



Menstrual Hygiene in Schools in South Asia:

2018-2020 update

Key Observations

- Efforts are underway to break the culture of silence and men are increasingly speaking about MH. Religious leaders have become MH champions by creating awareness and support through their religious teachings, but misinformation and negative taboos around MH still remain. Sports personalities continue to play an active role in MH-awareness raising.
- *The Puberty Book* has been endorsed in Sindh with plans for roll out in schools; other provinces have similar plans.
- MH indicators have been integrated into the EMIS in Sindh and Punjab provinces.
- Various initiatives are underway to develop business models and products for MH.



WASH in Schools (WinS) overview:

EMIS 2016-17

Drinking Water Availability

76% of schools have basic water supply

24% of schools have no water supply

Sanitation

76% of schools have limited sanitation facilities

23% of schools have no sanitation facilities

Hygiene

Data unavailable

Key Issues

- Under the Three Star Approach in 1,203 schools in four provinces, girl-friendly school toilet facilities include a wash basin for hand washing, a toilet, a mirror, an incinerator for proper disposal of used sanitary pads, and MH spaces.
- With DFID funding, WaterAid supported 160 girls' schools in three districts with girl-friendly sanitation facilities. WaterAid has also demonstrated this model in 60 schools in Islamabad with girl-friendly toilets and training, which the Government sees potential to scale.

MH Overview

Policies Standards Guidelines Legal frameworks	<p>MH is included in the National Education Policy, WASH Sector Development Plan (2018), and integrated into national and provincial WinS strategies.</p> <p>The WinS Framework, developed with government counterparts, has created a model that the Government of Punjab committed to scaling up.</p>
Education materials Curriculum materials Teacher training materials Additional resources	<p>MH has been integrated into the teacher-training curriculum at the national and provincial levels (pre-service).</p> <p>In 2018, UNICEF held a consultation with 45 prayer leaders on religious attitudes towards menstruation. As a result, the Council of Islamic Ideology, a constitutional advisory body, published a positive religious stance on MH. Religious leaders were engaged to break the religious taboo around MH under the Ehad Campaign.</p> <p>In 2018 <i>The Puberty Book</i>, developed with the support of the Real Medicine Foundation, Grow and Know, University of Alberta School of Public Health, and UNICEF, was disseminated as supplementary reading material for girls' schools in Pakistan. <i>The Puberty Book</i> has been endorsed by the Government of Sindh and there are plans for further scaling it at the national and provincial level.</p> <p>WaterAid has developed a standardised MH package (which includes ToT, teacher-training manuals, training materials for school WASH clubs, and IEC material) agreed upon by sector partners for further roll out in provinces. In 2019 the first national ToT was conducted by the Technical Working Group. A pool of teachers from Pakistan have been trained as Master Trainers in Nepal (150 different teachers in the last two years) to enable them to train others on the teacher-training module.</p> <p>MH Training of Master Trainers (ToT) has been completed in four provinces Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, Punjab, Balochistan, and Gilgit Baltistan. A cadre of 400+ master trainers (both government and partners) has been developed and cascaded to the provinces and districts.</p>
Is MHM in Education Information System (EMIS)	<p>In 2018, WASH-related indicators were incorporated into provincial EMIS to monitor and improve WASH facilities and hygiene practices, including MH.</p> <p>In Sindh the Department of Education added a WASH-monitoring indicator to the Annual Census for the province. WaterAid provided technical support and proposed five indicators (and one on MH) for EMIS. Data has been collected for the whole of Sindh Province. Data on MH and gender-segregated toilets will be used to inform school WASH plans and budgets.</p> <p>In Punjab MH indicators were added in EMIS (e.g. MH-friendly WASH rooms, supplies of sanitary materials, and disposal of materials) with UNICEF's technical support.</p>
Current evidence – key findings	<p>One study (Manzoor, et al., 2019) found an association between good MH practices and the education/occupation status of the mother and father, regular pocket money from parents, and the monthly income of the family.</p> <p>Another study (Michael, et al., 2020) assessed menstruation-related knowledge and practices of adolescent girls by visiting a public health care institute in Quetta city. Mothers (67%) were the main source of menstruation-related information. 78% never had a class or session regarding MH in schools. 44% knew that menstruation is a physiological phenomenon. Nearly 40% of respondents missed school. 69% used commercially-available sanitary napkins/pads. 58% did not take baths during menstruation, although 81% washed their genitalia with water.</p>

