Event Report
Menstrual Hygiene Day
July 19, 2017

Organised by:
MHM Working group Pakistan
# Table of Contents

Abbreviations and Acronyms

1. Executive Summary

2. Introduction to Menstrual Hygiene day

3. Theme

4. MH Day Proceedings

   4.1 Opening remarks by Ms. Ellen Van Kalmthought Chief Ed. - UNICEF

   4.2 Brief Remarks by Ms. Hina Kausar - MHM Co- Chair

   4.3 Keynote Address by Mr. Khalid Hussain Magsi

   4.4 Documentary by Real Medicine Foundation (RMF)

   4.5 Panel Discussion: Narrowing the Cross-sectoral Gaps for effective MHM

   4.6 Unveiling MHM champions and MHM mobile App

   4.7 Animation showcasing

   4.8 Experience sharing by Provincial MHM WG representatives

   4.9 MHM role play by students - Pakistan Cambridge School Rawalpindi

   4.10 Distribution of the shields to the guests

   4.11 Address by Mr. Syed Abu Ahmad Akif

   4.12 Vote of Thanks

5. Annexures

   Annex-01 Event Invite and Agenda

   Annex-02 Event Detailed Agenda

   Annex-03 Facebook Page of MHM Working Group Pakistan

   Annex-04 Media Coverage Snapshot

   Annex-05 Event Images
**Abbreviations and Acronyms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MHM</td>
<td>Menstrual Hygiene Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPA</td>
<td>Member Provincial Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WASH</td>
<td>Water Sanitation and Hygiene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children's Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nation Educational, Scientific &amp; Cultural Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoCC</td>
<td>Ministry of Climate Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCI</td>
<td>Save the Children International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGAHE</td>
<td>Association for Gender Awareness &amp; Human Empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSPN</td>
<td>Rural Support Programs Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRSP</td>
<td>National Rural Support Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRC</td>
<td>International Rescue Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIEDAR</td>
<td>Pakistan Institute for Environment-Development Action Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRSP</td>
<td>Integrated Regional Support Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HANDS</td>
<td>Health and Nutrition Development Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WCCI</td>
<td>Women Chamber of Commerce &amp; Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WSSCC</td>
<td>Water Supply &amp; Sanitation Collaborative Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDGs</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDGs</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMS</td>
<td>Pre-Menstrual Stress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR</td>
<td>Public Relation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEC</td>
<td>Information, Education &amp; Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMF</td>
<td>Real Medicine Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QAF</td>
<td>Quick Action Foundation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1 Executive Summary

In Pakistan, MH day is celebrated from the platform of the MHM Working Group, MHM Working Group, a coalition of humanitarian organizations working to champion menstrual hygiene rights in Pakistan. About 100 representatives from government, international and national development organizations, civil society, youth and media convened at the Pakistan Institute of Parliamentary Services (PIPS), in Islamabad to commemorate Menstrual Hygiene Day. A key objective of the event was to promote sharing and learning of experiences from various interventions being conducted across the country and at the same time engage government to take a more proactive stand to implement policies and fund MHM in Pakistan. The discussions will culminate in policy recommendations for relevant ministries in Pakistan to support necessary actions to improve the status of MHM in the country.

Mr. Rizwan, the Master of Ceremony, welcomed the esteemed guests and appreciated their efforts for coming forward together for such a critical cause, which otherwise is overlooked. The event provided a platform to put a spotlight on an issue which is hardly addressed in Pakistan yet and sadly not all adolescent girls and women have access to the facilities they need to manage their menstrual cycles.

In Opening remarks by Ms. Ellen Van Kalm, she said “Despite Pakistan’s gains in meeting its water and sanitation development goals, we are still failing millions of adolescent girls and young women who do not have access to the most basic necessities for managing their periods. As a result of this, and lack of basic knowledge on menstruation, their education suffers. We all know that many girls skip school during their periods, and that some of them eventually drop out.”

Ms. Hina Kausar, co-chair MHM Working Group Pakistan in her brief remarks said that “The objective of the MHM Working Group is to raise cognizance of creating an enabling policy environment for prioritizing MHM in the programming agendas and to support the Government in the implementation of MHM interventions.”

The keynote address was given by Mr. Khalid Hussain Magsi – Chairman Standing Committee on National Health, Services, Regulations and Coordination. The event was also graced with the presence of Mr. Syed Abu Ahmad Akif, Secretary Ministry of Climate Change Government of Pakistan. Other representatives from government included a host of experts from across health, academia, media, donors, private and the humanitarian sector. Speaking at the occasion, Mr. Magsi said: “Women and girls miss out opportunities in life because of not being able to handle this part of their life in a dignified manner. If we have to make health and education inclusive and equitable by 2030 in Pakistan, we have to focus on MHM needs of our girls and women”.

A research documentary was shown by Real Medicines Foundation (RMF). RMF in collaboration with University of Columbia and UNICEF worked on Gender, Poverty and social inclusion, maternal and child health sector and Menstrual Hygiene Management. It was evident from the research that knowledge regarding MHM is insufficient in Pakistan.

A panel discussion focusing on the impact of lack of proper menstrual hygiene on the education of adolescent girls was organized. Panelists included government representatives including Mr. Ali Raza, Advisor to the Prime Minister’s Education Reforms Program, Ms. Khawar Mumtaz, Chairperson of the National Commission on Women Status, Mr. Syed Ayub Qutub, Chief Executive PIEDAR and Dr. Naseem Ashraf, Senior Gynecologist who delved into much needed solutions to tackle the taboo and associated problems that females especially young adolescent girls face.

Ms. Rosemary- Gender Specialist UNICEF introduced three MHM Champions. These were Sana Mehmood—Captain of the National Women’s Basketball Team, Kiran Khan – Olympic Swimmer, Hajra Khan – Captain of the National Women’s Football team. These three champions not only worked hard in sports but also advocated MHM on different platforms. They shared their experiences regarding MHM, challenges and management of periods. Their inspiring thoughts work in their respective fields was a great appreciation.
Animation “Sharmao nahn baat Karo” on MHM was shown by WaterAid Pakistan on menstruation. The message was to educate and aware girls on MHM and emphasis was put on girl's education.

Provincial MHM working representatives form Punjab and KP also participated. Mr. Imran Ullah Khan focal Person MHM WATSAN cell KP and Mr. Nadir Khalique, Additional Secretary Women Development Department – Punjab.

