

Report of Indian Council of Social Science Research-Eastern Regional Centre (ICSSR-ERC) sponsored one-day virtual seminar titled: “Decoding The Shadow Pandemic: A Virtual Seminar On Understanding The Complex Issue Of Gender Violence Amidst Lockdown”

The Indian Council of Social Science Research-Eastern Regional Centre (ICSSR-ERC) sponsored one-day virtual seminar titled: “Decoding The Shadow Pandemic: A Virtual Seminar On Understanding The Complex Issue Of Gender Violence Amidst Lockdown”, held on 13th February, 2021 from 09.00 am to 05.00 pm (Indian Standard Time) was organised by the Internal Quality Assurance Cell and the Women’s Cell of Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis Mahavidyalaya, Kolkata, India. It was hosted on Google Meet and Youtube Livestream online platforms. The virtual seminar was attended by participants from both national and international organisations and institutions. 125 participants which included students, research scholars, faculty members, members of support service organisations like NGOs attended the virtual seminar. Participants joined from various states of India, the United Kingdom, Republic of Korea, Nigeria, Portugal and Canada.

Dr Sreyasi Chatterjee, Convener, Women’s Cell, Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis Mahavidyalaya initiated the virtual ceremony by introducing the topic to participants and then inviting the respected Principal of Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis Mahavidyalaya, Dr Shyamal Karmakar to deliver the welcome address.

Dr Shyamal Karmakar, Principal, Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis Mahavidyalaya welcomed all present on behalf of the institution. Dr Karmakar in his welcome address spoke about the extent of the Shadow Pandemic and focused on gender violence as a deep-rooted structural problem and how it exposes other forms of gender inequality in society. The welcome address showed how through this virtual seminar larger structures of gender inequality will be explored. How adaptations can be made at workplaces to address gender violence at home, will be discussed. The welcome address also explained how the first session of the Webinar will look at Gender Justice systems that can help cope with the shadow pandemic, while the second session will focus on Support Services that can help cope with the shadow pandemic. Innovative strategies and best practices would be shared that will help to provide support and rehabilitate survivors of gender violence amidst the Covid-19 crisis by encouraging awareness building, empowering grassroots organizations, mobilizing police and justice services and promoting technology-based solutions.

Dr Sukanta Das, Associate Professor, Department of English, Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis Mahavidyalaya welcomed and introduced the distinguished Keynote speakers. Dr Girija Borker, Economist, Gender Program Coordinator, Development Impact Evaluation Unit, The World Bank and Dr Jane Pillinger, Independent gender expert, researcher and policy advisor on gender based violence in the world of work; Visiting Professor in Gender Studies at the London School of Economics, Senior Visiting Fellow in Social Policy at the Open University in the UK were the eminent resource persons for the Keynote session. This session focused on how the increased instances of gender-violence and domestic violence during the lockdown may have been given the moniker--Shadow Pandemic, yet instances of gender-violence is neither a new phenomenon nor was it unexpected. The same structural injustices and inequalities that impacted the lives of the vulnerable and the marginalised, before the crisis of the pandemic now determines who

suffers the most from it. Investing in the elimination of gender-based violence is considered smart economics. Violence against vulnerable genders is one of the primary barriers to their participation in the economic, social and political spheres, not to mention it has a huge economic cost. Work from home norms create more opportunities for abuse, both physical and coercive control. Support needs to be tailored to pave safe ways of communication. Thus the need of the hour is a joint effort to successfully respond to the rise in gender-based violence cases during the pandemic--law makers, policy makers, law enforcement, civil society organizations, service providers, researchers, all play a vital role in helping survivors come out of the cycle of violence.

The first session titled : Gender Justice to cope with the Shadow Pandemic explored the elusive concept of Gender Justice. Gender Justice entails ending the inequalities between genders that are produced and reproduced in the family, the community, the market and the state. All mainstream institutions from justice to policy making are accountable for tackling the injustice and discrimination that keep too many members of vulnerable genders excluded. This session looked into how thinking about and addressing gender inequalities will be an essential tool for fighting against gender-based violence amidst the pandemic. Dr Alpana Ray, Assistant Professor, Department of Geography, Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis Mahavidyalaya welcomed and introduced the distinguished resource persons for this session. Professor Mary Elavinakuzhy John, Acting Director and Professor, Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi; Ms Ruchira Goswami, Assistant Professor (Social Sciences), The West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences, Kolkata and Professor Rukmini Sen, Director, Centre for Publishing, Professor, Sociology School of Liberal Studies, Ambedkar University, Delhi were the distinguished resource persons for this session. Ms Isha Biswas, State Aided College Teacher, Department of English, Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis Mahavidyalaya conducted the Question and Answer session for this First session. The first thought provoking session made us ponder on questions such as What constitutes Gender Justice and What does it leave out? What Gender Justice means in situations of crisis? And How can we rethink ideas of Gender Justice with regard to violence and with regard to the idea of domestic. Gender Justice is the ending of and the provision of redress for inequalities between genders. The term is rarely given a precise definition. Concepts of gender justice that seek to enhance the autonomy or rights of one gender in relation to the other are controversial and arouse intense debate. Gender justice includes unique elements: firstly, a vulnerable gender can never be identified as a coherent group along with other sets of disempowered people; secondly, unlike any other social group, relationships between genders in the family and community are a key site of gender-specific injustice and therefore any strategy to advance gender-justice must focus on the power relations in the domestic or private context; thirdly, the structural inequalities that are produced in the private sphere are not simply contained there but infuse most economic, political and social institutions. Justice systems alone are not enough to address deep-rooted structural inequalities that are amplified by the pandemic.

