



# RASHTRA MAHILA

## CONTENTS

1. Menstrual Hygiene Day – Right of every woman.
2. We Think Digital – Digital Shakti 2.0 Webinars on Misinformation & Online Safety.
3. Interactive e-Meeting held with State Commission for Women.
4. e-Meeting held with States DGPs to discuss Women Safety during Lockdown.
5. e-Meeting held with States DGs / IG (Prisons) to review Female Prisons Wards during COVID19.
6. NCW Cells Update (Complaint & Investigation, Non-Resident Indian, Suo-Moto Cognizance).
7. Consultation on Inter-State Migrant Women Workers (East & West Zones).
8. Consultation on Women in Agriculture Sector: Facilitating a Better Role.
9. Initiatives of North East Cell during Lockdown.
10. NCW Chairperson Engagements.

### 1. MENSTRUAL HYGIENE DAY – RIGHT OF EVERY WOMAN

Menstrual Hygiene Day is an awareness day to highlight the importance of good menstrual hygiene management and aims to benefit young girls and women worldwide. Menstrual Hygiene Day is globally celebrated on May 28 to break the silence and build awareness about the fundamental role that good menstrual hygiene management plays. Most women and girls will menstruate every month, yet this normal bodily function is still met with taboos and stigma. Women and girls around the world face numerous challenges in managing their menstruation which is an issue of privacy and health. Research has found that not having access to menstrual hygiene management products can keep young girls away from school during their periods. Hence the right to menstrual hygiene enables young girls and women to reach their full potential.



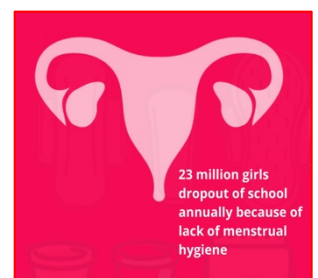
Millions of women and girls in India lack adequate facilities for menstrual hygiene management, such as inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, particularly in public places, such as in schools, workplaces or health centers. The lack of separate toilets, unavailability of means to dispose of used sanitary pads and water to wash hands leads to women and girls facing challenges in maintaining menstrual hygiene in a safe and dignified manner. The challenges menstruating girls and women face is often more complicated than simply the availability of infrastructure as it is deep rooted in social norms and beliefs. In many cultures, menstruating women are considered impure and are systematically excluded from participating in every-day activities, including attending schools and participating in religious activities. Moreover, the taboos and stigmas attached to menstruation leads to an overall culture of silence around the topic, resulting in limited information on menstruation and menstrual hygiene. Such misinformation can have ramifications on the health and dignity of young girls and women. Facing such discriminatory cultural norms or practices denies the basic human rights of every woman



**Menstrual Hygiene Day on 28/5 is a date selected to acknowledge that 28 days is the average length of the menstrual cycle and women menstruate on average of 5 days every month.**

and disregard of menstrual hygiene awareness can cause severe economic costs on their lives and on the country.

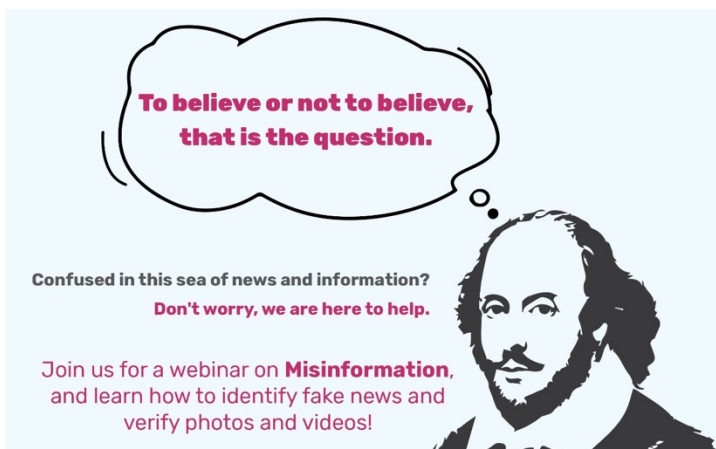
Menstrual Hygiene Day offers an opportunity to actively advocate for the integration of menstrual hygiene management into national and local policies and programmes, by raising awareness campaigns that can help engage decision-makers in policy dialogue. India is striving to overcome stigma and challenges around menstrual taboo. It is evident that promoting menstrual hygiene management is not only a sanitation issue but also an important step towards safeguarding the dignity, overall life opportunities of women and girls, and by doing so we enable them to reach their full potential.