The role play performance addressed the challenges and lack of information related to MHM. The performance began within the school girls where they discussed one of their class fellows who was absent from the school. The girls came to school for telling her fellows that she was leaving school due to improper toilet facilities and no management regarding menstruation in school. Upon these her other class fellows told her that now things have been changed and teachers are facilitating girls in educating about menstruation, also toilet facilities have also been improved.

The event was closed by Mr. Syed Abu Ahmad Akif - Secretary, Government of Pakistan Ministry of Climate Change. Sahih Bukhari Hadith named “Kitab ul Haiz”. Is specifically written on menstruation. Our culture is more dominant then our religion. this is the reason that we are still not talking on this issue due to cultural barriers. We as development workers, as government, parents, teachers need to educate our daughters on this specific thing so that they may not face challenges in their education and health.

Mr. Rizwan Thanked all of the participants, guests, speakers, panellist, development partners, teachers, parents to be part of the MHM day Celebrations.

The event was widely publicized by local media and on Twitter via the hashtag #MHMPakistan, the link is as follow:
https://twitter.com/wateraid/status/888048356001558528
https://twitter.com/hash/MenstrualHygieneDay?src=hash
http://menstrualhygieneday.org/events-3/event/mh-day-pakistan/

MHM Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/MHMWGPakistan/

Coverage in Newspapers:
https://www.dawn.com/news/1346449/11pc-more-girls-will-go-to-school-if-there-are-proper-sanitary-facilities
Introduction to Menstrual Hygiene day

Menstruation, also known as 'period' is primarily a monthly biological process of vaginal bleeding in women’s life; it is a transition from adolescence to adulthood and is a representation of reproductive wellbeing. Approximately, 52% of the total female population of the world, that makes roughly 26% of the total world population, falls in the reproductive age group. Out of an estimated population of 184.5 million in Pakistan, over 42 million (roughly 22%) are girls who are in the bracket of 10-19 years implying that most of them have started experiencing menstruation.

MH is a social concern which is urgent and calls fora collaborative effort formal key stakeholders. The onset of menstruation presents numerous challenges for schoolgirls as is evident in the rate of absenteeism and/or drop-outs, therefore addressing it requires a multi-pronged approach. Insufficient access to menstrual hygiene materials and inadequate sanitation facilities adversely impact girls’ learning experiences. Research has shown that marginalized girls can miss up to four consecutive days of schools every four weeks due to their menstrual cycle. This poses a dire need to explore the challenges faced by females that hamper their sense of self-efficacy and confidence when managing menstruation in a school setting, and to advocate community awareness on the prevalent MHM barriers in schools and at home to sensitize them about their role in promoting MHM in Pakistan. For this endeavour, identifying a day to commemorate MHM lays down the basis for domestic level recognition of May 28th as the day that acknowledges the right of females to hygienically manage menstruation in privacy, safety and with dignity.

The MH Day, therefore, has been launched to serve as a neutral platform bringing together relevant individuals, organizations, social businesses and the media to channel cohesive voice for females around the globe, in an effort to help break the silence around MHM.

3 Theme

The theme for2017 Menstruation Hygiene Day is: “Education about Menstruation Changes Everything”

Menstrual hygiene remains a taboo in many settings, with poor knowledge and misconceptions as great a challenge as access to adequate facilities. Better Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) is recognized as an important tool in making education a more accessible basic right for girls. Initiatives around the world are addressing adolescent girls’ menstrual hygiene management (MHM) needs in coordination with ongoing efforts to improve water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities and services in schools.

In Pakistan, studies showed that girls’ education is negatively affected due to unavailability of the girl-friendly toilets and menstruation management material in schools. Research has also shown that such unavailability also causes around 29% of girls of menstruating age can miss up to 20 days of school/year. This can further lead to the dropouts. ([https://www.facebook.com/unicefpakistan/posts/1034381436582093:0](https://www.facebook.com/unicefpakistan/posts/1034381436582093:0)).
4 MH Day Proceedings

Mr. Rizwan, the Master of Ceremony, welcomed the esteemed guests and appreciated them coming together for such a critical cause, which otherwise is overlooked. While emphasizing on the importance of MHM at school and community he quoted the definition of UNICEF and WHO that menstrual hygiene management as the articulation, awareness, information and confidence to manage menstruation with safety and dignity. Using safe and hygienic materials together with adequate water, and agents and spaces for washing and bathing and disposal with privacy and dignity.

The MH day outline was designed to ensure participation of parliamentarians, government line departments, UN, MHM Champions, civil society and academia. MH day invite and programme is attached as annex-1&2. Facebook Page, Media Coverage, Twitter, Event images and MHM Working group partners are annexed as 3,4,5, and 6 respectively.

It was also ensured that the panelists included relevant stakeholders from all walks of life.

4.1 Opening remarks by Ms. Ellen Van Kalmthought Chief Ed. -UNICEF

Opening remarks were delivered by Ms. Ellen Van Kalmthought who graciously thanked the Mr. Khalid Hussain Magsi Chief Guest, Mr. Nadir Khaliq Additional Secretary Women’s Development Department Govt. of Punjab, Mr. Imran Ullah focal point MHM in Water and Sanitation Cell Government of KP, fellow speakers, MHM Champions, panelists and members of the audience for participating at the event. She extolled this year's theme, Education about menstruation changes everything reflects the global education, lack of adequate resources including this information and myths about menstruation put really serious challenges through the health, education and dignity of girls. She further said that a research by Real Medicine Foundation shows that in most of the cases girls do not know about menstruation before getting their periods for the first time and as result girls are often stressed of the experience when they do not have information about menstruation. Despite Pakistan gains in meeting its water and sanitation development we are still failing addressing millions of girls and young women who do not have access to the most basic necessity for managing their periods. As a result, and lack of basic knowledge on menstruation, education also suffers. We all know that many girls skip schools during their periods and some eventually drop out. She quoted an example of a school in Bahawalpur district of Punjab. About three quarters of the girls stayed at home during their periods. UNICEF and one of the partners in Lodhran Pilot Project started working with teachers and girls on puberty and menstrual hygiene management in different schools. She mentioned example of a student of the same school named Aliya Mustafa- 13 years of age. She had her periods after getting session on menstruation in her school. She said I knew what was to do. She was not worried. She said: “It goes without saying that equipping girls with right information and right attitude will allow them to feel more confident and empowered in menstrual hygiene management in their peers and community”.

