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from **DURBAR**

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Sex workers of Sonagachi revived health insurance from the Mayor of city Kolkata



Sex workers are giving 'Bhai Phonta' to the Mayor of Kolkata Mr. Sovan Chatterjee

'Bhaier kopale dilam phonta jom dware porlo kata' – with this saying a sister applies 'tilak' on the forehead of her brother. The relation between a brother and

a sister is pristine and the bond gets further strengthened on the occasion of 'Bhai Phonta'. She prays for the good health and wards off all the evil from the brother's life and in return the brother pledges to protect his sister. In sisters life also the reciprocity from her brother is equally significant. It is more so when the sister belongs to sex workers community who are ostracized both by the policy makers as well as by the main stream society. The Mayor of city Kolkata broke this barrier through attending this 'Bhai Phonta' program and in this process recognized sex workers citizenship rights. He not only took 'Bhai Phonta' from sex workers but also offered Health Insurance scheme to around 1000 sex workers and provide premium from co operative fund.

The sex workers of Durbar celebrate the auspicious occasion every year. This year also the sex workers of Durbar organized Bhai Phonta where in addition to Mayor Mr. Sovan Chatterjee, Labour Minister Mr. Purnendu Bose, Mayor in council (education) Sashi Panja, Mayor in Council (health) Mr. Atin Ghosh were present in the program. Mayor distributed health insurance card as a token of appreciation to sex workers.



Mr. Sovan Chatterjee distributing health insurance cards among sex workers

Around 1000 sex workers of Sonagachi were handed over health insurance card by the Kolkata Municipal Corporation. The sum assured for each sex workers is for Rs 30000. The Mayor said that the KMC would provide this facility to 10000 more sex workers in the

coming year. The initiative of KMC made the sex workers feel as a part of the society. Even though the sex workers felt that the insurance coverage for illness is pretty low. Dr. Sasi Panja, Mayor in Council said that the KMC will accept any proposal regarding education for the sex worker's children.

Incorporating reproductive health care services for the sex workers community- A new venture from DMSC

Since its inception Durbar has been working among the sex workers community centers around HIV intervention program which includes prevention as well as care and treatment for HIV positives. Durbar has expanded this program all across West Bengal covering more than 45 thousand. However it is being felt more and more by the sex workers community that HIV intervention can't be implemented as a stand alone program as other health care services are equally important to their life as well as for their family members. One of the important health care support system what often affect their life is reproductive health care services.

To begin with the services what will be integrated with the existing HIV intervention program are pregnancy test, antenatal check up, screening for breast and cervical cancer among other. In this regard an awareness program on importance of early diagnosis of critical cancer was held on 9th November at Subham, the community hall inside Sonagachi red light district which was attended by more than 70 sex workers. Prof. Ramdas Chatterjee the renowned researcher delivers his lecture followed by question answer session in Bengali.

Durbar organised health camp at Dumdum for the domestic workers

Durbar, a women's organization working for domestic workers apart from sex workers for the last 2 years to help collectivization of domestic workers

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their capacity leadership among this workers. The workers in city

Kolkata A domestic worker and her child in the health camp receive a very minimum wage in return of their service and the amount they earn can hardly sustain their family. They have no job security. Their wages are low and they feel that they are exploited by the employers. Therefore, they are not able to procure health care services from the market. Keeping those in consideration Durbar organized a health camp for them on 6th November 2011 at Bidhan Colony, Dumdum where the clinic of the domestic workers, run by Durbar, is located. Altogether 50 domestic workers and their children attended the health camp and had their health check up done. 33 domestic workers and their children did blood test there. The program ended with a spectacular performance of a group of domestic worker's children in assistance with Komal Gandhar and was enjoyed by the people present there.