Comprehensive Report of Activities

Women's Studies Centre, Bethune College

Introduction

The Women's Studies Centre at Bethune College, Asia's first women's college established in 1879, serves as a vital platform for gender discourse and activism. Honoring Bethune's pioneering legacy in women's education, the Centre fosters critical engagement with gender issues through an interdisciplinary approach that connects academic inquiry with community action. This report documents the Centre's extensive activities from 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025, demonstrating a sustained commitment to feminist pedagogy, community engagement, and social transformation.

July 2024

Thalassemia Awareness and Testing Camp (27th July 2024)

- **Collaboration:** WSC and NSS in association with Rotary Club of Belvedere Gardens & Hindol Society
- **Location:** Bethune College, Kolkata
- **Duration:** One day



Focus & Objective: This health awareness camp addressed preventive healthcare for genetic blood disorders, recognizing that reproductive health knowledge is essential for women's empowerment and informed decision-making. The programme aimed to educate community members about thalassemia, provide free screening services, and promote genetic counseling as part of comprehensive reproductive healthcare. By offering accessible testing, the initiative demonstrated commitment to community health while emphasizing women's right to medical information and autonomy in reproductive choices.

August 2024

Banamohatsav – Community Inclusion Programme (12th August 2024)

- **Target Group:** Women and children from Goabagan slum
- **Location:** Goabagan slum, Kolkata



Focus & Objective: Celebrated on Bethune Day, this community inclusion programme promoted solidarity across class boundaries by bringing together privileged students and marginalized slum residents in cultural celebration. The initiative aimed to break down social barriers, challenge classist assumptions, and foster mutual respect through shared cultural participation. By specifically including women and children from slum areas, the programme embodied intersectional feminism's commitment to addressing how gender intersects with class to create compounded marginalization.

Rakhi Bandhan: Women in Solidarity (13th August 2024)

- **Location:** Bethune College, Kolkata



Focus & Objective: This programme reimagined the traditional Raksha Bandhan festival as a celebration of women's solidarity rather than patriarchal protection. The initiative aimed to reclaim cultural traditions for feminist purposes, transforming a festival that traditionally positions women as needing male protection into an expression of sisterhood and mutual support among women. By tying rakhis to each other, women asserted their capacity for self-protection and collective care, demonstrating how cultural practices can be reinterpreted to serve feminist values.

Protest March (14th August 2024)

- **Organizers:** College students
- **Focus & Objective:** This student-led activism demonstrated engagement with contemporary social issues and embodied feminist principles of direct action and collective resistance. The protest march aimed to raise awareness about specific social justice concerns, mobilize community support for change, and empower students to exercise their democratic rights through peaceful demonstration. By organizing and participating in public protest, students developed political consciousness and practical skills in advocacy and activism.

September 2024

Saree Mela (29th September 2024)

- **Location:** Goabagan Slum, Kolkata



Focus & Objective: This cultural and economic empowerment initiative promoted traditional crafts while supporting women's economic independence through the buying and selling of sarees. The programme aimed to celebrate cultural heritage while recognizing women's role as both producers and consumers in textile economies. By creating a marketplace specifically for sarees, the initiative valued women's aesthetic choices and economic participation, challenging consumerist culture with sustainable alternatives while providing economic opportunities for women artisans and sellers.

December 2024

Bal Vivah Mukt Bharat Campaign (4th December 2024)

Key Components:

- Opening address by Dr. Anushila Hazra Bhattacharya, Officer-in-charge
- Speech by Dr. Nilanjana Bagchi, Coordinator of Women's Studies Centre
- Collective pledge by teachers, students, and non-teaching staff against child marriages
- Creative competitions: poster making, photography, and slogan writing

Location: Bethune College, Kolkata



Focus & Objective: In response to the UGC circular on the Bal Vivah Mukt Bharat Campaign, this comprehensive programme addressed the critical social issue of child marriage by emphasizing girls' education as a fundamental strategy for prevention. The initiative aimed to raise awareness about the devastating impacts of child marriage on girls' health, education, and life opportunities while mobilizing collective action against this harmful practice. By engaging the entire college community in pledge-taking and creative expression, the programme fostered institutional commitment to protecting children's rights and promoting gender equality. The creative competitions provided platforms for students to critically examine and communicate about child marriage, developing both analytical skills and awareness-generation capabilities.

Gender Based Violence Awareness Programme (10th December 2024)

Collaborating Bodies:

- Women's Studies Centre
- Internal Complaints Committee
- Students' Grievance Redressal Committee
- Human Rights Cell

Programme Components:

1. **Welcome Address:** Dr. Anushila Hazra Bhattacharya emphasized the importance of creating safe and respectful environments
2. **Legal Rights Education:** Sub Inspector Tanusree Das, Officer-in-charge, Bidhannagar Women's Police Station, provided comprehensive education on:
    - Domestic Violence Act 2005
    - Sexual Harassment Act 2013
    - POCSO Act 2012
    - Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023
    - Detailed explanation of the SHe Box portal for confidential online reporting of gender-based harassment
3. **Digital Safety Session:** Sub Inspector Subhashish Sarkar from Cyber Crime Police Station addressed digital safety, social media vigilance, and cyber-related legal protections
4. **Emergency Services Information:** Students were educated about critical helpline numbers:
    - Emergency Response: 112
    - Women Helpline: 181
    - Childline: 1098

Location: Bethune College, Kolkata



Focus & Objective: Strategically conducted on International Human Rights Day in alignment with UGC's awareness campaign against gender-based violence, this programme addressed systemic gender-based violence through a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach. The initiative aimed to empower women with legal knowledge about their rights and protections under various legislative frameworks designed to combat violence and harassment. By providing detailed information about reporting mechanisms like the SHe Box portal and emergency helplines, the programme equipped participants with practical tools for accessing support and justice. The inclusion of cyber safety education recognized contemporary forms of gender-based violence in digital spaces. By bringing together multiple institutional bodies (ICC, Human Rights Cell, Grievance Redressal Committee), the programme demonstrated institutional commitment to creating harassment-free environments and supporting survivors. The holistic approach integrating legal perspectives, psychological insights, and practical safety strategies reflected a comprehensive understanding of gender-based violence prevention and response.

March 2025

International Women's Day Celebration (8th March 2025)

- **Curated by:** Department of Women's Studies and student volunteers
- **Format:** Annual poster exhibition
- **Location:** Bethune College, Kolkata



Focus & Objective: This visual exhibition created space for creative expression about women's experiences and achievements, using artistic media to challenge stereotypes and highlight diverse representations of womanhood that often remain invisible in mainstream narratives. The programme aimed to democratize feminist expression by inviting students to contribute their perspectives through visual art, making feminist discourse accessible beyond traditional academic formats. By celebrating womanhood in its multiplicity, the exhibition promoted recognition of women's diverse identities, experiences, and contributions while fostering pride and solidarity among women.

Women's Day Rally (7th March 2025)

- **Theme:** "Women in Leadership: Breaking Barriers"
- **Coordination:** Dr. Nilanjana Bagchi, Director, Women's Studies Centre
- **Participants:** Students and teachers
- **Format:** Campus-wide rally
- **Focus & Objective:** This collective public demonstration embodied feminist principles of solidarity and visibility, creating physical and social space for women's voices while raising community awareness about gender equality through unified action. The rally aimed to celebrate women's leadership while acknowledging the persistent barriers that limit women's access to leadership positions across all sectors of society. By marching together, participants challenged the social norms that discourage women from claiming public space and asserting political voice, demonstrating collective feminist power and demanding gender equality in leadership and decision-making.