She further elaborated that it does not have to be a difficult experience for all of us. Periods are connected to all spheres of life from public health to education, to the environment and basic dignity. Unfortunately, not enough is done and now it is on all of us to find the momentum to change the status quo through mothers and teachers speaking freely to their daughters on menarche, to brothers and male students to support their sisters and female classmates, to fathers to ensure resources for their daughters to purchase the supply they need for menstruation.

She further lauded that MHM working group is now creating menstruation movement to advocate for every girl to be able to take right of going school, have a toilet facility she wants and needs. UNICEF expects the similar response from MHM provincial chapters, already have been formed in Punjab, KP and Balochistan. This is very important step in right direction. It
will chart the path for future government policies that are needed to create enabling environment to support MHM for adolescent girls and young women.

4.2 Brief Remarks by Ms. Hina Kausar- MHM Co-Chair
Ms. Hina Kausar on behalf of MHM Working group welcomed the guests. She said that this is the third time we have gathered to celebrate MHM day under the umbrella of MHM working group at national level. In these three years journey; working group members who equally represent different organizations working actively to bring this taboo issue in mainstream development discourse. The journey was challenging ever since the group inception. The group has grown to a network of 20 organizations. In these years UNICEF provided leadership and coordinated with the sector partners, government and the other stakeholders. For this year this leadership has been passed to Water Aid and other working group members are equally striving for the same cause that is: “to bring the change in the lives of adolescent girls particularly in the schools and in communities”. In this year when Water Aid have had taken this group leadership at National level and we have three Provincial Working groups in Punjab, KP and Balochistan respectively. Equally this year one of the Working Group member organizations WSSSC organized training of trainers on MHM in Nepal to build the capacity of Group members.

She further elaborated that implementing this intervention specially in this culture and social context is challenging. The MHM focus is very new in the group to invest in learning effective MHM interventions, Mainstreaming MHM in existing projects and WASH programs. Realization of social aspects and dynamics is again important aspect that needs to be explored by MHM Working Group. More MHM integrations are to be done and synergies are needed to be formed by the working Group. Ministry of Climate Change (MoCC) provided support at national level. We are also thankful to provincial governments for their cooperation and support. In the last she added that “we believe that cross sector ownership will help to address this issue in more articulated way equally both in education and in health sectors”.

4.3 Keynote Address by Mr. Khalid Hussain Magsi, Chairperson of the Standing Committee National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination

Mr. Khalid Hussain Magsi expressed that he is proud to be the part of this event. MHM is a taboo topic in our society. Despite this, Islam openly talks about it. This is very important thing in one’s life and needs to be catered on priority. Girls lose opportunities in life because of not handling this thing in a dignified way. While highlighting the importance of education he added that girls should not remain uneducated due to menstruation as they are naturally different from boys. There is a need to create a conducive environment in schools and workplaces for girls and women to let them avail and create opportunities. He further said, we as government are fully determined to create such environment for girls and women of Pakistan in all spheres of life. We have to make health and education inclusive and available and we have to focus on MHM needs of girls and women. He showed his gratitude to MHM Working Group and RMF for inviting him to the event.

4.4 Documentary by Real Medicine Foundation (RMF).

This documentary was prepared by Real Medicine Foundation (RMF) based on a research. RMF in collaboration with University of Columbia and UNICEF worked on Gender, Poverty and social inclusion, maternal and child health sector and Menstrual Hygiene Management. This documentary was on Menarche; when girls get periods for the first time in their lives. In this documentary, girls described herself after getting her periods for the first time. She was totally unaware about the menstruation. It further shows that the toilet facility in the schools was not clean as well. She got terrified with the bleeding and could not tell her teacher and
mother. She remained confused and did not go to school having no confidence. She assumed that she would never be able to attend school anymore.

It is evident from the research that knowledge regarding MHM is insufficient in Pakistan. Ms. Afshan, National Research Consultant RMF said while talking about the menstruation in schools; girls told that this is very difficult to discuss menarche and puberty issues. research findings told that cross sectional survey in Pakistan shows 60% girls reported limited movement, problem in socializing and religious practices because of menstruation. 70% girls do not use hygienic material to manage menstruation, poor nutrition and misconceptions related to food intake. menarche is jeopardizing the young girls in Pakistan. It is important to understand relationship between menstruation, education and health to address this gap. While talking about Puberty Book by RMF she told that this is scientific and practical book. Teachers could be taught, parents could be taught on Puberty and MHM issues. she further said that Teachers, elder’s sisters, cousins should be consulted by the young girls to have an understanding related to MHM.

4.5 Panel Discussion: Narrowing the Cross-sectoral Gaps for effective MHM

Major Areas highlighted as follows.
- Policy reforms, Social & Culture myths, taboos and norms,
- Physical and psychological implications,
- Social and educational outcomes,
- Policy reforms and school programming

The MH day commemoration included a panel discussion that highlighted MHM in the milieu of education, Health and Hygiene. The session was moderated by Nadeem Malik. The panel discussion was followed by Q&A session where the audience directed questions to the panelists individually and generally as well, leading to a healthy discussion. Mr. Nadeem started with an overview of the MHM discussion. Its implications on Health and Education. How are we given the fact that MHM has implications in health, Education both physical, mental and reproductive health? How do we see this type of integration in various sectors and how best we can do in SDG era where we need acceleration and integration? Health in shorter term, education in medium and economic in broader term.

Why does menstrual need continue to be socially neglected and remain a taboo despite being as basic human right of adolescent girls?
Syed Ayub Qutub: As my organization PIEDAR is working in different schools, our colleagues are telling that Menarche is taking place in a very young age now, before it used to happen at the age of 14 years. Now upper primary girls are to be told because it is happening in the age of 10 years. Mother and teachers need to be more prepared. Unfortunately, teachers do not take this responsibility. Mothers are also needed to be educated. They have old mind sets regarding menstruation. This is not only girls issue, this is the issue of whole society as well. If see the theme education can change everything; we did not follow this in Pakistan. Education empowers girls, give new thinking and above all education gives self-awareness. As Aristotle said: “More thy Self”. We need to excel in this sector. This is responsibility of all of us, teachers, parents and leaders.

