

Story of Sourav and Naskeer, A Beneficiary of Heals's Sanitation, Safe Drinking Water and Girl Child Education Awareness Project.

Name: Sourav & Naskeer.

Age: 42 and 40 years old

Area: New Delhi NCR Region



Sourav, a 42 year old farmer, and Naskeer, a 40 year old tailor, are two men living in the same community as Anjali. Neither Sourav nor Naskeer believe that it is important for men to be educated about menstruation. The primary concern of Sourav and Naskeer around menstruation is its significance as the entry to womanhood and ability to bear children and subsequently the need to control their daughter's sexuality.

In Sourav and Naskeer's village menstruation is intertwined not only with sexuality but also with stigmas about impurity which have been passed through generations. It is vocalised beliefs such as these which help to propagate taboos that inhibit women's ability to carry out their usual daily routine. There is a lack of understanding about the broader implications of reproductive healthcare, particularly amongst men, and discussion about menstrual hygiene is often avoided due to a culture permeated with an underlying aversion towards menstruation.

Educating communities, rather than just women, is a necessity for fostering more understanding attitudes, mobilising social support for combating taboos and increasing access to facilities to enable good menstrual hygiene practices. Men and boys have a specific role to play in communities supporting their wives, female relatives and friends in their menstrual hygiene. In particular, as head of the family, villages or schools, men are often key to decision making that affects the provision of menstrual hygiene services that allow women to manage their menstruation with privacy and dignity. Men can therefore play a significant, positive role in realising change. By mobilising the support of the whole community, the scope for feasible solutions and actions is expanded and change sustained.

Engaging meaningfully with men and adolescent boys about menstrual hygiene management currently presents a critical gap to influencing cultural attitudes around menstruation. HEEALS is working to sensitise men to the importance of menstrual hygiene. A key barrier is the association of menstruation with sex and it is clear that different approaches need to be developed to successfully integrate men into menstrual hygiene education. Engaging men in the conversation can be aided by de-linking training in menstrual hygiene practices from sex education, bringing it out of the sphere of potential religious or ethical offence and into

one of health maintenance. However to succeed this must be done gradually and with great sensitivity.