**Access to feminine hygiene products stands for:**

1. To address the challenges and hardships that many young girls and women face during their menstruation days. This involves advocating for ease of accessibility for special need groups too.
2. To highlight the positive and innovative solutions undertaken by activists and groups to address menstrual challenges across the world and reduce period poverty
3. To catalyze a growing, global movement that recognizes and supports girls' and women's rights on national and local level.
4. To engage in policy dialogue and actively advocate for the integration of menstrual hygiene management into global, national and local policies and programmes.
5. To integrate Menstrual Hygiene Day with the growing movement that promotes body literacy and autonomy, as well as gender equality.

**2. WE THINK DIGITAL – DIGITAL SHAKTI 2.0 WEBINARS**



NCW kick started the 2nd phase of 'We Think Digital' campaign in February, 2020. Amidst the lockdown, NCW continued with the campaign and training sessions on digital literacy and cyber laws through virtual mode by organizing webinars with colleges, universities and common active netizens. The online session through webinars trains participants on safety tips and verifying news, images and videos, and also educates to empower netizens to stay safe online and spread awareness on menace of fake news and misinformation. The session also gives examples of several government initiatives in combating COVID19 misinformation and encourages netizens to follow reliable sources only like Aarogya Setu, COVID Seva, MyGov, PIB Fact Check, World Health Organization and MoHFW. The online training session is held three days a week in two sessions. It is open to all with a focus on encouraging young girls and women, in order to make online spaces more enabling for them. It helps them in identifying and reporting online abuse and encourages women to exercise their digital rights. In total 55 webinar sessions have been conducted and 6890 participants have benefitted from the sessions. More information can be found @DigitalShakti on Twitter/FB.



**3. INTERACTIVE e-MEETING HELD WITH SCWs**

The interactive session was held on May 5 via video conferencing with all Chairpersons of State Commissions for Women and was moderated by NCW Chairperson Smt. Rekha Sharma. The session was held to discuss on situation of women safety during nationwide lockdown and initiatives undertaken in their respective states. The need for effective planning to allow easy accessibility of redressal to women and how to interlink the working strength and methods between NCW and other State Commissions were deliberated. The interactive session is part of NCW's continued endeavor to enhance interface with the State Women Commissions. NCW encouraged SCWs to strengthen all coordination with their respective state's counterparts with State Women and Child Development Cells, integration with One-Stop Centers and 181 Helpline. A counsellors' team for supporting women for coping with mental stress and introducing online or telephonic counselling were also some of the important topics of discussion. Just like how NCW introduced the WhatsApp helpline for emergency response, Chairperson Smt. Rekha Sharma asked the SCWs to introduce initiatives similar to the WhatsApp emergency helpline launched by NCW. Participants shared their initiatives for women such as distribution of ration, essentials kits, awareness on health and mental wellbeing, and redressal of complaints against women during lockdown. The session ended with take-aways of good learnings and replicable good practices with a view to strengthen the Commission's working.

**4. e-MEETING HELD WITH STATES DGPs**

The National Commission for Women on May 29 held an e-meeting via video conferencing on NIC platform with 30 Police Officials including State Director General of Police (DGPs) and their representatives, where the Officers apprised the Commission of the special measures taken in their states to reduce cases of domestic abuse and cybercrime against women during the lockdown. The Officials also discussed the Standard Operating Procedures (SoP) put in place by them to address the increased cases of violence in different categories of offences against women. The Commission was informed that many helpline numbers including 100, 181 and 1091 were initiated for speedy redressal of complaints. The Commission requested all the State Police Officers to appoint a Nodal Officer in their respective states to attend complaints from NCW and grievances reported by women across. The officers were asked to send data on cases of domestic violence received during lockdown and details of action taken reports to the Commission. NCW also requested the initiation of WhatsApp helpline number for women by Police Task Force for women who were unable to reach out personally or make phone calls in front of their abusers. The meeting was convened with a view to improve coordination between NCW and State Police Force so as to make complaint redressal mechanism more effective for every woman in the country.