What are the key challenges of delivering MHM services in school setting and how they impact social and learning outcomes?
Mr. Ali Raza: Approximately 2.2 billion of global population do not have access of adequate sanitation. We need to see this issue in development viz a viz schools. 11 % more girls would go to schools if there are proper sanitation facilities. Under Prime Ministers Education reforms program, we saw serious absenteeism and dropouts of girls in the schools after primary. Unfortunately, there is no mechanism where we can ask parents about this. We found two reasons while researching the reasons. Firstly, Sanitation issues that includes conducive environment, boundary wall etc and secondly access to school which means the distance from
home to school. Parents at certain age of their girls are not comfortable in sending them to school being far. Awareness raising is required even private/elite schools do not have ample awareness schemes.

What are the health impact of inadequate MHM?
Dr. Naseem Ashraf: There are some common infections including Urinary Tract Infections, skin infections, Reproductive tract infection and allergies etc which could be caused by poor hygiene practices also they all have to do with materials being used as sanitary pads and they may be treated as well. Human body has a fantastic way of coping with the natural things happening to it.

What contributions does improved MHM have towards girls’ lives, empowerment and reducing gender inequality? As we just discussed there are implications on girl’s education, their learning outcomes discontinued, there are also mobility issues as well.

What do you think of this whole happening affect?
Ms. Khawar Mumtaz: We see that girl’s physical changing process is difficult stage and girls usually do not know about it. There are Physical as well as Psychological impacts. Mothers should tell girls about Menarche, marriage, pregnancy. But this is not the case, girls either get information from peers, elder sisters and sometimes relatives. There is a communication barrier between mothers and daughters.
There is a traditional custom in our society that when menarche happens it is thought that girl is ready for marriage. But if menarche is happening in ten years of age; how can a girl get married. Under law there are some regulations that restraint child marriages. Secondly girls and parents should know that this is a biological thing and should not consider it a taboo. Thirdly, for girl’s school dropout rate we need to see the washroom facilities and MHM material availability in the schools. Fourthly, life skill based education has to be introduced as part of curriculum.

What interventions can help to influence social norms across rural and urban population? How MHM working Group can play role in terms of socialization, particularly when rural and urban dynamics are different?
Syed Ayub Qutub: we need to have a strong social mobilization in this context. While quoting an example from Madya Pradesh-remote area of India he told that he met a 19 years old girl in a conference. she was assigned to go in remote areas of Madya Pradesh to help and promote MHM. I wondered how would she do it. He met her again after 2 years. she told that she went to remote villages she not only informed but empowered women. Due to her strong mobilization village women formed their own factory of sanitary napkins. It is a matter of record that she succeeded admirably with those women. They were able to provide sanitary napkins at a half of the price of commercial napkins. It continued to be flourishing, sustainable enterprise of women self-help groups. If a girl from such a remote area can do this, why can’t we? This needs struggle, we have so many blessings one out of these is a progressive enlightened belief system. We would not have any problem in talking on these issues. So MHM Working Group members can contribute a lot.

What are policy measures that are needed to improve school-based projects and programmes? Education policy is under progress what do you think MHM Working Group can help into it at Federal level and what are the policies and plans those need to be considered for future perspectives?
Mr. Ali Raza: After devolution, education is now a provincial and federal chapter. Under Prime Minister Education Reform Program, there is three-pronged strategy. This includes Conducive environment, Access, and Quality of teaching and learning environment. Life skills education is unfortunately missing in the curriculum. Another important work by Ministry of education is good, despite of the devolution is the inter-provincial education minister conference in which all of the minister and secretaries are included. They have realised that the current curriculum which is in practice was made in 2006 and implemented in 2009. Curriculum should be revised
after every three to four years in which contents are also changed. What we have done is to join hands with the federating units and create a model to integrate life skills and MHM in curriculum in a subtle way. It will be having global citizenship, patience etc. This seems ambitious but we are trying that till December 2017 primary level curriculum would be revised and next year further 6 to 10th grade curriculum will be revised. When curriculum will be revised contents will be changed then there will be a need to train teachers accordingly and here I think MHM Working group organizations will have to play role.

How the MHM WG can capitalize SDGs to promote MHM among general public and decision makers? You have been involved in process of SDGs particularly from Gender perspective. What do you think how MHM Working group can be incorporated in these SDGs?

Ms. Khawer Mumtaz: SDGs are interconnected in different ways. When we talk about women empowerment, participation, education, health conditions, contribution in economy SDGs 3, 4 and 5 are interrelated. Women’s health is extremely important in terms of productivity, participation in government, civic and political life. So, there is no reason why we cannot address all. For every SDG; indicators are developed which are very closely looking women’s reproductive health and rights. MHM should be looked as a part of women’s health right for healthy body.

As it is a normal process, how a Practitioner can work to reduce the thinking that it is an issue?

Dr. Naseem: The most difficult part in a life of a human being is a change that takes place in one’s body. Body has new sets of hormones. Our parents and teachers do not prepare a child. Changes in body are coming earlier as compared to previous findings. Only education can change the thinking. Internet, electronic media, may be used as creating awareness on this particular topic.

The panellists were also questioned by the audience about MHM issues in Pakistan. They are documented below.

Ms. Sabahat asked question to Dr. Naseem

What is dysmenorrhea and how should it be dealt?

Dr. Naseem Ashraf: Dysmenorrhea is menstrual cramps or a pain during menstruation. It is not a big issue. If we prepare the girls about menstruation then they may cater it in a fine way.

Ms. Rida from National Defense University asked Question to Ms. Khawar Mumtaz

Fallacies about menstruation is historically adopted by mothers and even by teachers. Do you think these ideas need to be reconstructed? If yes then who will take this responsibility? These ideas surely need to be changed now. this can be done through the education. Awareness campaigns through print and electronic media. This is not a responsibility of one person, teachers, mothers’ doctors’ elder sisters are equally responsible in educating the young and adolescent girls.

Mr. Rao Bashir from Rozan organization asked question to Mr. Ali Raza

As you said that incorporating life skills education in curriculum in a subtle way due to its sensitivity is under consideration by education ministry. While talking about the issues related to women and girls at policy level, what are the challenges you face and how we development practitioners can help you in this context?