The second session titled: Support Services to cope with the Shadow Pandemic focused on other systems and institutions that have adapted to the needs of survivors amidst lockdown. The Hinsa Ko No campaign run in Mewat masked itself as a mask making drive--it was an excuse to create an opportunity to identify cases of violence and abuse. Even during peak lockdown, volunteers would visit homes to provide the cloth and teach the women how to make masks, but the most important cause of this visit by the volunteer was to enquire about the well-being of the woman.

In British Columbia specific approaches to clinical practice in the pandemic era and resources adapted for the pandemic are helping front-line physicians assess risk of child maltreatment, support children and their families and to recognize and respond to child abuse and neglect. In this session the eminent resource persons shared their experiences of providing support to survivors. Dr Somdatta Ghosh, Associate Professor, Department of Bengali, Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis Mahavidyalaya, welcomed and introduced our distinguished resource persons for this session. The Question and Answer session for the Second session was conducted by Ms Nandita Bhaumik Choudhury, State Aided College Teacher, Department of English, Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis Mahavidyalaya. Ms Sushmita Mukherjee, Director, Gender and Adolescent Girls, Project Concern International, New Delhi and Dr Anindita Chatterjee, CGC Coordinator, Clinical Psychologist, Peerless Hospital and B.K.Roy Research Centre, Kolkata were the eminent resource persons for this session. This session made us ponder about how the COVID-19 pandemic has isolated survivors and cut them off from their safety nets. It has also led to the emergence of new forms of violence. Perpetrators are using COVID-19 restrictions and threat of COVID-19 infection to restrict survivors movements and to coerce survivors to reside with them. Monitoring Of internet use, removal of mobile phones and using hidden downloadable phone apps to monitor movements are some of the new methods of coercive control in this new normal. The previous session provided a platform to discuss the various adaptations of support services to fight against newer forms of violence, by re-starting safe channels of communication or discreetly establishing new forms of safe communication. Social isolation has long been recognised as a form of coercive control used by perpetrators. Measures for home isolation, while undoubtedly necessary from a public health perspective, isolates survivors from significant support networks and makes them invisible to the outer world.

The third and final session of the webinar: Sharing of Innovative Strategies and Best Practices provided a platform for presenters to discuss service innovations and share best practices. There are of course challenges of providing such innovative support mechanisms during COVID-19 restrictions like difficulty in making and maintaining contact with survivors, decline in referral follow up, difficulty in assessing risk and determining protective factors remotely. How do the innovative strategies respond to such challenges? To deliberate more on this, Mr Debadyuti Karmakar, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis Mahavidyalaya and Dr Nabanita Basu, State Aided College Teacher, Department of Human Development, Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis Mahavidyalaya welcomed and introduced the presenters in this session and even conducted the Question and Answer session. Ms Shreyashi Sharma and Ms Neel Sengupta; Centre for Studies in Gender and Sexuality; Ashoka University, Haryana and Rituparna Borah, Nazariya: A Queer Feminist Resource Group, New Delhi presented during this session. The last session looked at how the Shadow Pandemic not only affects cisgendered women but also impacts queer, trans and intersex persons and people from marginalised socio-economic communities in more ways than one. On helplines that previously reported calls from the queer community to aide them in the transition process or to help them in coming out to their family, distress calls are the new norm in this new-normal. Majority of these calls are to complain against domestic violence. There is therefore an urgent need to develop a space--a space at the grassroot level: a go-to site to address this issue but equally important are advocacy spaces created through workshops, events and dialogue based initiatives to start, build and sustain conversations around this issue.

Dr Kamala Mitra, Coordinator, Internal Quality Assurance Cell, Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis Mahavidyalaya initiated the Valedictory session by welcoming the Special Guest for this session-- Dr Nandita (Banerjee) Dhawan, Director, Department of Women's Studies, Jadavpur University. Dr Dhawan summed up the entire virtual seminar in her Valedictory address.

