

REPORT OF ACTIVITIES
(From April, 2021 – March, 2022)



DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN'S STUDIES



Enlightenment to perfection

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL

Accredited by NAAC with **Grade B++**

RAJA RAMMOHUNPUR

P O – NORTH BENGAL UNIVERSITY

DIST- DARJEELING, WEST BENGAL.

PIN -734013

REPORT OF ACTIVITIES

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UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL

BACKGROUND OF THE DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN'S STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL

- 1. Name of the University** : University of North Bengal
- 2. State** : West Bengal.
- 3. Address** : Department of Women's Studies,
University of North Bengal
Raja Rammohunpur,
P.O- North Bengal University,
Dist. Darjeeling, PIN-734013.
- 4. Date of Establishment** : July, 2000.
- 5. Date of Assignment of Present Phase** : The Centre has been upgraded by the UGC to **Phase- II** as per the letter F.No.7-68/2007 (WS) dated **21st March, 2012.**
- 6. Name of the Director** : Dr. Zinia Mitra, from **3rd September, 2021** (Addl.)
&
Date from when in position
- 7. Date of establishment of the Department** : **The Centre has started P.G.Course in Women's Studies from the Academic Session-2021-22.**

2. PROFILE OF THE CENTRE

2.1. OBJECTIVES:-

Briefly, the purpose behind the establishment of the Centre for Women's Studies at the University of North Bengal was two-fold, namely

- a. To articulate the situations of women in general and their developmental needs through academic research, teaching programmes with an ultimate policy focus;
- b. To fulfill critical gender needs and to build self-awareness and self-confidence among women in the region, through grass root empowerment activities that would encourage their articulate participation in the institutions of governance.

2.2 FULFILLMENT:-

Since its establishment in 2000, programmes undertaken at CWS have sought to reach out to women of all sections from the North Bengal districts and Sikkim, in order to fulfill these objectives. The core activities undertaken by CWS in framing a regional research programme in Women's Studies are an integral part of the CWS Action Plan. CWS also provides critical community support services, and networks with Government institutions, women's organizations and NGOs in order to generate Community Action for the fulfillment of regional women's needs.

Keeping the basic objectives in view, the Centre for Women's Studies has endeavored to coordinate multidisciplinary activities that can synergies the expertise into a definite core for Women's Studies pertaining to the North Bengal region. The Centre has also undertaken programmes to extend research and training skills of individual scholars and departments, within and without the University system. Projects and programmes undertaken by the Centre have sought to formulate developmental policies for the betterment and empowerment of the women of this region. To realize and attain the above, the Centre has established an interface of technical, academic and administrative skills throughout the region. Various departments at the University have already established programmes in Women's Studies with a significant research component in addition to their teaching content. The Centre has endeavored to consolidate and strengthen these studies and capabilities under its umbrella.

However, since 2009 during XIth Plan, the Centre has started **Refresher Course on Women's Studies** for University and College teachers, in collaboration with UGC Human Resource Development Centre of the University.

Till date the Centre has successfully completed ten (10) Refresher Courses. University / College teachers from all over the country has been participated in the course.

Further, to generate academic interest amongst the young generation towards Women's Studies and make them aware to gender issues the Centre has started short term **Certificate Courses** on various women's issues along with its regular activities like Research works, Publications, Seminar, Workshop, Sensitization and Awareness programmes on gender issues at various level including the grass root women. The project work initiated at the Centre aids the formulation of gender sensitive development policies and programme for the upliftment and empowerment of women in the region.

However, as per the decision taken at the Advisory Committee Meeting under the Chairmanship of Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, University of North Bengal, it has been decided that the Centre will start **Short Term Course on Women's Studies for College / University Teachers** from this year. Accordingly it has been implemented from the year 2018-19.

3.0 DETAILS OF THE ACTIVITIES:-

3.1 TEACHING COURSES

Keeping in mind the criteria laid down by UGC as per XIIth Plan guideline where UGC encourage the teaching courses to build strong academic base institutionally for Women's Studies, the Centre has started **Refresher Courses on Women's Studies** and **Short term Certificate Courses on Women's Issues, Research Methodology for Gender Studies, Geoinformatics & Computer application** during XIIth Plan Period.

In order to disseminate the knowledge as well as to create academic interest on **Women's Studies**, the Centre have taken few new initiative, by means of organizing various kinds of collaborative programme with different institute including government departments

The Centre has started **P G Course in Women's Studies** from the Academic Session-2021-22.