When we are the development stage of anything, we engage the development partners that includes NGO sector, Advocacy groups, government and private sector people are there. Getting an acceptance on particular concept or idea how to take it forward is certainly an issue. While talking about life skills education to be the part of curriculum, we want to do and cannot ignore it. And after doing this we engage different organizations because we need to train the teachers as well because how to deliver the contents is another issue. Development partners are the best in telling that how to deliver this. We also try to go for win-win situation for the curriculum development team and this is also challenging. So, development partners may help us to take forward our development agenda where it comes to implementation.
4.6 Unveiling MHM champions and MHM mobile App

Ms. Rosemary – Gender and Development Specialist UNICEF moderated the session. She introduced the three Champions who have excelled both in sports and in menstrual hygiene management. While describing a Champion she said there are two principle meanings of this. Firstly, a champion is a person who has surpassed all rivals in a supporting context or other competition. Secondly, a champion is a woman or a man who vigorously support or defend a person for cause. In today's celebration, we are talking about menstrual hygiene management of women who is not intimated or held back by her periods. Who proceeds and does not allow community to held her back and to proceed with really ambitious goals. And persuades other goals and women to do the same.

Afterwards a short film was shown regarding these three incredible champions. The theme of the short film was “Be Bold- Be Free”.

1. Sana Mehmood—Captain of the National Women's Basketball Team
2. Kiran Khan – Olympic Swimmer
3. Hajra Khan – Captain of the National Women’s Football team

4.6.1 Sana Mehmood – Captain of the National Women’s Basketball team

Sana Mehmood is the captain of Pakistan National Women’s Basket Ball team and former captain of Pakistan National Women Football team. She is the only female athletes in Pakistan to be given the opportunity to lead both teams. she started playing football with her club " The Rising Star" in June 2007. In Sana's time as a captain in a team the club won the National Women Football Champion not for one, twice or thrice but five times. She is now leading the national basketball team to participate in the 12th South Asian Games in India and this is first time since 1995 that National Women Basketball team is formed and managed playing internationally outside Pakistan. Sana is not just an amazing athlete she is also a Fulbright graduate alumni with a master in International Development. She worked at Right to Play to promote support school activities and to teach life skills for youth from disadvantaged communities and in her free time she is a volunteer coach for young girls.

4.6.2 Kiran Khan- Olympic Swimmer

Kiran khan is known as “Golden Girl” to her fans. Kiran became member of Pakistan Swimming team in the year 2000. She’s been declared the national Junior Swimming Champion not just once, twice or thrice but eight times. Kiran is also the first internationally playing swimmer from Pakistan. She was a first Pakistani woman to win a gold medal in the South Asian Swimming Championship and the only female athlete of the country representing Muslim women in international sports in any country. She has won six international Gold Medals.

4.6.3 Hajra Khan - Captain of the National Women’s Football team

Hajra is a footballer who is the current Captain of Pakistan National Women’s Football Team. She joined the team in 2009 and became Captain in 2014. From a very early of her age Hajra’s dream was to become a professional athlete not necessarily the footballer. But she was so good with the football that she was discovered by a club coach Sadia Sheikh from Diya Women’s Football Club. Hajra made her debut at the age of 14 and scored nine goals in three games. She joined Balochistan United in 2014 and won the Pakistani Women Football Championship. She then accepted an offer in 2014 Sun Hotels and Resorts to play in Maldives with National Women’s League.
So, all three of our Champions have made history for this country and now are the fabulous role models for girls and women across Pakistan. They were invited on the stage to share their experiences.

First question was asked to Sana Khan - Captain of the National Women’s Basketball Team

**You have so much experience in team leadership what would you say is the most important quality for a female team leader in this country both generally and perhaps amicable with the menstrual hygiene management?**

It’s a pleasure to be here. Being women MHM is very close to my heart. Team Leadership, the only reason I was able to get where I am today is the team that is full of throw, the leader is as good as people of the team are. Two-way communication is encouraged, foster each other’s strengths, we uplift each other’s and trying to cover each other’s weaknesses. Creating a conducive environment of trust, mutual understanding and respect each other. If we have all this then there are no ill feelings or jealousy for anyone and we naturally become leaders. As far as MHM is concerned, this is really a challenging topic. She appreciated the efforts of development workers, teachers, NGO sector persons to address this issue. She further said that these people are the true champions because in rural areas where there is no awareness on this topic and making people understand is really a great challenge. We all need to support them. Lets break down all the boundaries to bring this agenda forward. Mothers, families, teachers, development workers can play a vital role.

Next question was asked to Kiran Khan- Olympic Swimmer

**As you have won six International Gold Medals. What is your advice to young girls who are striving to get one Gold Medal? This becomes difficult while girls are having periods.**

This is really challenging for us being in periods on our special sports days. Because when we are nervous we get periods before time. I was told about my mother as she is a gynecologist It’s not about winning the Gold Medal it’s all about the dedication for the sports. She said “if you love doing something, do that”. I am in sports that is very limited in Pakistan. not everybody can afford it. you may excel in any field it can be education, sports, doctor etc, you should have true dedication with your respective field. Just like my dream you become something in sports. My passion is for my sports, I studied for the sake of people because I was told to get education and degree as well by people. I did study to make some people happy and I did sports for my own happiness. My advice would be – be yourself and make yourself happy. You will automatically be dedicated the things with whom you are happy and would excel in it as well.

Hajra Khan- Captain of the National Women’s Football team was asked the following question.

**Girls cannot play football as they have periods. What would you say or advice to achieve dreams?**

We are living in such a society where girls are not supposed to play. I play sports ever since I was a kid. My extended family had serious concerns for my sports. Football is male dominated game and there is concept in our society that women are physically weak for playing sports. My parents are always encouraging for my sports. They sent me to India to play. In Pakistan, sports are not taken normal for a girl. The problem of our country is that we do not appreciate our local athlete.
A general question was asked to three of these MHM Champions

There are many girls who want to peruse their ambitious dreams even know that Menstrual Hygiene Management of period is challenging. What each of you would advise around achieving dreams.

Hajra Khan said My advice is “whoever we are and wherever we are, menstruation is not a barrier, we should focus on whatever we are doing and want to achieve”.

Kiran Khan said essence of women is to have periods. We are privileged and blessed. I would suggest that we have periods for about 5 days in a month. We have 25 days for doing anything. My periods won't stop me doing anything, these are my rest days. Periods are making us beautiful.