Dr Shyamal Karmakar, Principal, Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis Mahavidyalaya presented the Concluding Note where he focused on how the meaningful and thought-provoking interactions tried to shine light on the inequitable gendered practices that have negatively impacted the vulnerable genders in our society. Understanding gender violence in the society requires comprehension of tradition, gender and culture in the country. India has taken significant strides towards protecting and enhancing the rights of weaker genders. Gender justice systems have adapted themselves and worked swiftly to ensure rights. Support service systems have adapted and responded to the needs of survivors. Multiple innovative responses have emerged during the pandemic. Yet, beyond these very powerful executions, there exists a disparity between those who can avail of these services and those who face obstacles in availing these services, owing to their position in society. The poor, the disempowered and the vulnerable must be brought into the fold. Access to justice services for vulnerable genders are vital and judicial systems must continue to be responsive. Along with virtual access to courts and continued protection through extension of judicial orders--it is vital to support more channels for vulnerable genders to access justice by collaborating with community-based grassroots organisations and non-lawyer legal assistance initiatives. The private sector has an important role to play here, to address gender-based and domestic violence--especially because the remit of the workplace has now broadened because of work-from-home. Support services must ensure that shelters remain open, provide alternative safe spaces and further broaden the type of support services that are available. Steps must also be taken to strengthen and increase the response capacity of already existing support programs. Vulnerable genders should be kept at the center of the pandemic response. There must be a transformation of gendered economic discriminations. The future requires the formulation of socio-economic plans that intentionally focus on the lives and futures of the vulnerable genders. Through platforms such as this webinar public conversations must ensure that the Shadow Pandemic is brought to light. It must be acknowledged as a major human rights violation. This Shadow Pandemic of gender-based violence must be treated with the same severity and the same determination as seen in the measures taken to fight against COVID-19.

The virtual seminar ended after a vote of thanks was delivered by Dr Kamala Mitra, Coordinator, Internal Quality Assurance Cell, Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis Mahavidyalaya. E-Certificates were issued to all participants who filled up the feedback form. Certificates of Appreciation were also emailed to all resource persons for their valuable presentations and humbling presence.



**INDIAN COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH (ICSSR) SPONSORED
ONE-DAY VIRTUAL SEMINAR**

**“DECODING THE SHADOW PANDEMIC: A VIRTUAL SEMINAR
ON UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLEX ISSUE OF
GENDER VIOLENCE AMIDST LOCKDOWN”**

**Organizer: Internal Quality Assurance Cell & Women’s Cell
Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis Mahavidyalaya
Saturday- 13 February 2021
09:00- 17:00 (IST)**

Platform: Google Meet & YouTube Live stream
Registration Opens: 1 February 2021
Registration Closes: 12 February 2021
Registration Link: <https://forms.gle/DT5Y6gh5Ky4gnTfy7>
(For Queries, Contact: +91 98300 86160; +91 96748 13762)
Fees: This virtual seminar is free of charge

Organizing Committee of Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis Mahavidyalaya
Dr Shyamal Karmakar Principal; Dr Kamala Mitra IQAC Coordinator;
Dr Sreyasi Chatterjee Convener, Women’s Cell;
Members of Women’s Cell: Dr Alpana Ray; Dr Sukanta Das;
Dr Somdatta Ghosh; Dr Uttara Kundu (Choudhuri);
Dr Nabanita Basu; Ms Nandita Bhaumik Choudhury;
Ms Indrani Dey; Ms Piyali Saha
Invitee Members: Mr Debadyuti Karmakar; Ms Puja Biswas;
Ms Suparna Dey; Mr Samrat Sur; Ms Deepmala Chakraborty

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Resource Persons

 Dr Girija Borker Economist, Gender Program Coordinator, Development Impact Evaluation unit, The World Bank	 Dr Jane Pillinger Independent gender expert, Visiting Professor in Gender Studies at the London School of Economics, Senior Visiting Fellow in Social Policy at the Open University in the UK	 Professor Mary Elavinakuzhy John Acting Director and Professor Centre for Women’s Development Studies New Delhi	 Ms Ruchira Goswami Assistant Professor (Social Sciences) The WB National University of Juridical Sciences Kolkata, India
 Professor Rukmini Sen Director, Centre for Publishing Professor, Sociology, School of Liberal Studies Ambedkar University, Delhi	 Ms Susmita Mukherjee Director Gender and Adolescent Girls, Project Concern International New Delhi	 Dr Anindita Chatterjee CGC Coordinator, Clinical Psychologist Peerless Hospital and B.K.Roy Research Centre Kolkata	 Dr Nandita (Banerjee) Dhawan Director Department of Women’s Studies Jadavpur University

Sharing of Innovative Strategies and Best Practices:
Ms Shreyashi Sharma and **Ms Neel Sengupta**; Centre for Studies in Gender and Sexuality; Ashoka University, Haryana
Nazariya: A Queer Feminist Resource Group, Delhi NCR

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9:47

meet.google.com/cjv-rjbx-ktj

Girija S. Borker is presenting

Mulayam Sarkar and 29 more

Paid work: employment

- Globally about 1 out of every 2 adult women participates in the labor force, compared to 3 out of every 4 men.
- In India, men match the global average but only 1 out of 5 adult women participate in the labor force.
 - India has had one of the lowest rates of female labor force participation in the world and also in South Asia.

