal (BBA and Commerce) North Bengal St. Xavier's College Rajganj along with the students and the staff of D.M.W.S.C. looked into the registration and ushering of guests.

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The One Billion Rising (OBR) campaign was introduced by Anushree, the anchor for the event. The campaign, launched on Valentine's Day 2012 with Eve Ensler as the OBR founder, began as a call to action based on the staggering statistics that one in three women on the planet will be beaten or raped during her lifetime. With the world population at 7 billion, this adds up to more than One Billion women and girls, and hence on 14<sup>th</sup> Feb. 2013, people across the world came together to express their outrage in defiance of the injustices women suffer.

After introducing OBR 2017, Anushree went on to give an account of the Siliguri chapter of this campaign which began in 2013 with an initiative from DMWSC in collaboration with several NGOs, schools, colleges and sponsors. In 2013 the event was observed in the rural sector while in 2014 a much larger participation in the urban sector was witnessed.

This year OBR Revolution is giving sharper focus and visibility to the exploitation of women and to harnessing even stronger global solidarity to demand an end to violence in all forms – Thus the clarion call of WE RISE! DISRUPT! CONNECT.



The anchor welcomed the Chief Guest, Commandant Tapan Das from 46<sup>th</sup> Battalion Shashastra Seema Bal, Jalpaiguri along with the special guest Sr. Anita Braganza, ibvm, Provincial, South Asian Province, Bishop Vincent Aind as well as the panelists Dr. John Turkey, Dr. Nirmal Kr. Bera, Dr. Susama Nayak, Smt. Sutapa Saha, Advocate Sushmita Bose, Deputy Commissioner of Police Indra Chakraborty and Smt. Uma Majhi.

Next, the audience was shown a video of the partners of OBR who expressed their solidarity with the campaign. What followed was a theme based song accompanied by a video by the

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students of Prerana Educational Centre on the theme of solidarity against violence.



This was followed by a contemporary dance act by G. Squad School of Dance on the theme of



street children and their right to education, food and health.



After the presentation of khadas to the distinguished guests and the Chief Guest, Commandant Tapan Das was invited to address the gathering. Commandant Das expressed his personal views on atrocities against women. He highlighted the conditioning boys receive in our culture wherein they are taught to use violence to control. He mentioned the practice of mothers reserving the best portion of food for the sons. However, Commandant Das believes mothers



should keep the best portions for their daughters and raise stalwarts like Sakshi Malik and Geeta Phogat who will resist violence.

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Next, Sr. Anita Braganza felicitated Ms. Hasina, founder and MD of Impulse, a social organization working on human trafficking. Ms. Hasina moderated the panel discussion and was delighted to see both men and women equally participate in the campaign. She invited the panelists to the dais, introducing them.



The panel discussion began with Ms. Hasina's question to Dr. Bera, Head of the Department of Psychiatry of NB Medical College. Dr. Bera stressed on the necessity to provide specialized psychiatric treatment to victims as they may suffer from psychiatric emergencies like a suicidal tendency. Dr. Bera drove home the point that NGOs should not take counselling of victims in their hands but should seek professional help.



Ms. Hasina's next question was put to Dr. Susama Nayak, Child Psychologist and Principal of Goodricke School for Special Education, Siliguri. Ms. Hasina wanted to know the challenges people with disabilities face. Dr. Nayak replied that disability itself is a challenge and when a disabled child is exploited, it is doubly traumatic. She insisted on sensitizing children, parents and support groups in good and bad touch. She stressed on the need to create an understanding of abuse.

Advocate Sushmita Bose was questioned about the laws and directives present to protect women. Adv. Bose replied that new laws have been formulated to protect women from abuse. She also

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stressed that Sexual Violence was not the only type of violence against women. There are Acts to protect women from Domestic Violence, Dowry related abuse etc. She said there is a lack of awareness regarding these Acts in India and hence NGO's could play a major role in creating awareness.



The moderator then asked Mr. Indra Chakraborty, Dy. Commissioner of Police for his views on the challenges despite several laws. DCP Chakraborty put it down to a general lack of tenacity. From the time a complaint is lodged till the time justice is served most people run out of steam and get disinterested. This lack of tenacity is a big hindrance. He stressed on the important role played by NGO's who are empowered to lodge complaints on behalf of victims. NGO's also have the responsibility of detecting abuse and helping the victim. He also highlighted the commendable role the NGO's play in the post recovery period of the victim.



Next, College Professor Smt. Sutapa Saha was asked if she felt existing policies need to be tweaked. Ms. Sutapa began by stating how red is the color of both love and violence. She acknowledged Eve Ensler's drive for women's justice commenting on the myriad factors like, patriarchy, race, gender etc. which are linked with violence against women. She mentioned the book Second Sex which rightly says that a woman is never born but created. A woman in other words is a social construct. She too reiterated like Dr. Susama that gender sensitization is necessary. She stressed on the importance of being a woman first and then focusing on the various roles a woman plays.

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Dr. Tirkey, Associate Prof. from Dept. of Sociology, Kalipada Ghosh Tarai Maha Vidhyalaya, Bagdogra highlighted the root cause of women's exploitation which lies in our family system. He explained how the disparity between girls and boys was a cultural construct and how invisible exploitation at home goes unnoticed eg. in terms of education, distribution of food, property rights etc. He stressed on the need to change values where women will not be treated as secondary in society.