Sana Khan said girls need to love and embrace their body. We must understand our body. We should be happy that we are capable of doing so much. Women's body is a beautiful body. Menstruation is not a disease. As this is all natural and sooner we will realize this is natural we would celebrate it. We must learn about our body, as sports told me so many things about my body. I can run, I can jump, I am strong and this is why I play.

4.7 Animation showcasing

To better understand the menstruation for young girls Water Aid Pakistan prepared an Animation with a title “Sharmo nahn baat Karo”

4.8 Experience sharing by Provincial MHM WG representatives

Mr. Imran Ullah Khan WATSAN Cell, MHM Focal Person Govt. of KP: He said MHM journey at Provincial level is not so long. MHM Working established in KP in March 2017. MHM day was celebrated in May 2017 in University of Peshawar through this platform where other stakeholders also participated. The beauty of eth event was the participation of community members from Mardan, Chitral, Swabi and Swat. He further said that MHM is a challenging thing but with the passage of time and with awareness raising this will be streamlined in the development process.

Mr. Nadir Khaliq Additional Secretary Women’s Development Department- MHM Focal Person Govt. of Punjab: He said after 18th Amendment several laws have been passed in Punjab to empower women. He told that government of Punjab started interest free loan schemes and scholarships for the women to establish their enterprise and to continue education. He further elaborated that govt has approved 2500 schools for South Punjab to enroll more girls. While talking about the MHM he told that in March 2017 MHM Punjab chapter was formed with the efforts of Aagahi and MHM partners. Aagahi held meeting at Lahore in March 2017 with Planning and Development department, Education, PHED Women Development Department (WDD), social sector organizations and other MHM WG partners participated in the meeting. He said that this platform will be utilized for the advocacy activities for MHM. While talking about the MHM awareness raising he said in Punjab there is a Quaid e Azam institute for trainings of women, MHM information will be incorporated in the training manuals so that awareness may be raised. He emphasized that mothers, teachers, and elder sisters should work proactively in awareness raising of girls regarding MHM

4.9 MHM role play by students - Pakistan Cambridge School Rawalpindi
The importance of MHM was also highlighted through thought-provoking activities at the event. A role play was performed by the school girls showed MHM issues they face while in schools and how does it affect their education.

Role play highlighted menstrual health management issues which adolescent girls face in their school’s routine lives. The roleplay depicted the story of Nimra, a 15-year old school girl who is unable to go to school due to her periods. When the other class fellows asked Nimra that why was she not coming to Schools she revealed that she had left the school because she got menses. She said she got periods in school and all of her cloths were stained with blood. Nimra told this to school teacher and teacher scolded her and did not facilitate her. She also revealed that the toilet facility in the school is dirty and she could not use that.

Her school, which is a government-run property lacks proper infrastructure and has dilapidated toilets that raises many concerns for girls experiencing periods. When Nimra revealed all these issues with her class fellows, they told her that there are changes in the school. School management also thought about the frequent dropout of girls and decided few things in which MHM and toilet facility was the priority.

One of the school teachers joined the conversation and told that the toilets have been constructed, MHM Corners has been formed to facilitate the girls experiencing and going to experience menstruation. Talking regarding Menstruation girls ask few question to teacher which she replied.

**Q.1 what is period?**
Periods or menses is the blood discharge from girl’s body. It starts in the girls from 8 to 10 years and stops at the age of 45 to 50 years.

**Q.2 what are symptoms of periods?**
There are so many symptoms. It varies, some experience headache, dizzying, vomit, less and more appetite, pain in lower abdomen, fatigue etc are the common symptoms of menstruation.

**Q.3 why should we not take bath; drink milk and eat meat during menstruation? Is it right?**
No this is not true. We should eat everything. We should drink more water, should take bath with Luke warm water. If someone has pain then painkiller could be taken as well.

**Q.4 why do girls leave schools? What are the reasons?**
There are so many reasons for this. These include: absence of toilet facility in schools, lack of guidance related to menstruation from teachers and parents, facilities for menstruation like MHM corners, presence of male teachers in schools.

After all this conversation Nimra said that she is satisfied from the school now and will let her mother know about all the changes in the school. so that she may join the school and continue her education.

In concluding of role play teacher said “I would like to say something about it. Allah in Quran openedly told on menstruation, then why do we feel shy and embarrassed while talking on it. We all need to understand that this is natural process and there is nothing to be ashamed off. I request all mothers and teachers; we being together make girls confident so that they may pass through this process easily. She also requested to the authorities to include MHM in the Curriculum. Girls are future mothers and Menstruation should not be a hurdle in the process of development our country”.

**4.10 Distribution of the shields to the guests**

Shields were distributed among guests’ speakers and panellist, school girls and teachers.

**4.11 Address by Mr. Syed Abu Ahmad Akif - Secretary, Government of Pakistan Ministry of Climate Change**
He said that for Muslims Cleanliness is half of our Deen and we have delegated this responsibility to non-Muslims. Being a nation, we have so many issues including, injustice, corruption, health education, and, intolerance in the society. The reasons of all these issues is being away from Islamic teachings. We are a confused nation. When we talk about menstruation, it is clearly mentioned in Quran and one of the volumes of Sahih Bukhari Hadith named “Kitab ul Haiz”. Is specifically written on menstruation. Our culture is more dominant then our religion. this is the reason that we are still not talking on this issue due to cultural barriers. We as development workers, as government, parents, teachers need to educate our daughters on this specific thing so that they may not face challenges in their education and health.

4.12 Vote of Thanks

Mr. Rizwan Thanked all of the participants, guests, speakers, panellist, development partners, teachers, parents to be part of the MHM day Celebrations.
Menstrual Hygiene Management Group cordially invites you to the celebration of

Menstrual Hygiene Day 2017

Wednesday, July 19, 2017
at Pakistan Institute of Parliamentary Services,
Sector F-5/2, Islamabad