Country	Rate (%)
Afghanistan	28.8
Pakistan	25.2
India	23
Sri Lanka	28
Maldives	33.8
Pakistan	38.8
Nepal	53.7
World	48.8

Understanding The Complex Issue Of Gender Violence Amidst Lockdown™ Indian Council of So

Keynote Session 1: Dr Girija Borker

meet.google.com/cjv-rjbx-ktj?authuser=0

jane pillinger is presenting

Carrying out a risk assessment on domestic violence?

- Always carry out the risk assessment with the survivor and ensure confidentiality. Address risks for a survivor, for example,;
 - Travelling to and from work
 - In the car park, public places and parts of the workplace where a perpetrator can have access
 - From phone and digital harassment (text, email, online and social media)
 - In relation to a survivors capacity to work to her full potential, taking account of impact of domestic violence on time off work, productivity etc.
 - Risks for co-workers
 - Risks where a survivor and perpetrator are in the same workplace
- In drawing up a safety plan, involve the survivor, her supporters (e.g. a trade union representative or advocate) and relevant managers, and hold regular meetings with her to assess security risks, monitor changes in or escalation of the risk.

"Decoding the Shadow Pandemic: A Virtual Sem..."

People (41)

IN CALL

- SREYASI CHATTER... (You)
- Alpana Ray
- Amrapali Jogdand
- AMRITA
- amruta magar
- ANZLA BHATTACHARYA
- Bhasha Roy
- Dipannita Das
- Dr Arpita Chatterjee
- Gopal Halder