A. REFRESHER COURSE (14 DAYS)

The Department of Women's Studies, University of North Bengal, in collaboration with the UGC Human Resource Development Centre, University of North Bengal, organized a Refresher Course in **Gender Discourse: Theory and Practice** from **31.08.2021** to **13.09.2021**. Teachers from various University departments and Colleges from every corner of the country attended the course. Due to the growing responses towards the field of Gender Studies, like previous years this year also it received good responses from all over the country.

Teachers (50) from entire country including West Bengal were selected for the Course. They were from various disciplines like Economics, Political Science, History, Sanskrit, English, Law, Sociology, Geography, Bengali etc.

Teachers from the University of North Bengal, Calcutta, JNU, Delhi etc having the expertise in this field acted as resource person and delivered lectures on various issues related to the theme.

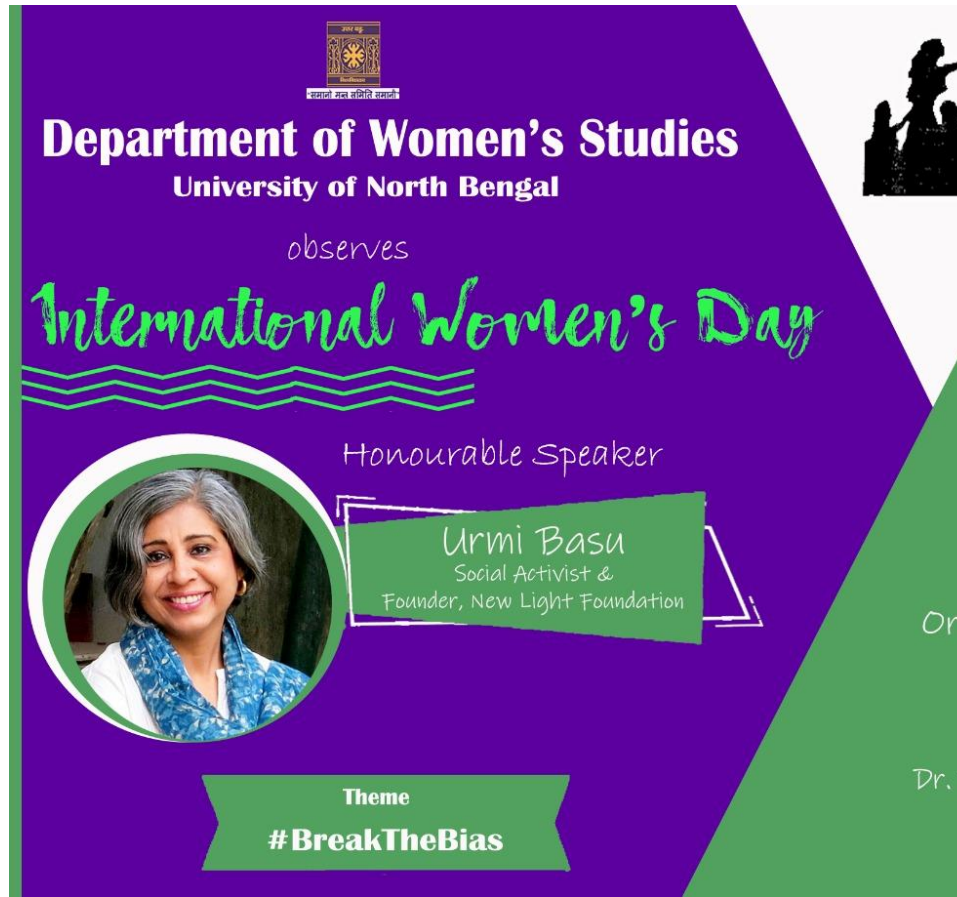
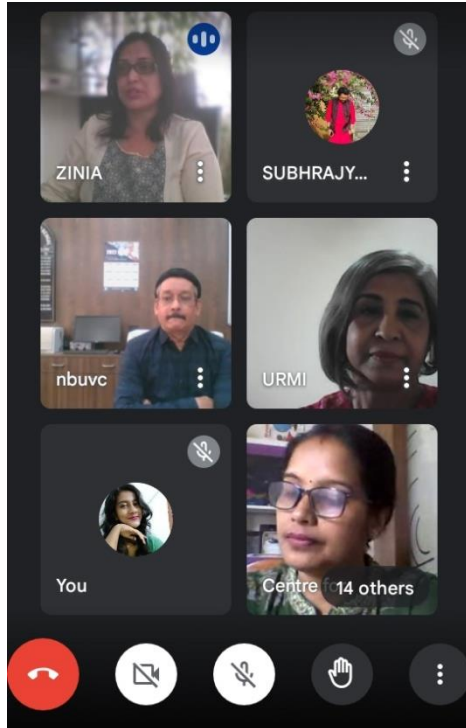
3.2 FIELD ACTION

