The Centre for Women’s Studies AMU is organizing a seminar at Aligarh, from 01 – 03 February 2014. The theme of the Seminar is ‘Women’s Health in India: Issues and Concerns’.

The concept note of the seminar is enclosed, along with the list of themes to be covered. However, the themes are illustrative and not comprehensive.

Participants are required to submit their abstract by November 30th and full paper by December 15th, 2013.

We plan to meet your travel expenses and will provide full hospitality from 31 January – 04 February 2014.

For further information you can contact us at our e-mail ID amucws@gmail.com or at any of the following numbers mentioned below:

Professor Nighat Ahmad, Director, 09411654977, 0571-2706479 or 08810183064.

- The last for the submission of abstract has been extended to 7th December and the last date for the submission of paper has been extended to 20th December’2013.
Concept Note

Right to health is one of the basic human rights. Women have been historically discriminated against, they are a group whose health concerns need to be prioritised, understood and researched.

Health is an important component of human development. With the rapid changes brought about through globalization and the resultant new economic order, there is an increase in the need for academic studies to be focused on the area of women’s health. The proposed seminar precisely intends to deliberate and contribute to the understanding of a wide span of issues particularly focusing on the gendered aspects of women’s health. The seminar proposes to look into issues pertaining to women’s access to health care facilities in India, the impact of new reproductive technology on women’s reproductive health, the rise in sexually transmitted diseases among women, health problems of working women, the vulnerability of women belonging to marginalized sections with respect to health problems of dalit, tribal and Muslim women, including health concerns of women with disabilities.

There is a rising need to include gender dimensions in the health care policies and programmes by the state, and to review the existing programmes and policies as per the international standards. India is a State party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Article 12 of the ICESCR states, “The State parties to the present covenant recognize the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.” Reiterating the importance of the right to health, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, further emphasised the responsibilities of the State parties to protect the right of all groups and individuals to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

Ironically, in India despite the international commitment, women from the poorer classes and marginalised sections experience differential access to health care facilities. Women’s health is one of the areas that deserve special concern. There is also a need to explore and understand the health concerns of women belonging to marginalized sections, since they are doubly vulnerable to discrimination.

It is estimated by the UN that in the developing world as a whole, one third of all pregnant women receive no health care during pregnancy. According to another UN estimate women account for 70% of the world’s poor, and poverty, inequality and limited decision making power adversely impact women’s health.

The proposed topic for the seminar intends to focus on health concerns of women belonging especially to the economically and socially marginalised sections, including dalit, tribal, and Muslim Women.

Disability is another area of concern for women, as disabled women are doubly vulnerable to discrimination, one because of their gender and the other because of their disability. Hence, one of the areas that the proposed seminar intends to delve upon is the concerns of disabled women.
Research suggests that incidence of infection HIV/AIDS among women is on the rise. This has a significant impact on the reproductive health of women. In India with unequal access of women belonging to economically deprived sections and marginalised sections to health care facilities the threat further multiplies. Hence, there is a social dimension to the increase in HIV/AIDS that needs to be understood and tackled. Here what needs to be highlighted and researched is the lack of attention given by the State in working effectively towards gender sensitive policies, programmes, providing testing and counselling services and other measures. Further there is need to understand the social stigmas related to HIV positive women in India with respect to marriage, child bearing and shrinking social spaces.

India is home to one of the highest numbers of malnourished in the world after Sub Saharan countries. Health, hygiene and nutrition are another area that the seminar intends to deliberate upon. Lack of proper sanitation facilities is another area of gender concern here. Biologically the stronger sex, life expectancy of women is higher than that of men. However, preferential treatment of boys and neglect of girls in household allocation of resources the under – 5 mortality rate is much higher for girls than boys reflecting inadequate medical care and nutritional disadvantage of growing girls. In addition to this we find prevalence of sex selective abortions of girls for which states of Punjab and Haryana are infamous. Thus inadequate nutrition and lack of medical attention lead to health problems among them.

Working women have specific health concerns. With the rise in the number of working women in this age of globalisation, new health problems are surfacing that the seminar proposes to deliberate upon. Health problems of working women have received inadequate attention. Stress of work coupled with domestic responsibilities, pregnancy related problems has taken a toll not only on women’s physical health, but their mental health too, with large number of women being afflicted by common mental disorders including depression. Faced with gender based discrimination at different stages of their lives many find it difficult to cope with the stress they are subjected to.

Another area relating to their health is the new reproductive technologies like IVF and surrogacy that promises hope for millions of childless couples. Commercial surrogacy has become a growing business. It is exploiting poor women in a country like India. There is urgent need for government to enact laws to regulate surrogacy and protect the interests of the couples involved. Questions of ethics and religion too need to be tackled along with the legal issues involved.

The theme of the seminar is further broadly categorized into following Subthemes:

1) Health, Hygiene and Nutrition of Women
2) Health Issues of Working Women: Organized and Unorganized Sectors
3) New Reproductive Technologies
4) HIV/AIDS/STDs and Women
5) Women’s Health and Marginalized Groups: Muslims, Dalits, Tribals etc.
6) Disability and Women’s Issues
7) Women’s Health: State and Governance