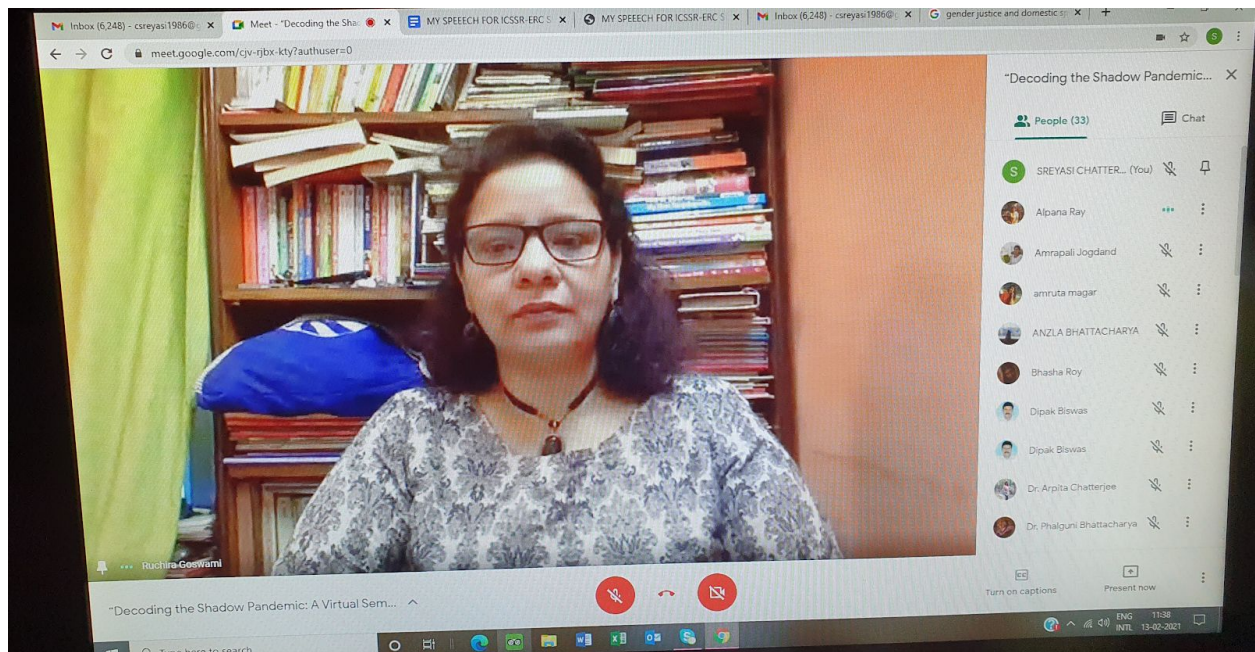
Turn on captions

jane pillinger is presenting

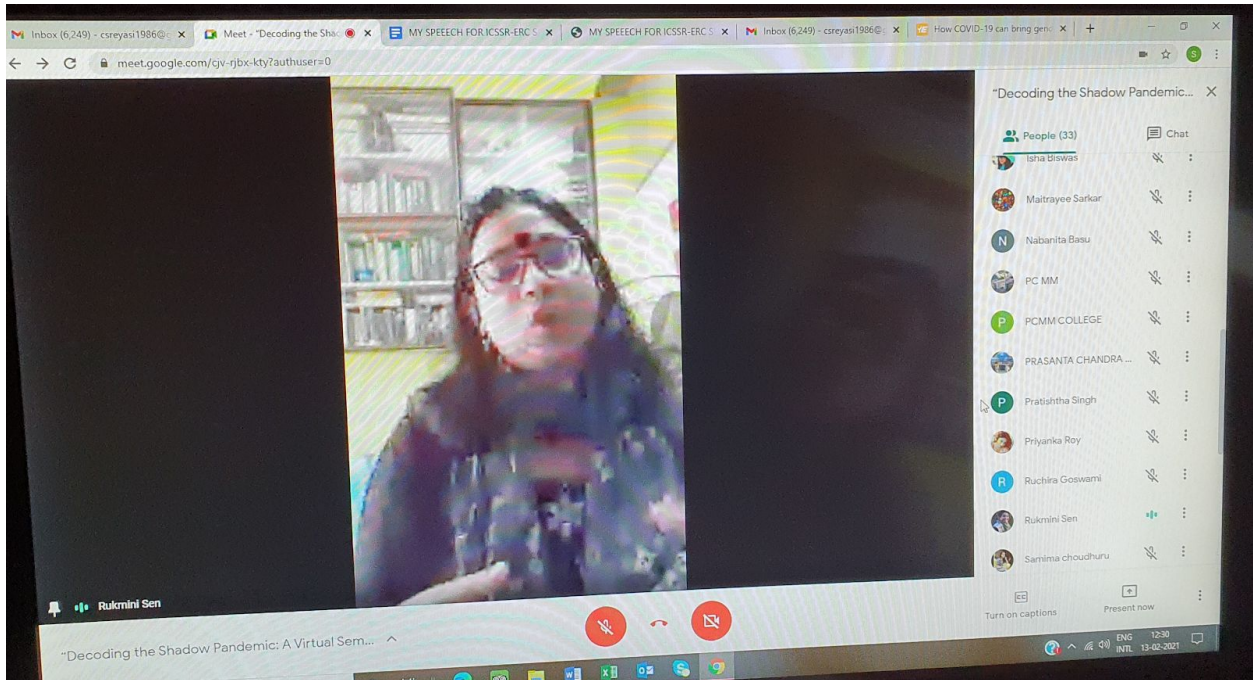
Keynote Session 2: Dr Jane Pillinger



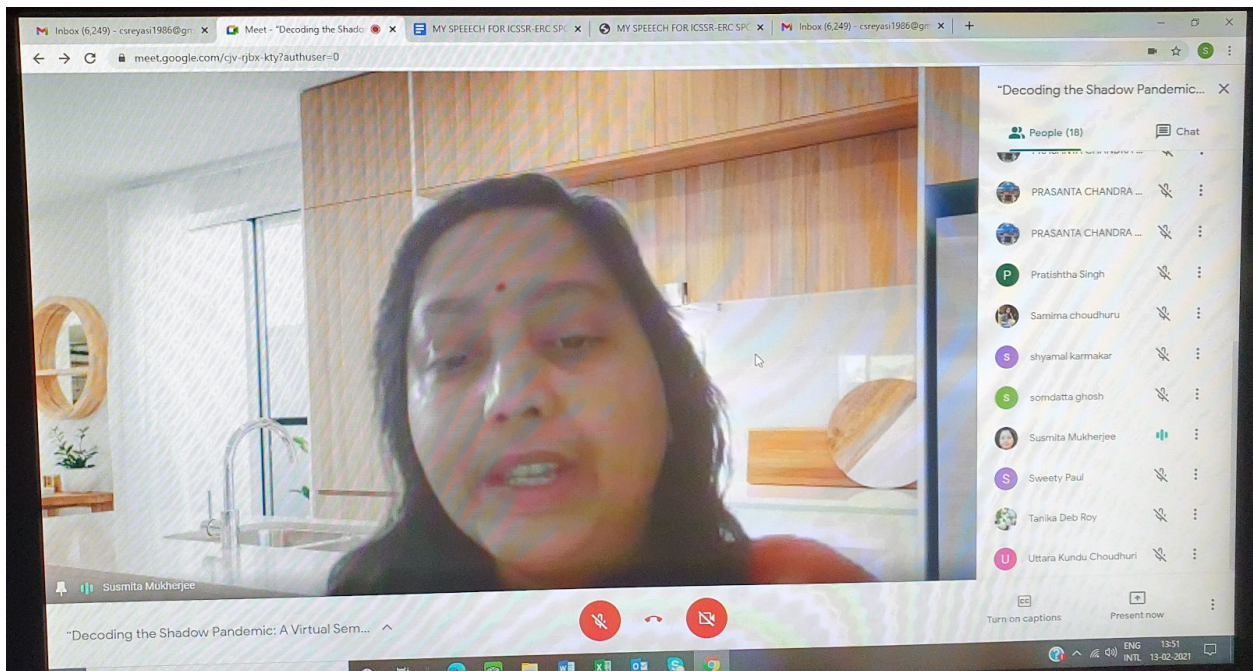
Session 1: Gender Justice to cope with the Shadow Pandemic Speaker 1: Prof Mary E John