Report on

International Women's Day 2022

Date	<i>8th March 2022</i>
Time	<i>12:30 PM onwards</i>
Mode	<i>Google Meet</i>
Theme	<i>#BreakTheBias</i>
Speaker	<i>Ms. Urmi Basu, Social Activist and Founder, New Light Foundation (Kolkata & USA), Nari</i>

Shakti Puraskar Awardee, 2019



Introduction:

To celebrate the spirit of International Women's Day (IWD) 2022, the Department of Women's Studies at the University of North Bengal organized a thought-provoking webinar centered on the global theme, #BreakTheBias. The event aimed to inspire conversations on dismantling gender prejudices and fostering an inclusive society where equality is not just an aspiration but a reality.

Inauguration Ceremony:

The program began with an inaugural address by the Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, Dr. Subiresh Bhattacharya, who highlighted the significance of gender equality in shaping a progressive society. He underlined the urgent need to eliminate systemic biases and cultivate opportunities for all, irrespective of gender. His words served as a reminder of the ongoing struggles and the collective responsibility to create a world where women and men can thrive equally.

Prof. Zinia Mitra, Head of the Department of Women's Studies, delivered the welcome address, setting the stage for an engaging session. Prof. Mitra reflected on the historical relevance of Women's Day and contextualized the 2022 theme, urging participants to examine their roles in perpetuating or dismantling societal biases. Her address was both reflective and forward-looking, emphasizing the role of academia in spearheading social change.

❖ **Highlights of the Event:**

The International Women's Day 2022 webinar on #BreakTheBias organized by the Department of Women's Studies, University of North Bengal, was a blend of insightful discussions and impactful storytelling. The highlights of the event encapsulated the pressing need for gender equality and provided a roadmap for participants to address biases in their own spheres.

Reflections on Historical Gender Roles:

Ms. Basu began by tracing the origins of gender bias, examining how patriarchal narratives have been constructed and perpetuated throughout history. She observed that societal norms, dictated largely by men, have shaped perceptions of gender roles, limiting opportunities for women. By referencing historical powerhouses such as Cleopatra and Razia Sultana, she illustrated that women's leadership is not a modern phenomenon. However, these figures often faced greater resistance than their male counterparts.

Contemporary Women Leaders:

Juxtaposing historical examples with modern achievements, Ms. Basu celebrated the rise of influential women like Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, a pioneer in biotechnology; Priyanka Chopra, a

global entertainment icon; and Mayawati, a leader who broke caste and gender barriers in Indian politics.

These examples underscored her argument that while progress has been made, persistent biases continue to undermine women's leadership potential.

Challenges in the Workplace:

Delving into workplace dynamics, Ms. Basu highlighted critical issues such as wage disparity, biased hiring practices, and discrimination in performance evaluation.

She noted that women often face the dual burden of professional expectations and societal pressures, which hinders their career growth. Addressing this requires systemic changes in organizational policies and a cultural shift in attitudes toward women employees.

Exploitation in the Prostitution Industry:

A significant portion of her address was dedicated to discussing the exploitation of women in the prostitution industry. Ms. Basu described this as one of the most coercive and exploitative forms of gender bias.

She strongly refuted claims that prostitution can be a legitimate profession, arguing that the industry thrives on poverty, gender inequality, and lack of alternatives for marginalized women. She called for stronger policies to rehabilitate and empower survivors while addressing the root causes that lead women into this exploitative cycle.

Intersectionality and Bias:

Ms. Basu emphasized the importance of intersectionality in understanding bias, pointing out that factors such as caste, class, and ethnicity compound the challenges faced by women. She shared stories from her work in Kolkata, where women from marginalized communities often face the harshest forms of discrimination.

Key Takeaways from the Address:

- **Education and Awareness:** Combatting biases starts with acknowledging their existence and educating individuals about their detrimental effects.

- **Community Support:** Building networks of support for women, especially those in vulnerable positions, is essential for breaking cycles of oppression.
- **Policy Reform:** Systemic issues like wage gaps and workplace discrimination require robust policy changes to ensure equality and fairness.
- **Empowering Survivors:** Addressing exploitation, particularly in industries like prostitution, demands rehabilitation programs and economic empowerment initiatives.
- Ms. Basu concluded her address with a powerful message: “Breaking the bias is not just a hashtag—it’s a collective responsibility. Each of us holds the power to challenge stereotypes and create a world where equality is the norm, not the exception.”

