The MoonCatcher project in Meghalaya (West and East Jaintia Hills District) Report 5 – OCTOBER 2021

The MoonCatcher project in collaboration with the Shashi Kiran Charitable Trust have provided the MoonCatcher kits to be distributed in Meghalaya. Health and Beyond Foundation through its Meghalaya Consultant Dr Darivianca E. Laloo. Dr Laloo had consulted the Districts Medical and Health Officers and agreed for health talks and distribution of the kits to the target audience (school girls from Classes 6 to 12) as part of the Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK) and the adolescent health clinics through the Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKS) teams under National Health Mission (NHM).

The Adolescent Health counsellor of Laskein block under West Jaintia Hills district Ms Marygold Papiah and team organised a health talk on the 12th October 2021 at Madanrwan Community Hall, Madanrwan village under Sahśniang PHC. A total of 50 participants were present and they comprised of school girls from Class 6 to 10 and also young mothers who are housewives from the village along with health staff. The Medical Officer of Sahśniang PHC and village headman was also present.

After the initial programme (health camp) of the PHC team, Ms Papiah spoke on the importance of nutritious food with examples of what food are constituted good and what habit forming practices to avoid. She then spoke on the complications of childhood pregnancy and how to avoid it. The girls then recited an oath which was recommended to ensure they understood the issue.

Ms Papiah then took a quick survey on the ease of talking about menstruation. 10 of the 50 participants felt comfortable talking about menstruation while the rest 40 were uneasy speaking about menstruation. Of the 50 girls, 30 were aware of menstruation before menarche and 20 were unaware until they got their first period. As most of the girls/women use washable cloth they did not find it inconvenient to dispose of used materials. Some of the girls use sanitary napkins during school timings to avoid leakage and embarrassment at school and that too had assigned bins to throw used napkins.
She then proceeded to explain the anatomy, the physiological changes of puberty and what happens during a menstrual cycle using pictures as tools to explain. The talk included how to manage menstruation, ensuring hygiene and taking care of one’s nutritional needs. She then spoke about the MoonCatcher kits, demonstrated their use and requested the kits to be distributed to the participants. A total of 50 MoonCatcher kits were distributed on the 12th October at Madanrwan village. The health talk ended with refreshments served to all and photo session. Everyone said they were very happy to receive a MoonCatcher kit and would use it.

The second health talk series was conducted by Ms Marygold Papiah, Counsellor of Laskein CHC and her team on the 22nd October at various schools i.e. (i) Upper Secondary School, Mukhap where a total of 51 school girls from Classes 6 -10 were present for the talk and (ii) David Edward School, Mukhap, 17 girls of Class 8 were present and (iii) Lumlihoi Upper Primary School SSA, Mukhap, 10 school girls from Class 6, 7 and 8. A total of 78 school girls benefitted from the health talks in their respective schools.

A pre-health talk questionnaire was used to check the following:

1. Level of awareness of menstruation before starting the first period: Of the 78 school girls 20% had knowledge of menstruation before menarche. 80% only realised about it when they started their menstruation.
2. General comfort level in discussing menstruation: All girls were somewhat comfortable in discussing about it and had responded to questions.
3. Convenience to dispose used menstrual materials at home or school: Majority of the girls use cloth as menstrual material and have not faced an inconvenience to dispose them off as they wash the cloths and reuse them.

Ms Papiah then proceeded to discuss puberty and the changes that occur during puberty from the physical, emotional and mental changes. The female anatomy and reproductive system was discussed using an Anatomy chart. Why does menstruation happen, the process and changes during menstruation and during pregnancy. Menstrual cycle was shown using a chart and days of the average menstrual cycle explained with the physiological aspect of each time line.

The next part was about managing their menstrual cycle and understanding their body and menstrual cycle and how to take care of oneself and dealing with cramps or discomfort during menstrual cycles. The importance of maintaining personal hygiene especially during their cycle to prevent infections.

The third part was focussed on menstrual materials and most girls in the village use reusable cloth and have been trained on washing and drying of the cloths. The participants were excited about the mooncatcher pads as they would not need to find old cloths to use from now on. The Mooncatcher kits were distributed to all 78 participants in the three (3) schools of Mukhap village.

The ANM will be doing a follow up with the girls after three months of using the MoonCatcher kits to ask the following questions as feedback:

- Rate their comfort/satisfaction in using the Mooncatcher kits in managing their periods.
- Rate the condition of their Mooncatcher kits after use (indication of correct washing and drying).
- Are they using any other menstrual material along with the MoonCatcher kits or by itself.

The feedback will be reported to the counsellor who will then inform Dr Laloo via phone. After the sessions, Tea and snacks were served to the girls and photos were taken.
A third health talk was conducted on the 23rd October and Dr Laloo joined Ms Papiah at the first location in West Jaintia Hills where the MoonCatcher kits were distributed in Mowtyrchiah B Anganwadi centre (on the 15th July 2021 among 20 adolescent girls). In July the girls from the village were home and attending school through online classes but in October majority of the first 20 girls who had attended were away at school in other villages and towns so only 6 of the 20 girls could be followed up with, on their use of the MoonCatcher kits. There were a total of 16 participants present on that day (23rd October). The event started with Dr Laloo asking the girls on the use of the MoonCatcher kits.

Follow up questions:

1. Rate their comfort/satisfaction in using the MoonCatcher kits in managing their periods.
   - Of the 6 present from the first batch all were very satisfied with their kit and were comfortable using them.
2. Rate the condition of their MoonCatcher kits after use (indication of correct washing and drying).
   - All 6 mentioned that the kits were in good condition and they had followed instructions on washing and drying them in the sun light after use.
3. Are they using any other menstrual material along with the MoonCatcher kits or by itself?
   - They are only using the MoonCatcher kit to manage their menstruation.

The health talk began by Ms Papiah on the importance of nutritious food with examples of what food are constituted good and what habit forming practices to avoid. She then spoke a little on the complications of childhood pregnancy and how to avoid it. The girls then recited an oath which was recommended to ensure they
understood the issue. To ensure the girls were listening to the talk she then conducted a brief quiz on what was discussed and handed prizes to the girls who recalled what health issues were being shared earlier.

She then spoke on menstruation and menstrual hygiene and handed over the talk on the MoonCatcher kits to Dr Laloo who spoke on usage and maintenance of the kits. A total of 10 MoonCatcher kits were distributed on the 23rd October meeting at Mowtyrchiah B.

**Summary:**

A total of **138 MoonCatcher Kits** was distributed to school going girls, young adolescent girls and mothers in the month of October 2021. 50 at Madanrwan under Sahsniang PHC as part of a health camp with the Medical Officer and health staff of the PHC, 78 at Mukhap schools to school going girls from Classes 6 to 10 and 10 at Mowtyrchiah B the same location as the first distribution was conducted by Ms Mary Papiah and Dr Laloo. The health talks at all locations was wholly conducted by the counsellor Ms Marygold Papiah who had used the same recommended methodology and materials as Dr Laloo.

Follow up of the first 20 girls who had received the MoonCatcher kits was done and 6 of the 20 were present and provided positive feedback to all three follow up questions. More follow up will be conducted in the coming months along with ongoing programmes.

The talk and distribution was made possible in collaboration with the West Jaintia Hills district, Laskein block, RKS K and RBSK (NHM) program with the Adolescent Health Counsellor Ms Marygold Papiah and her field team.

No MoonCatcher kits were distributed in East Jaintia Hills in October 2021 as Dr Handaka Suting and her field team were busy with the Covid vaccination programmes and did not manage to hold school health programmes.

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