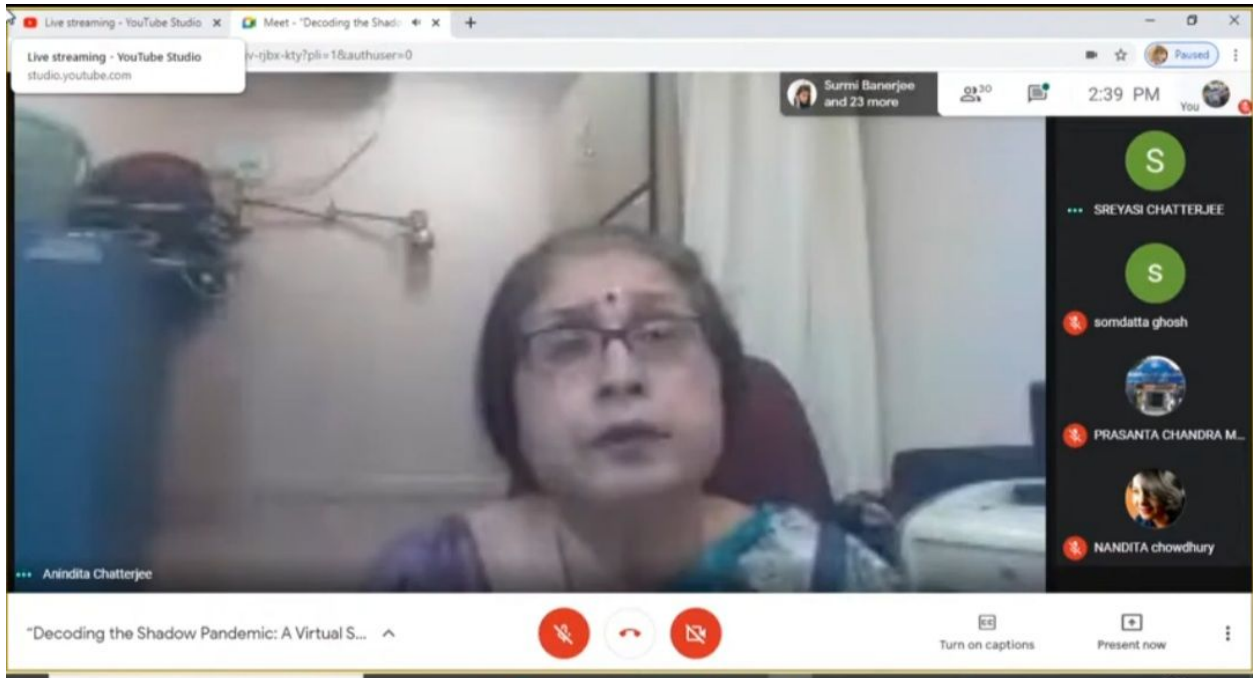
Session 1: Gender Justice to cope with the Shadow Pandemic Speaker 2: Ms Ruchira Goswami



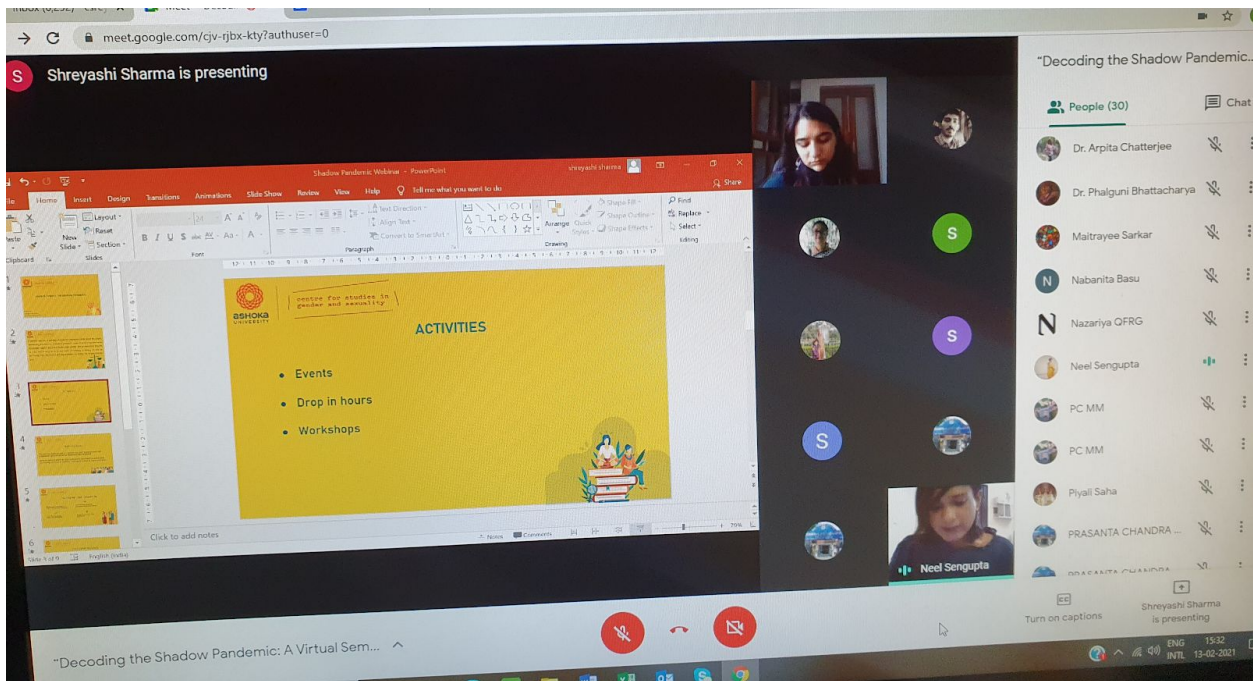
Session 1: Gender Justice to cope with the Shadow Pandemic Speaker 3: Prof Rukmini Sen