Scheme of the Day

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welcome Note</td>
<td>10:00 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening Remarks</td>
<td>10:05 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience Sharing by an Adolescent Girl</td>
<td>10:20 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panel Discussion</td>
<td>10:30 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showcasing MHM Interventions</td>
<td>11:20 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remarks by Guests</td>
<td>11:50 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concluding Remarks by Chief Guest</td>
<td>12:15 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vote of Thanks</td>
<td>12:30 pm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#MENSTRUALHYGIENEMATTERS
### Annex-02 Event Detailed Agenda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Agenda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:00 am</td>
<td>Welcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:10 am</td>
<td>Opening remarks by UNICEF Representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:20 am</td>
<td>Brief remarks by the MHM Working Group Co-Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 am</td>
<td>Key note address by Mr. Khalid Hussain Magsi, Chairperson of the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Standing Committee National Health Services, Regulations and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coordination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:40 am</td>
<td>Video documentary showcasing research findings on girls’ perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>on MHM in Pakistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:45 am</td>
<td>Panel Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Mr. Ali Raza - Advisor to the Prime Minister’s Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reforms Program, Government of Pakistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Ms. Khawar Mumtaz - Chairperson of the National Commission on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Mr. Syed Ayub Qutub - Chief Executive PIEDAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Dr. Naseem Ashraf - Gynecologist and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Obstetrician Medicis Islamabad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30 am</td>
<td>Unveiling MHM champions and MHM mobile App</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Kiran Khan – Olympic Swimmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Hajra Khan – Captain of the National Female Football team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Sana Mehmod – Captain of the National Female Basketball team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:40 am</td>
<td>Animation showcasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:50 am</td>
<td>Experience sharing by Provincial MHM WG representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 am</td>
<td>MHM role play by students from the Pakistan Cambridge School -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rawalpindi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:10 pm</td>
<td>Distribution of the shields to the guests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:20 pm</td>
<td>Address by Mr. Syed Abu Ahmad Akif - Secretary, Government of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pakistan Ministry of Climate Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30 pm</td>
<td>Vote of thanks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:40 pm</td>
<td>Closing of the Event</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annex-03 Facebook Page of MHM Working Group Pakistan

MHM Working Group Pakistan
@MHWGPakistan

Like this Page to show your support

Community
5 ★★★★★
Govt, humanitarian partners highlight need for proper Menstrual Hygiene Management in Pakistan

Our Correspondent
ISLAMABAD

About 100 representatives from government, international and national development organizations, civil society, youth and media convened in the Pakistan Institute of Parliamentary Services, in Islamabad to commemorate Menstrual Hygiene Day.

Menstrual Hygiene Day serves as a neutral platform to bring together individuals, organizations, social businesses and the media to create a united and strong voice for women and girls around the world, helping to break the silence around menstrual hygiene management (MHM). This year, the global theme of the day is “Education.”

A panel discussion focusing on the impact of lack of proper menstrual hygiene on the education of adolescent girls was organized. Participants included government representatives including Mr. Ali Anwar, Advisor to the Prime Minister’s Education Affairs Program, Ms. Shaukat Mustafa, Chairman of the National Commission on Women’s Affairs, Ms. Syeda Aziza Qureshi, Chief Executive of PREDAR, and Dr. Yasmeen Akbar, senior Gynecologist who delved into much needed solutions to tackle the taboos and associated problems that females especially young adolescent girls face. The event was organized by the MHM Working Group, a coalition of humanitarian organizations working to champion menstrual hygiene rights in Pakistan.

The keynote address was given by Mr. Khalid Hussain Magdi – Chairman Standing Committee on National Health, Services, Regulations and Coordination. The event was also graced with the presence of Mr. Syed Abid Ali, Adviser to the Prime Minister of Climate Change Government of Pakistan. Other representatives from government included a host of experts from across health, academia, media, donors, private and the humanitarian sector.

Speaking at the occasion, Mr. Magdi said “Women and girls miss out on opportunities in life because of not being able to handle this part of their life in a dignified manner. If we have to make health and education inclusive and equitable by 2030 in Pakistan, we have to focus on MHM needs of our girls and women.”

The event provided a platform to put a spotlight on an issue which is largely addressed in Pakistan yet sadly not all adolescent girls and women have access to the facilities they need to manage their menstrual cycles.

Echoing his words, UNICEF’s Chief of Education said, “Despite Pakistan’s gains in meeting its water and sanitation development goals, we are still failing millions of adolescent girls and young women who do not have access to the most basic necessities for managing their periods. As a result of this, and lack of basic knowledge on menstruation, their education suffers. We all know that many girls skip school during their periods and that some of them eventually drop out.”

The objective of the MHM Working Group is to raise awareness and create an enabling policy environment for prioritizing MHH in the programming agenda and to support the government in the implementation of MHM interventions,” said Ms. Hina Khan, co-chair MHM Working Group Pakistan.

A key objective of the event was to present sharing and learning of experiences from various interventions being conducted across the country and at the same time engage government to take a more proactive stand to implement policies and fund MHH in Pakistan. The discussions will culminate in policy recommendations for relevant ministries in Pakistan to support necessary actions to improve the status of MHH in the country.
Speakers call for menstrual hygiene management

ISLAMABAD:

The government and humanitarian partners at an event called for proper menstrual hygiene management (MHM) in Pakistan, a statement said on Wednesday.

The speakers highlighted the fact that even though half of the population menstruates, there were no existing policies supporting the creation and implementation of proper menstrual hygiene management conditions in Pakistan.

About 100 representatives from government, international and national development organisations, civil society, youth and media convened at the Pakistan Institute of Parliamentary Services in Islamabad to commemorate Menstrual Hygiene Day observed on May 28 across the world, the statement said.

The event was organised by MHM Working Group, a body of almost 20 national and international governmental, non-governmental organisations and UN agencies, to raise cognizance of creating an enabling policy environment for prioritising MHM in the programming agenda and to support the government in the implementation of MHM interventions.

Approximately 53 per cent of the total female population of the world, that makes roughly 25 per cent of the total population falls in reproductive age group. Out of estimated 184.5 million people in Pakistan, over 45 million (roughly 25%) are girls who are in the bracket of 10-19 years implying that most of them have started menstruating.

At the event Khalid Hussain Masri — Chairman Standing Committee on National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination said "Women and girls miss out opportunities in life because of not being able to handle this part of their life in a dignified manner. If we have to make health and education inclusive and equitable by 2030 in Pakistan, we have to focus on MHM needs of our girls and women."

Echoing his words, UNICEF’s Chief of Education Ellen Van Kalmthout said: “Despite Pakistan’s gains in meeting its water and sanitation development goals, we are still facing millions of adolescent girls and young women who do not have access to the most basic necessities for managing their periods.

A key objective of the event was to promote sharing and learning of experiences from various interventions being conducted across the country and at the same time engage government to take a more proactive stand to implement policies and fund MHM in Pakistan, said MHM Working Group Pakistan co-chair Ikram Kausar according to the statement.