Participant Engagement:

The interactive session that followed Ms. Basu’s address further enriched the event, as students and faculty engaged in meaningful discussions. Participants posed questions about practical ways to tackle biases in everyday life, drawing on Ms. Basu’s expertise to brainstorm solutions.

The webinar succeeded not only in raising awareness about the pervasive nature of gender bias but also in inspiring participants to become active agents of change in their communities.

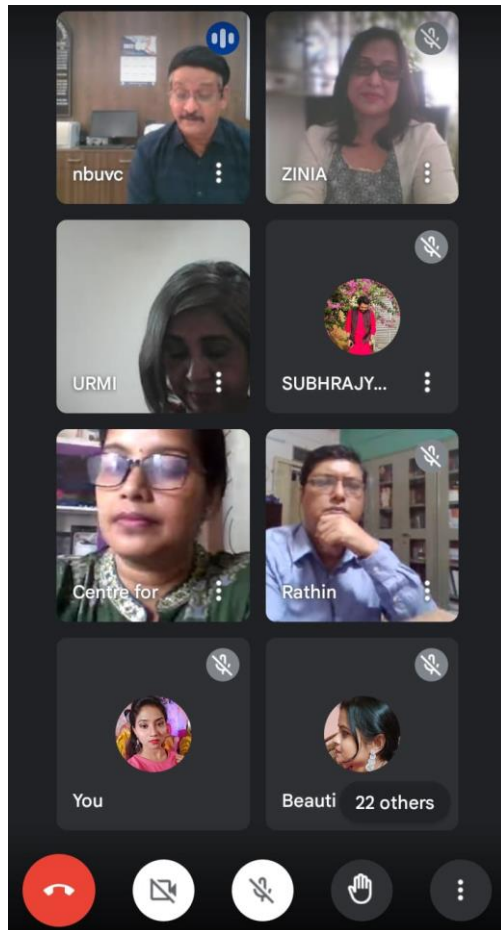
Panel Contributions: Diverse Perspectives on #BreakTheBias

The panel discussion following Ms. Urmi Basu’s keynote address added depth to the webinar, with experts from diverse fields sharing their insights on tackling gender bias and fostering equality. The discussion, moderated by Dr. Dahlia Bhattacharya, brought forward practical strategies, theoretical frameworks, and personal reflections, making it an engaging and enlightening session.

➤ *Dr. Rathin Bandopadhyay: Addressing Workplace Inequality*

Dr. Rathin Bandopadhyay, Professor of Law and Former Head, Department of Law; Dean, Faculty of Arts, Commerce and Law, focused on actionable strategies to address workplace inequalities.

Strategic Sedation Planning: Dr. Bandopadhyay introduced the concept of sedation planning, emphasizing the importance of neutralizing unconscious biases within organizational structures.



He explained how tailored training programs and regular evaluations could help identify and dismantle hidden prejudices.

Gender Equity Index (GEI) Frameworks: Dr.

Bandopadhyay highlighted the potential of the GEI, a metric used to assess gender equity within organizations and industries. By implementing GEI frameworks, companies could measure progress and hold themselves accountable for creating more inclusive workplaces.

Policy Recommendations: He also proposed creating policies that address wage disparities, establish equitable parental leave, and mandate diversity in leadership roles as critical steps toward achieving workplace equity.

➤ *Subhrajyoti Kundu: Gender Equity and Economic Development*

Mr. Subhrajyoti Kundu, Assistant Professor, Department of Mass Communication, University of North Bengal connected the dots between gender equity and economic development in his thought-provoking address.

The Cost of Bias: Mr. Kundu outlined how gender discrimination has a tangible economic cost, including reduced workforce participation by women and lost productivity due to unequal opportunities.

Inclusivity in Leadership: He argued for the inclusion of women in decision-making roles across sectors, citing research that organizations with diverse leadership perform better financially and are more innovative.

Entrepreneurship for Empowerment: Encouraging women-led entrepreneurship, particularly in marginalized communities, was a key suggestion. He discussed how microfinance initiatives and skill-development programs could uplift women economically, enabling them to challenge biases.

Key Insights from the Panel Discussion:

- **Holistic Approaches:** Tackling gender bias requires a combination of policy changes, education reform, and cultural shifts.
- **Metrics and Accountability:** Frameworks like the GEI provide tangible ways to measure and track progress toward gender equity.
- **Intersectional Focus:** Addressing the overlapping effects of caste, class, and other factors alongside gender biases is essential for comprehensive solutions.
- **Community-Level Solutions:** Empowering women at the grassroots level is crucial to driving systemic change.