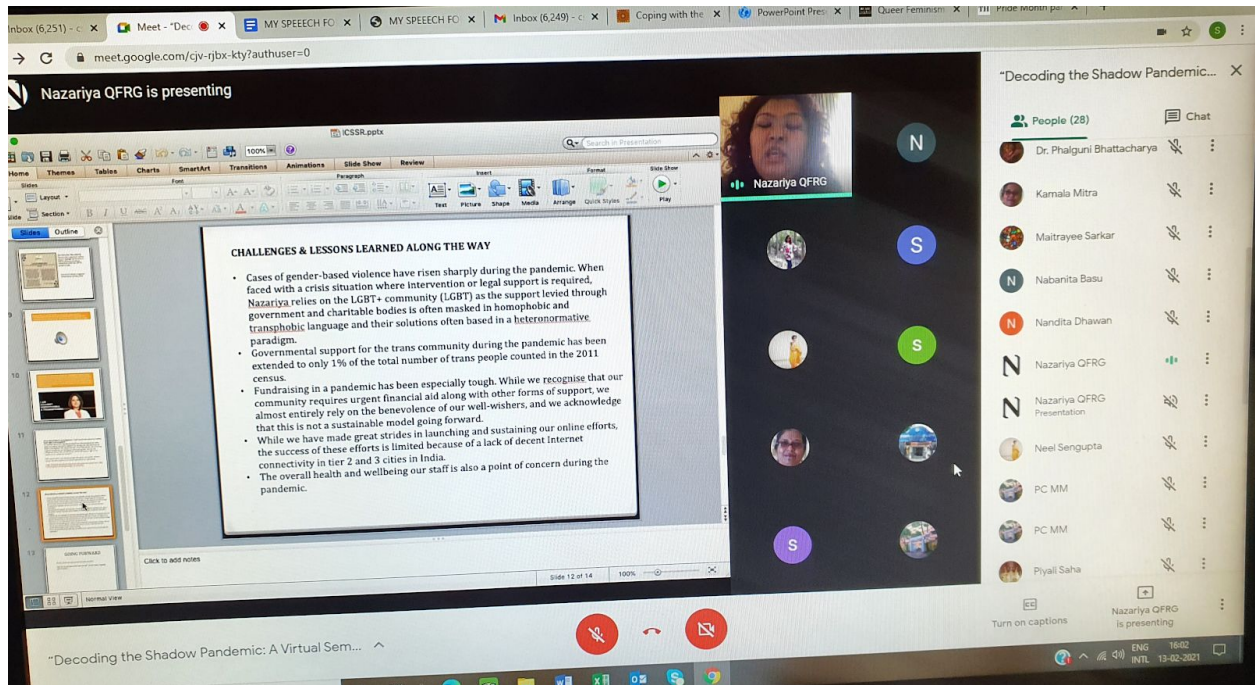
Session 2: Support Services to cope with the Shadow Pandemic Speaker 1: Ms Susmitha Mukherjee



