



MHM Research Study Launched in Sindh, Pakistan

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Background

RMF Pakistan's Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) research studies conducted in the provinces of Punjab and Balochistan in conjunction with Columbia University, New York have been a success. The key outcome of the studies' findings is to develop the Pakistan Girls' Puberty Book. For this book to be applicable to the diverse cultural landscapes of Pakistan, it is imperative that data from the provinces of KPK and Sindh be added to the book. Therefore, the same research protocol is now being replicated in the province of Sindh. This research expansion has been funded by UNICEF, and the aim of this extension is to collect data to include the diverse social and cultural norms and practices of the country.

Approach and Goals

The Ministry of Education in each province of Pakistan has collaborated with RMF, encouraging this baseline study that aims to describe, via ethnographic approach, the local cultural understandings and meanings of menarche in urban and rural Sindh as experienced by adolescent, school-aged girls. By means of comparative case studies, this study also aims to explore ways in which local cultural meanings about menarche/menstruation interact with sanitary technology, school design, and peer group relations that often lead to intolerable menstrual-related stigma, causing young women to drop out of school. The third aim of this study is to utilize adolescent young women's own recommendations for improving the pubertal and menstrual management-related guidance of adolescent girls. This is envisioned to be addressed through the development of a girls' puberty book in Pakistan.

UNICEF, having pioneered the initial research and interventions on Menstrual Health Management in Pakistan since 2012, understands that the next step is to directly raise adolescent girls' awareness of their own bodies and selves. The Pakistan Girls' Puberty Book is based on similar projects in Tanzania, Ghana, Ethiopia, and Cambodia, all of which were supported by UNICEF. This research also forms part of UNICEF's global WinS/MHM project that aims to strengthen evidence-based advocacy on MHM in 10 different countries.

Data collection methods will be the same as previous studies, whereby three approaches will be adopted:

- Ethnographic observations
- Key informant interviews with adults
- Participatory group activities with adolescent young women aged 10-19

The proposed study will be carried out in an urban and a rural school. The selected site for an urban school is Government Girls Primary/Elementary School in Sehrish Nagar, Qasimabad of District Hyderabad. The rural school selected is CGHS High School, Baberloi in District Khairpur.