

# ‘No policies in place for implementation of proper menstrual hygiene management conditions in Pakistan’

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**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 (MHM) Working Group on Wednesday.

MHM 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, PIEDAR, Save the Children, IRC, Hands, IRSP, RSPN, AGAHE’, NRSP, AHKMT, 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.

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 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, Advisor to the Prime Minister's Education Reforms Program, Khawar Mumtaz, Chairperson of the National Commission on Women Status, Syed Ayub Qutub, Chief Executive of PIEDAR and Nasim Ashraf, an Islamabad based Gynaecologist Obstetrician, delving 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 Magsi, Chairperson of the Parliament Standing Committee on Health, while Syed Abu Ahmad 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, Magsi 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 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 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," said Hina Kausar, 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.