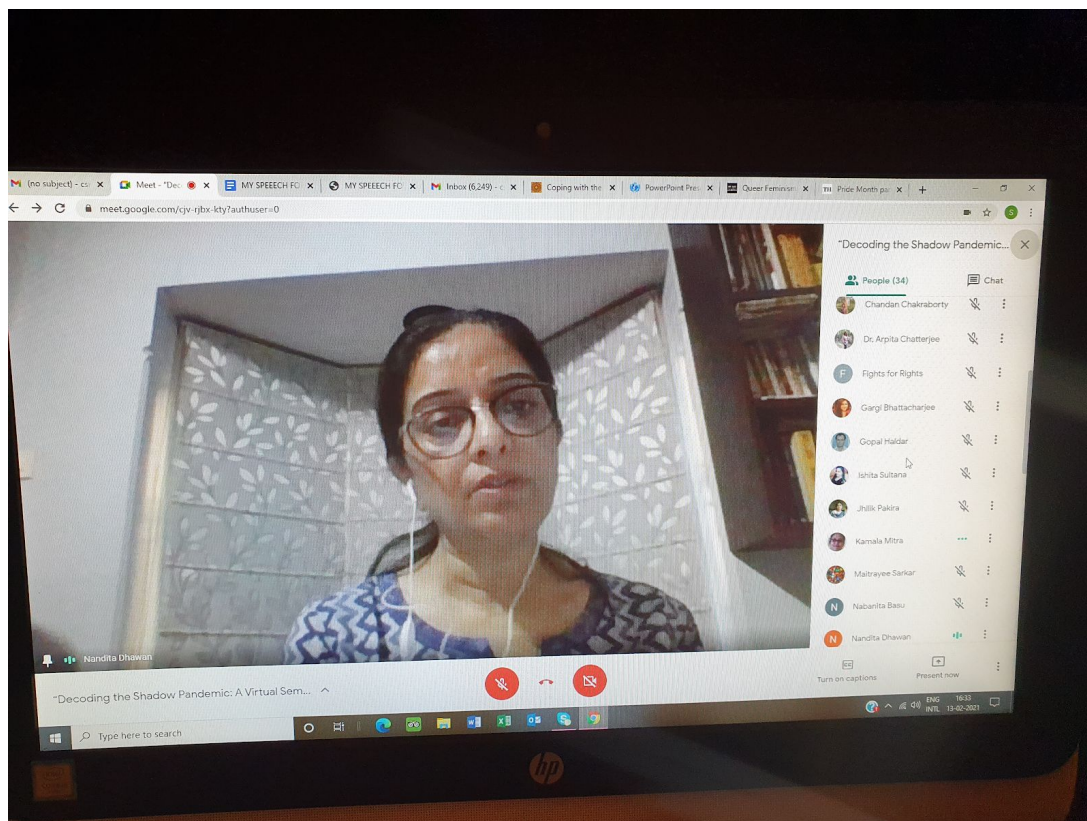
Session 2: Support Services to cope with the Shadow Pandemic Speaker 2: Dr Anindita Chatterjee



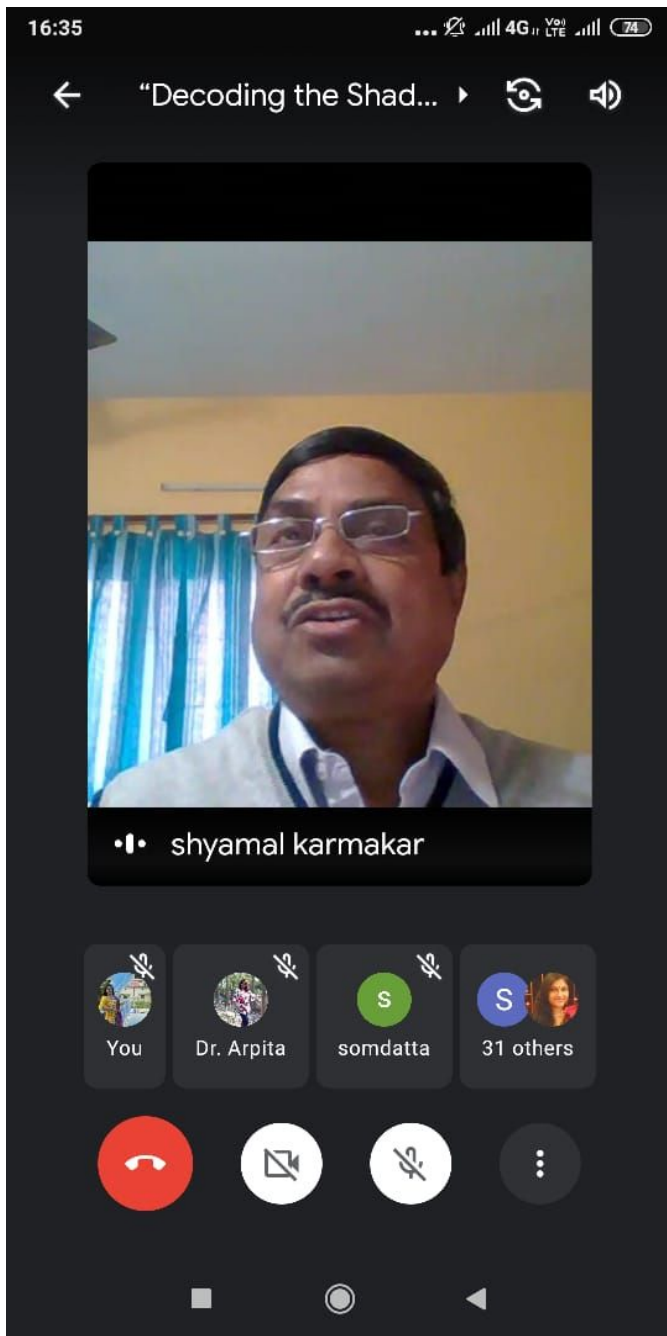
Session 3: Sharing of Innovative Strategies and Best Practices: Presentation 1: Ms Shreyashi Sharma and Ms Neel Sengupta



Session 3: Sharing of Innovative Strategies and Best Practices: Presentation 2: Ms Rituparna Borah



Valedictory Session: Dr Nandita (Banerjee) Dhawan



Concluding Note: Dr Shyamal Karmakar