**5. e-MEETING HELD WITH DGs & IGs OF PRISONS**

The Commission had addressed the concern for the female inmates in prisons, particularly in view of the COVID19 outbreak situation. A letter was written to Director General and Inspector General of Prisons of all the states in April, advising for taking immediate action on various observations and recommendations to improve the living condition of female inmates during the pandemic. The e-meeting held via video conferencing was conducted on May 11 and joined by DGs/IGs of 17 States from Bihar, Odisha, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Chandigarh, West Bengal, Gujarat, Telangana, Assam, Karnataka, Punjab, Goa, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi, to follow up with updates of the advisory sent earlier. Various action taken report in view of health safety guidelines issued by the Commission and undertaken by the Prison authorities were found to be satisfactory. The Commission was appraised that women convicts and under-trials are released on interim bail and parole which has served the problem of overcrowding and maintaining social distancing in most prisons' wards across the country. A total of 1039 women were reportedly released on interim bail and parole. While concluding the meeting, Chairperson Smt. Rekha Sharma emphasized that the DGs are guardians of the female prisoners and they must ensure protection of self-respect, dignity and modesty of every woman, not only within the prison but also from any attempt of character assassination by people outside. DGs are duty bound to take cognizance of any such attempt even on social media and initiate strict action by filing FIRs and appropriate penalty. This is necessary as the women prisoners inside the prison cannot take such action on their own and DGs are solely responsible for all possible actions where modesty of a woman prisoner is violated.



**6. NCW CELL UPDATES**

**COMPLAINTS & INVESTIGATION CELL**

Month	Complaints Received	Complaints (Closed) (Old+New)
May 2020	1500	220
WhatsApp	528	510

**NRI CELL**

Month	Complaints Received	Complaints (Closed) (Old+New)
May 2020	41	-

**(SUO-MOTO) CELL**

Month	Nos. of Cases Taken	ATR Received (Old+New)	Cases Closed (Old+New)
May 2020	28	04	06

**7. CONSULTATION ON INTER-STATE MIGRANT WORKERS**

The Commission under section 10(1)(d) of the NCW Act, 1990, has mandate to 'review' the existing provisions of the Constitution and other laws affecting women and 'recommend' amendments thereto, so as to suggest remedial legislative measures to meet any inadequacies or shortcomings in such legislations. In pursuance to this, Commission had decided to plan five sessions of regional consultations on "Inter-State Migrant Women Workers". On May 14, the second consultation was held for the eastern region in collaboration with National Law University of Cuttack, Odisha. The third consultation was held on May 30, for the western region in collaboration with National Law University, Gujarat. NCW invited participation from senior government officials from state labour departments, civil society leaders working first-hand on the issue of migration, labour law experts, social activist and representatives from state women commissions on issues of women migrant workers. National Commission for Women being the apex statutory body to work for women empowerment in the country took the onus to propose certain interventions in light of its mandate for the welfare of these women migrant workers and checking of any exodus during this lockdown. Since women are the most adversely affected in situations of crisis, it becomes extremely pivotal that safety and security of women migrants is ensured. The Commission have noted recommendations and suggestions from the participating members of the consultation for further deliberation.



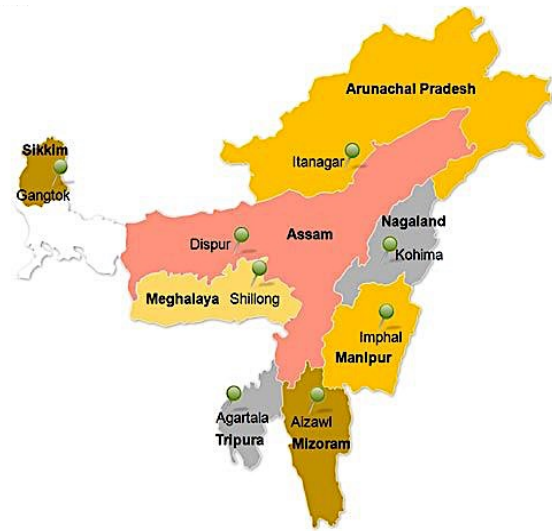
**8. WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE: FACILITATING A BETTER ROLE**

A Consultation was organized by National Commission for Women on May 8 where sessions covering all areas for intervention in agricultural and rural economy were discussed for the empowerment of women farmers in India. The consultation was conducted through a video conference on NIC platform with various government departments from the agriculture sector, esteemed research organizations, policy-makers, along with participants from NGOs and knowledge experts.



