

May and June / 2017

Newsletter

"Be seekers of truth and doers of justice."



Anti-Child Labour Day



Anti-child Labour Day is a globally recognised event held annually on the 12th of June. It fosters a worldwide movement aimed at halting child labour in all of its forms. Here at the DMWSC, fighting and putting a stop to child-labour has always been a key goal, and to mark the day, we held an honours ceremony. All of the invited guests had come from restaurants and hotels which had been previously screened. They were congratulated as being working members of Siliguri who have done their best to reduce child labour by adhering to anti-child-labour policies.

Throughout the event, staff from the DMWSC led a discussion which involved the standing reality of child labour here in India. From discussion, the Act of 1986 and the degree of its implementation since the late 80s were fiercely contested. Reema and Annoy Ghosh served as the event's chief guests. Mr. Ghosh, now a young university student, presented a talk on Bahar More's education programs and how these have fought against child labour. Mrs. Reema, in turn, served as Assistant Commandant from 41 Battalion, SSB, Siliguri. Their words of vigour were absorbed by the audience as all listened to how the margin of population and poverty has grown wider over the years. It was understood that the overcrowding of cities and that minimum access to social welfare programs was what has principally resulted in the perpetuation of child labour.



The DMWSC, alongside other NGOs, seek to promote an awareness of the rights that children have. From this, one sees that the main injustice of child labour is found in its capacity to deprive children of their ability to develop a healthy wellbeing and a strong intellectual spirit. Statistics were drawn out as to the number of child laborers in India, as well as the degree in which great political influence is found in the existence of child labour. All in all, plausible solutions were suggested by Reema, by Annoy Ghosh and by DMWSC presenters. Their elaboration offered ideas which help to combat the duration of societal neglect and indifference towards India's marginal youth.

Congratulations to all members of the team who spoke at the event. We shall continue to tackle together child labour related issues stronger than ever.

DARJEELING MARY WARD SOCIAL CENTRE

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Environment Day

Environment Day, which took place on June 5th, 2017, was an occasion in which the staff and volunteers of DMWSC proudly came together to spread throughout Siliguri an awareness of environmental sustainability. The principal method of promotion was through auto rallying. Through the loudspeakers used, spectators and passersby effectively heard how the staff and volunteers of DMWSC promoted the themes of hydroelectric power, solar power, wind energy, LED lights and reduction of outdoor waste. The main areas of promotion were Anchal, Siliguri town, NJP and Siliguri Junction, all of which were chosen due to them being densely frequented locations.



The arrival of staff and volunteers of DMWSC at Junction allowed onlookers to enjoy the recital of an important play. Written and acted out by the social center's staff members, the play reenacted the environmental dangers of garbage accumulation and the disfavor displayed before one's indifference to a polluted, garbage-filled society

The environmental themes of 2017 were found in the centre's newly created brochures. Throughout this day's campaign of environmental awareness, these were distributed to passersby. From this day, one has to understand the importance of remembering our environment's health as well as living in a healthy surrounding so that all may benefit from a clean India whose wellbeing will allow its people to flourish.

Lok Manch Convention

On the 14th of June, the Darjeeling Mary Ward Social Centre attended the Lok Manch Convention, which was held in the Himalayan Free Church (Matigara). A large number of partner organisations, and their leaders, were also present, including Dr. Fr. Lalit Tirkey SJ, director of the HLDRC (Human Life Development Research Centre). Fr. Dr. Lalit Tirkey SJ also gave the Key Note Address sharing his experiences of the tea gardens whilst he was travelling in the Doars and Terai regions. Throughout his address, he made continuous reference to his own experience of the injustices faced by those employed in the tea plantations. He said “though the tea gardens of north Bengal started about 150 years ago still workers are getting only Rs. 132.50. This is in fact below the standard”. Further, he promised that HLDRC would always stand with marginalized, oppressed tea garden workers against injustices. He drew the attention of the participants and said that we would have to take these problems seriously and discuss the possible solutions during the convention.



All speakers at the event clearly conveyed the message that more can be done to provide help to plantation workers, and an action plan was formed to tackle the issues. In the aftermath of the convention, a large number of plantation workers have agreed to hold a rally in Siliguri to create mass awareness of the troubles they face daily.

Prior to attending the convention, staff and volunteers of the DMWSC attended pre-convention planning meetings and training sessions with HLDRC.

School Awareness Programme

Throughout May and June, the legal Department at DMWSC conducted a total of four school awareness programmes concerning the rights and protections to which children and young adults have access to through legal aid if they face the dangers of human trafficking and human labour. A total of four sessions were run between May 1st and June 30th. The centres of school awareness took place at Washabari Primary School on May 4th, at Bagrakot Primary School on May 11th and at the higher secondary schools of Washabari and Bagrakot on June 6th and June 7th.

In total, more than 700 young people took part in the programme. This number was outstanding considering the great interest that youth displayed. Furthermore, the questions that the youth addressed throughout the programmes' running were remarkable and allowed for further elaboration of answers that targeted specific questions. A feeling of pride was engendered among the staff and volunteers of DMWSC, towards the act of educating youth and that of spreading an awareness of one's rights. Through this, they become better equipped to protect their wellbeing and personal development.



In situations of voluntary or involuntary migration/displacement, youth face the risk of endangering their livelihood and future.

Stakeholder Training

The DMWSC held one stakeholder training event at Gram Panchayat on June 9th, 2017. With an audience of approximately 50 women and the presence of Shubash Ghosh, (Advocate from Siliguri Court) an enriching interaction between the presenters and women who attended took place. While Mr. Ghosh served as the legal resource person in the explanation of women and children's rights, Margret Horo served as the social centre's legal aid representative

Through having created a comfortable and open environment for discussion, the women present inquired much into the legal measures that lie behind their rights in the plantation field and workplace. They presented a series of questions which concerned their wellbeing and that of their families. The ease of Mr. Ghosh and of Ms. Horo in conveying well-detailed answers and methods of future undertaking in legal matters provided the women with further confidence. Truly, this was an event of empowerment where the women who attended became concretely aware of the strong voice they possess when they outwardly demand justice in their place of employment.



NETWORKING



DMWSC took part in the rally on 28th June 2017, in collaboration with Uttar Bangal Chai Mazdoor Adhikari Manch. The total number of participants were about 4500. The Rally began at 11.30am near Hanuman Mandir, Mallaguri and progressed towards Air View chowk, turned back towards the Sub Divisional office, Mallaguri and culminated at 3.00pm with the submission of a Memorandum to the Sub Divisional Officer.

Miss Beni Usha and Babita Oraon representing Jalpaiguri Seva Sadan, and on behalf of women participants spoke on the importance of coming together in claiming minimum wages which is due in all gardens. They also spoke on maternity benefits of Rs. 6000/- to be implemented without delay. The president Mr. Parimal Lagun of Adivasi Jana Shakti Morcha (civil society organization) ignited the mass to continue the movement till they achieve their goal. He told them to hold a meeting with the state and central government to resolve the problems of the tea gardens.

KMWSC VISIT

On the 29th and 30th of July, staff from the Kolkata Mary Ward Social Centre (KMWSC) Kolkata visited DMWSC, Siliguri. The staff of KMWSC Kuheli and Devdas assisted the staff of DMWSC with documentation. The staff spent 2 days at the centre and helped in arranging the documentation of the organization.



The DMWSC thank the staff of KMWSC for their interest, kindness and collaboration.

We Truly Thank You