Ms. Hasina commented on the Khasi community she belonged to, which was matrilineal where she as the youngest daughter was the caretaker of the family property. Ms. Hasina then shifted her focus to Uma Majhi, Principal of a college, asking her to comment on the kind of awareness young people should have. Smt. Majhi took exception to the word 'Rape' saying this term should be avoided. She also spoke on how social media is promoting violence against women. She was also against judging women and subjecting them to demeaning questions on their virginity. Ms. Hasina then questioned DCP Indra on Cyber Crime, who said it was a perversion of the mind of individuals, making them sadistic. He lamented the growth in cyber crime – swindling of bank accounts, posting wrong profiles, transferring money illegally and hacking accounts.

Next, Adv. Sushmita was questioned about cyber laws. She replied that laws were not the only solution for a change in mindset of people to combat cyber crime. She commented on the cyber laws available and the important role mobiles play in solving crimes.



Dr. Bera spoke on the primitive desire of man and the need for psychotherapy to help delinquents. Smt. Sutapa applauded celebrities like Anushka Shankar for coming out with the abuse she suffered at the hands of a close family member. She also stressed the need to use social media judiciously and recommended all present to read a book titled 'Understanding Gender'. She signed off by inviting us to take an oath of 'power of love' not 'love of power'.

The session was then open to questions from the audience. Commandant Das questioned Smt. Sutapa regarding the practice of asking daughters to behave in a way so that they may avoid violence. But why weren't sons told to behave themselves? Smt. Sutapa stressed on women

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being a social construct. She reminded us that when girls are born in rural areas they are considered a burden and often strangulated, but weeklong celebrations follow the birth of a male child. Language, dress, behavior are all gendered. She commented on how women are not allowed to use slang as it is considered a masculine trait. She said women need to be aware of their individual space.

The next question from a DPS student was for Adv. Bose, the question was on the laws present against women exploiting women. Bose replied that no such laws were present. But NGO's could help through awareness camps. We need to understand why one woman tortures another, understand their personal grievance.

---- Smt. Majhi left at this stage and was felicitated for her contribution and presence.

The next question was from a student of Salesian College who wanted to know about the rehabilitation of women and the need for boys to be made sensitive. Dr. John Tirkey, in reply stressed on the power of love and the need for a change in values where men took greater responsibility. DCP Indra added to what Dr. Tirkey had said explaining that Rehabilitation is a process by which a victim is sent back to his original environs. NGO's play a major role in helping the victims lead a more normal life.

The next question to DCP Chakraborty was from Good Shepherd School and was regarding fast track courts. DCP Chakraborty praised these fast track courts for their good records in handling cases of rape, dowry deaths etc. He was happy to inform everyone about the setting up of many more such courts.

A question was raised about the need to change terms like MA-BA as it is unfair to be gender biased. Adv. Sushmita replied that a change in the coinage of the terms would be welcome but required a proper procedure. DCP Indra Chakraborty was then asked to comment on the helpline numbers and he reiterated that the important factor in the use of these panic buttons was the response time.

Dr. Susama Nayak rounded up the question session by encouraging women to take pride in themselves and to take charge of their lives. She reminded the audience of the TV programme *Satyamev Jayate* which highlighted the fact that most crimes happen in our comfort zone-our home. Abuse should not be suppressed at any cost. She echoed Vivekananda's belief that men and women are the two wings of a bird, both wings equally essential for a smooth flight.



The moderator Ms. Hasina thanked the panelists. Sr. Anita Braganza was invited to make a brief reflection on the discussion. Sr. Braganza expressed how overwhelmed she was by the discussion. She was touched by the stories she had heard and

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stressed on the need for women to be peacemakers. She said it was important for women to address the restlessness within themselves which often created problems for other women. Sr. Anita thanked the panelists and Ms. Hasina for the enriching session.

This was followed by Sr. Braganza felicitating the panelists and the announcement of the signature campaign wherein all present participated.



Manju Toppo from DMWSC then called forward women who had done exemplary work. Laxmi Lohar, Sukni Oraon, Chameli Tewar, Jeramila Ekka, Devika Gurung, Aruna Lakra, Rakhi Gope, Premmoni Munda and Francesca Minz were felicitated by Bishop Vincent Aind. They had worked hard to bring progress in their villages and tea gardens, uniting women and helping them to be self reliant.



The raffle announcement was made by Fr. Dennis Soosai, with the first prize winner being Sangay Dukpa from Mirik, the second prize went to Mrinal Ghosh and the third to Anita Soya from Gulma T.E. Sr. Powlin from Panighatta, Monika Lama from Marina's Hotel, Basanti

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Champromari, Nikita Bramha and Ejaya Sundas were among those who won consolation prizes.



Sr. Leena, Director of DMWSC was requested to give the vote of thanks and administer the pledge. She thanked all the invited guests, partners and sponsors. The audience then took the pledge.

Eric Singh from Salesian College sang a song and students from the college performed a dance



on the theme of trafficking.



The One Billion Rising (OBR) Campaign Siliguri chapter came to close with a presentation of mementos to the partner NGO's, sponsors, schools and colleges.

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The chief guest Commandant Tapan Das ended the programme by facilitating the photographers



and the anchor, Anushree.

A group photo for OBR 2017 was taken. This was followed by lunch.



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