## 9. INITIATIVES OF NORTH EAST CELL DURING LOCKDOWN

With a view to provide focused attention to empowerment of women from the North Eastern States of India, the National Commission for Women has constituted a separate Cell in the Commission. The Cell organizes a series of activities for disseminating information on various issues concerning development of women and protecting their legal and constitutional rights. In addition, the Cell also coordinates review of Acts, codes, customs and practices specific to the North-Eastern States with a view to assess, if any changes are required for ensuring legal and other rights of women in the region. During the nationwide lockdown imposed to contain the spread of COVID19, the National Commission for Women had come across many complaints from the North Eastern community especially women living in metropolitan cities. They were subjected to repeated harassment and accused of being carriers of coronavirus. While we fight battle of COVID19, we must also condemn threats of racism and discrimination at every level, including the general public mindset and mentality. The Commission had taken cognizance and legal action to stop such acts/crimes against women from North East States.



Since the outbreak of COVID19 pandemic, the Commission received cases of racial discrimination faced by women in public spaces. It has also come to light that many women migrant workers were not receiving wages/salary working in unorganized sectors and many had lost their jobs in private sectors, due to which they were unable to purchase rations and essential needs or pay rent. The Commission also received complaints that some were chased out of their house by landlords making many homeless and helpless during the lockdown. In view of many such grievances, the Commission took active initiatives to ensure safety and security of women and girls from the North East States living in metropolitan cities.

- ⇒ NCW took Suo-Moto Cognizance on 8 cases of racial discrimination against North Eastern women during lockdown. These cases were from New Delhi, Gurugram, Mumbai, Pune, Goa, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. With coordination from NCW Members, appropriate actions was initiated by respective State Police authorities.
- ⇒ NCW supported the 'North East Task-Force' initiative of Special Police Unit for North Eastern Region (SPUNER) by Delhi Police, for coordination in generating financial aid, assistance and distribution of essential supplies.
- ⇒ NCW had raised funds/resources for SPUNER and contributions were accepted in cash, bulk essential supplies and rations, which were distributed amongst the needy.

- ⇒ NCW was able to connect and receive relief support from various organization and NGOs like Hans Foundation, Aasraa Trust, FICCI Ladies Organization, ICICI Bank for helping the North Eastern community.
- ⇒ NCW resolved cases of medical emergencies in coordination with SPUNER Task Force.
- ⇒ Help for emergencies like funeral rites were initiated by NCW through telephone requests & IT enabled helpline services.
- ⇒ NCW had reached out to women who lost their jobs and were not getting paid for their domestic work, hence NCW helped in providing them financial assistance and distributed essential kits for their daily needs.
- ⇒ Many student groups were stranded due to the sudden lockdown rules and closure of colleges/universities. NCW upon receiving requests from girl students living in cities of Pune, Mumbai, Jamshedpur, West Bengal, Karnataka, Kerala, Gujarat coordinated with state administration, relief enforcement authorities and SPUNER to transport the stranded students. Around 20,000 students received help through NCW's coordination and were able to reach their home state safely during lockdown.

To know more about SPUNER (Delhi Police) visit website:



[delhipolice.nic.in](http://delhipolice.nic.in)



@NodalOfficerNE

## 10. NCW CHAIRPERSON ENGAGEMENTS

- Chairperson was invited as Guest Speaker on a webinar hosted by G.R Patil College (Thane, Maharashtra) on May 10, to discuss on "Dimension of Pandemic & Women in India" during COVID19 crises.
- Chairperson was invited as Guest Speaker on a webinar "Safety Gap" hosted by Red Dot Foundation (New Delhi) on May 11 to discuss the roles and mechanism of government institutions, and the need for strengthening mutual partnership with activists and civil organization to effectively address women issues and rights in India.
- Chairperson was invited as Chief Guest as key note speaker in a webinar on "Measures to curb Domestic Violence amid the Lockdown" hosted by Sharda University (Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh) on May 12.
- Chairperson was invited as Guest Speaker on webinar hosted by Lovely Professional University (Punjab) on "Socio-Legal Framework for Optimizing Women Entrepreneurship in India" on May 19.

Follow Chairperson on  @sharmarekha