Published in The Express Tribune, July 29th, 2017.
‘11pc more girls will go to school if there are proper sanitary facilities’

Asma Mejia
July 20, 2017


World Menstrual Hygiene Day is marked internationally on May 28. The theme this year, and for Wednesday’s event, was ‘Education about Menstruation Changes Everything’.

The event included short addresses from various speakers, as well as a panel discussion and a talk with MHM ‘champions’ Sana Mahmood, Hafsa Khan and Irum Khan.

The panel discussion was moderated by WaterAid policy and advocacy manager Nadia Almal and featured Advisor on Prime Minister’s Education Reform Programme Ali Rana, National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) Chairperson Khawar Mumusa, Pakistan Institute for Environment-Development Action Research CEO Sysal Ayub Qurban and gynaecologist and obstetrician Dr Nasnat Azhar.

Mr Rana said the challenge around menstruation is a challenge any educationist would face.

“The challenge is unfortunately, many times, when we really want to touch upon such subjects - especially public sector institutions - we tend to get branded by parents that we are not supposed to talk about such things,” he said.

He added, “11pc more girls would attend school if there are proper sanitation facilities in schools. When we started to work with WASH in this, particularly Prime Minister’s Education Reform Programme, we realised there is serious absenteeism in girls’ schools.”

He explained that there were two reasons for girls dropping out of school at this point in their education.

“One, essentially was the sanitation issue. Or putting it in a different context, providing a conducive environment for learning. So, for example, if there is no boundary wall or the toilets are not adequate in number, you see an issue with the attendance in these schools. The other issue was access. About girls, when they get to a certain age, their parents are very reluctant to send them to school through these other transport vehicles.”

NCSW Chairperson Khawar Mumusa said physical growth happens in stages, and menstruation is an important stage in the physical growth of a child, which girls are not capable to handle. She said this has a physical as well as a psychological impact on girls and can affect their self-confidence.

She added that the way people think about menstruation also needs to change. She referenced a statement made by Mr Qurban earlier in the discussion, who had noted that girls had started menstruating earlier in their lives than before, and said the custom of thinking of menstruation as a sign that a girl is ready for marriage cannot apply to girls at the age of nine or 16.

The event also featured a short discussion with the captain of the Pakistan Women’s Football team Sana Mahmood, Pakistan’s first international female veteran Erin Khan and captain of the Pakistan Women’s Football team Farha Khan, who won double MHM champions and awarded prizes. All these athletes discussed their experiences as women in sport.

The event was moderated by Geena Javovati for International Development CEO Kamran Narrt, who later introduced the mobile phone game MeetMe, which aims to educate people on menstruation.

Published in Dawn, July 20th, 2017
‘No policies in place for implementation of proper menstrual hygiene management conditions in Pakistan’

July 20, 2017
By: Samaa Web Desk
Published in: Health
Be the first to comment!

NEWS DESK: Despite the fact that half of the country’s population bleeds every month, there are no policies in place to support the creation and implementation of proper menstrual hygiene management conditions, said a press release issued by the Menstrual Hygiene Management (MNM) Working Group on Wednesday.

MNM Working Group is a coalition of humanitarian organisations working on menstrual hygiene management in Pakistan. It is anchored on a vision to create a society where girls and women can manage their specific water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) needs, with special focus on menstruation, with safety, dignity, privacy and pride. It comprises of MOCC, UNICEF, UN-Habitat, WaterAid, MuslimAid, Plan International, Real Medicine Foundation, PERKAR, Save the Children, IRC, Handicap International, AGAHE, NRSF, AIKMT, WSSCC, and UNGEI.

On Menstrual Hygiene Day 2017, around 100 representatives from the government, development organizations, civil society, youth and media convened at the Pakistan Institute of Parliamentary Services in Islamabad to commemorate the day.
Memorial Hygiene Day serves as a neutral platform to bring together individuals, organizations, social businesses and the media to create a united and strong voice for women and girls around the world, helping to break the silence around MHM. This year, the global theme of the day is “Education about Menstruation Changes Everything.”

A panel discussion focusing on the impact of lack of proper menstrual hygiene on the education of adolescent girls was organized with Ali Raza, Adviser to the Prime Minister’s Education Reform Program, Khawar Mumtaz, Chairperson of the National Commission on Women Status, Syed Ayes Qubib, Chief Executive of PELIAK and Dr. Islam Akhtar, an Islamabad based Gynaecologist Obstetrician, getting into the much-needed solutions to tackle the taboo and associated problems that women, especially young adolescent girls, face. The event was organized by the MHM Working Group.

According to research conducted on menstrual knowledge and practices of female adolescents in urban Karachi, less than 20% of girls surveyed understood that menstruation was a natural bodily function.

The keynote address was delivered by Khalid Hussain Magzi, Chairperson of the Parliament Standing Committee on Health, while Syed Abu Ahmade Akif, Secretary of the Ministry of Climate Change in the Government of Pakistan, gave the concluding remarks. The event provided a platform to shed light on an issue that is hardly addressed in Pakistan.

During his address, Magzi said, “Women and girls miss out on opportunities in life because of not being able to handle this part of their life in a dignified manner. If we have to make health and education inclusive and equitable by 2030 in Pakistan, we have to focus on MHM needs of our girls and women.”

Echoing his words, UNICEF’s Chief of Education said, “Despite Pakistan’s gains in meeting its water and sanitation development goals, we are still facing millions of adolescent girls and young women who do not have access to the most basic necessities for managing their periods. As a result of this, lack of basic knowledge on menstruation, their education suffers. We all know that many girls skip school during their periods, and that some of them eventually drop out.”

“The objective of the MHM Working Group is to raise awareness about creating an enabling policy environment for prioritizing MHM in the programming agenda and to support the government in the implementation of MHM interventions,” said Hina Kasim, co-chair of the MHM Working Group Pakistan.

A key objective of the event was to promote sharing and learning of experiences from stakeholders working on MHM across the country and at the same time engage government to take a more proactive stand to implement and fund policies that promote proper MHM in Pakistan. The discussions will culminate in policy recommendations for relevant ministries in Pakistan to support necessary actions to improve the status of MHM in the country.
"Education about #menstruation changes everything" - Pakistani gold-medal swimmer @KiranKhanLive, aka #GoldenGirl!
Annex-05 Event Images