Interactive Session:

The session concluded with an engaging and thought-provoking interaction where students, researchers, and faculty members shared their reflections and posed meaningful questions. Ms. Basu addressed these inquiries with insightful responses, sparking further dialogue and encouraging participants to think critically about these pressing issues.

Breaking Biases

Ms. Basu highlighted the transformative power of education, awareness, and vocational training in empowering marginalized communities. She stressed the urgent need to dismantle societal stereotypes to foster inclusivity and equity.

Equality as a Universal Right

Drawing upon international human rights laws, Ms. Basu reinforced the idea that freedom from violence and access to essential services, including reproductive health care, are fundamental rights for all individuals, irrespective of gender or background.

Actionable Solutions

The session emphasized the role of advocacy, awareness campaigns, and grassroots initiatives in addressing deep-seated societal norms and biases. Ms. Basu encouraged participants to be active agents of change within their communities, contributing to sustainable development and social justice.

The webinar was more than an event—it was a transformative experience, shedding light on the pervasive yet often unacknowledged gender biases that exist in society. With over 100 attendees, including distinguished professors, researchers, activists, and students, the dialogue served as a reminder of the power of collective effort in challenging systemic inequalities.

Conclusion:

The engaging discussions, insightful presentations, and thought-provoking questions underscored the importance of collaboration in driving meaningful change. The diverse perspectives shared during the sessions enriched the discourse, leaving participants inspired to take concrete actions in their respective spheres of influence.

The event was not just a reflection of the present challenges but a call to action—reminding everyone that breaking biases requires persistence, courage, and unity.

Together, we can **#BreakTheBias** and build a world where equality is not just an aspiration but a reality.

Development and Progress of the Department of Women's Studies

University of North Bengal (2021 Onwards)



Introduction

The Centre for Women's Studies at the University of North Bengal transitioned into a full-fledged Department of Women's Studies in the year 2021. This transformation reflects the University's recognition of Women's Studies as a vital academic discipline and its commitment to advancing gender equality through education, research, and community engagement. Since its inception, the Department has emerged as a hub for interdisciplinary scholarship, fostering meaningful discussions on gender issues while addressing real-world challenges.

Under the leadership and collaborative effort of Prof. Zinia Mitra, Department of English and the Additional Head of the Department of Women's Studies, and Dr. Beethika Moni Dutta, Assistant Professor, Department of Women's Studies has flourished. Their visionary approach has not only enhanced academic rigor but also encouraged a broader societal impact through academic, research and outreach initiatives.

Key Developments and Achievements (2021–2024)

Academic Excellence

Introduction of Master’s program in Women’s Studies:

The Department launched a Master’s program in Women’s Studies, designed to offer an interdisciplinary curriculum. Courses span areas such as Gender Studies, Public Health, Women’s Entrepreneurship, and Social Justice. The Department has become a vibrant center for postgraduate and doctoral research, encouraging critical inquiry into pressing gender issues, with a focus on local, national, and global contexts.

Faculty members and students have made significant contributions to national and international conferences, workshops, and journals. Research areas such as gender and entrepreneurship, education and health, and intersectionality have been prioritized, producing impactful findings that have shaped public discourse. The Department has established strong ties with local communities, particularly in the remote tea garden areas of North Bengal, empowering women through skill development programs.

PUBLICATIONS:-

A. JOURNAL

Journal of Women’s Studies Vol-X, 2021 (ISSN -2320-3625)

5.0 RESOURCES

5.1 MANPOWER

As of 31st March, 2022, the following members constitute the existing manpower at the Centre for Women’s Studies:

- i) Honorary Director: Dr. Zinia Mitra.
- ii) Assistant Professor: Dr. Beethika Moni Dutta
- iii) Peon: Shri Asit Singha

5.2 MATERIAL

The Centre occupies 700 sq. ft space in 3 bays in the Humanities building.

The Centre has acquired a LCD projector and laptops to facilitate presentation at seminar and workshops and in future for M. Phil students.

For effective documentation, the centre has acquired a camera which has been useful in the various activities of women in North Bengal.

5.3 DOCUMENTATION

I. Books:- The DWS library presently houses 1379 books on Women's Studies covering different fields of Gender Studies were procured from the UGC fund. Library also has charts and posters on Women related issues and paper cuttings are also preserved for scholars and students who visit the library for viewing and disseminating information.

II. For the preparation of "Gender Atlas of West Bengal/India" on GIS platform Super map GIS software has been procured and women scholars and students of NBU were given training .Now the digital information on women of West Bengal is available with DWS.

III. Study materials for UGC NET Examination for Women's Studies compiled from different books and internet for the students are kept in the DWS library and many students have been benefited.

Dr. Zinia Mitra

Director

Centre for Women's Studies