Coordination platforms/ mechanisms at national/ sub-national levels	A national Technical Working Group (TWG) meets once a month led by the Ministry of Climate Change. The national TWG developed the first Comprehensive Action Plan for MH. Provincial MH Working Groups are also operational. MHM TWG in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan have also been established.
	The Local Government Department also maintains a database on the 'who is doing what and where' (4W matrix) on MH.
	WaterAid has created a pool of influential champions (including government, civil society, journalists, youth ambassadors, and celebrities) to promote female-friendly public toilets and raise funds for MH. UNICEF has also engaged national athletes/sports champions as MH ambassadors.
MHM in schools practice ▶ Materials ▶ Disposal	In 2018 WaterAid reviewed ten incinerators built as part of MH girl-friendly toilets in the Muzaffargarh District.
	Various WASH interventions have trained entrepreneurs on MH supply-chain interventions. For instance, the WASH Response Project in Upper Chitral (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province) has produced sanitary pads in hard-to-reach areas through the Aga Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP).
	In 2018 a nationwide MH Innovation Challenge provided US \$1,000 in seed funding as well as mentorship to youth, aged 16 to 35, to develop projects to improve MH. In 2019 Red Code, an all-female enterprise making reusable sanitary pads, was awarded US \$20,000 and was successful in scaling up production during the COVID-19 pandemic, helping low-income women in Karachi.

MH Journey in Pakistan

Year	Key steps – Pakistan WinS MH
2018	UNICEF's C4D team worked with religious leaders to break the religious taboo around MH under the Ehad Campaign.
	Aao Baat Karein Pakistan's first-ever animation film on MH was released: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJXtHqN5kbo&feature=youtu.be .
	<i>The Puberty Book</i> was developed with support from the Real Medicine Foundation, Grow and Know, University of Alberta School of Public Health, and UNICEF.
2019	MH was incorporated into the Clean Green Pakistan Movement. Clean and Green volunteers were engaged to raise awareness around MH.
	The Generation Unlimited Youth Challenge was conducted.
	<i>The Puberty Book</i> was endorsed by the Government of Sindh.
	A standardised package was developed for MH (which included ToT, training manuals, and IEC material). The national TWG developed the first Comprehensive Action Plan for MH roll out in provinces and conducted ToT at national and provincial levels.
2020	Digital engagement with young people: the launch of an animated chatbot Raaji and MH mobile applications to educate young girls on menstruation and answer their questions. The Red Code was successful in scaling up their idea of re-usable sanitary pads into a registered business entity following support and mentorship from UNICEF.

What's coming up? Opportunities for MH in WinS

- Partnering with multinational, private sector companies (P&G and Unilever) to raise awareness in schools and communities as well as increase the supply of low-cost sanitary items.
- Including MH in reproductive health education in school curriculums.
- Integrating and monitoring MH indicators through the EMIS.
- Developing national standards and guidelines for women-friendly washrooms in schools and working places.
- Undertaking a gap analysis on policy and budget for designing future, policy-level dialogue.
- Developing community-level toolkits for community-level champions of change.
- Taking forward the No-Chutti (No Break) social media campaign, challenging restrictions on girls during menstruation.
- MoCC taking leadership of the national Technical Working Group to bring government ownership under the Clean Green Pakistan movement.
- Scaling of *The Puberty Book* as reference material for MHM in girls' schools from grade six to ten.
- Supporting the provincial working groups to roll out MHM in the education system, health, child protection and welfare department, and local government.

References:

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