



Update on MHM Research Study in Sindh, Pakistan

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Prepared by: Dr. Rubina Mumtaz, Country Director

Organization: Real Medicine Foundation Pakistan (www.realmedicinefoundation.org)

UNICEF (www.unicef.org)

Project title: Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) Research Project

Project location: Sindh province, Pakistan



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Real Medicine Foundation
11700 National Blvd., Suite 234
Los Angeles, CA 90064
+1.310.820.4502

Background

In early 2015, Dr. Marni Sommer of Columbia University, in collaboration with Real Medicine Foundation and with funding from Grow N Know Inc (G&K), launched a research study to explore how the onset of menstruation and puberty influences Pakistani girls' school-going experiences, including school retention. The other key goal of the study was to develop the Pakistan Girls' Puberty Book in line with G&K's model of similar puberty books in low and middle-income countries, with the aim of promoting young women's health and education during pubertal transitions. This project is an adaptation of a similar research methodology previously used in studies conducted in Tanzania, Ghana, Ethiopia, and Cambodia, which also developed context-specific, culturally sensitive girls' puberty books; all above studies were conducted by the same principal investigator.

Starting in December 2016, RMF began building upon previous, successful studies in Punjab and Balochistan (conducted in collaboration with Columbia University) by extending our research to the province of Sindh. This Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) research study was funded by UNICEF, following the same research methodology as our previous studies, and collected data in Sindh to ensure that the diverse social and cultural norms and practices of Pakistan were included in the Pakistan Girls' Puberty Book. Our MHM research study came to a successful close by February 2017. The key outcome of the study findings was the development of the Pakistan Girls' Puberty Book, which was a natural next step to UNICEF's research and interventions in Menstrual Health Management in Pakistan.

Puberty Book Submission Status

The Pakistan Girls' Puberty Book, developed by RMF Pakistan, University of Columbia, and UNICEF, has been submitted to the Provincial Ministries of Education of all four provinces—Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pukhthunkhwa (KPK), and Baluchistan—with the request to incorporate it into their secondary school curricula as a supplementary reader. The province of Sindh was the first to formally accept this request in October 2018. The process of modifying the Pakistan Girls' Puberty Book, now referred to as the Girls' Book in Sindh, into a more culturally sensitive format and then translating it into Sindhi language is underway. This modification is being carried out as a collaboration between UNICEF, RMF Pakistan, and STEDA (Sindh Teachers Education Development Authority).

National Level TOT Seminar, January 2019

Meanwhile, the National MHM Working Group took the first step towards introducing MHM as an awareness and health education strategy at a health facility level by holding a week-long National Level TOT (Training of Master Trainers) seminar. This took place on January 23–29, 2019 at Serena Hotel, Islamabad and was hosted by the chair of the MHM group, the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC). MHM Working Group members carried out development of MHM guidelines for primary health workers based on national information on MHM and best practices at a global scale. Members of the MHM Working Group brainstormed until consensus was achieved regarding each talking point. UNICEF compiled the newly developed guidelines into a formalized training handbook, which was translated into Urdu and handed over to the participants.

- The seven-day National Level TOT workshop was inaugurated with a High-Level Policy Dialogue on Menstrual Health & Hygiene Management. The details and agenda of the meeting are attached as Annex 1.
- The participants were mostly LHVs (Lady Health Visitors) who work in primary and secondary level hospital facilities and come into direct contact with female patients of all ages; some participants were representatives of local community organizations that are implementing MHM, health care services, and/or educational services in their project profiles. Participants originated from all parts of the country.
- Our Pakistan Girls' Puberty Book was selected as advocacy tool to be distributed to the trainers at the TOT workshop. Instruction on appropriate use of the book was delivered by Afshan of RMF Pakistan on January

28, 2019. This was accompanied by a live demonstration session at a local healthcare facility. Below are some featured photos of the event.

Project Photos



Afshan instructing participants on use of Puberty Book as an advocacy tool for MHM



Afshan distributing the Puberty Book to participants



Trainers of TOT Workshop L-R: Alisa Jones of WSSCC Asia Regional Office, Virginia Kamow of WSSCC Pakistan Office, Afshan of RMF Pakistan, Sumera Javed of HANDS Islamabad and Deepa Shakia of ERM, Nepal.



Afshan instructing TOT participants





Participants engaging in the Puberty Book advocacy training workshop



ANNEX 1: High-Level Policy Dialogue on Menstrual Health & Hygiene Management

Date: January 23, 2019

Event location: Serena Hotel Islamabad

Event host: *The National MHM Working Group Pakistan*

Event Information

A high-level policy dialogue is being organized by the MHM Working Group in Pakistan on January 23 at Serena Hotel, Islamabad. This policy dialogue event will provide a platform for parliamentarians, policy makers, public sector workers, UN agencies, and development sector organizations to integrate MHM into their policy and practice with a holistic approach and create an entry point to broader policy influence focusing on equality and non-discrimination in WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) and beyond. The policy dialogue will be held at the inauguration of this seven-day National Level Training of Trainers (TOT) on MHM, which is scheduled on January 23–29, 2019.

Event Objectives

Hygiene and its impacts on health are key factors in achieving our Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This policy event aims to deepen the dialogue on the intersectionality in SDG 3 (Health), SDG 4 (Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 6 (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, with special attention to SDG 6.2), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and SDG 17 (Partnerships) by reviewing progress in programming and policy at the national and provincial levels.

The policy dialogue will conclude by issuing a call to action on the next steps to ensure menstrual hygiene and health needs everywhere are given the attention and support they require.

Representatives

The MHM Working Group Pakistan is represented by UNICEF, WSSCC, WaterAid, WHO, UN Women, Ministry of National Health Services, Regulation & Coordination, IRC, GIZ, UN Habitat, FPAP Rahnuma, PPAF, RMF Pakistan, Muslim Aid, PIEDAR, HANDS, Islamic Relief, Mercy corps, IRSP, Shifa Foundation, Oxfam, NRSP, SRSP, AHKMT, Plan Pakistan, NDMA, AGAHE, LPP, AKRSP, and Girls Guide Program.

Policy Dialogue Program

Time	Sessions
10:30 - 12:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Welcome and Opening Remarks ▪ Presentation on MHM Status in Pakistan ▪ Video on MHM (<i>courtesy of RMF Pakistan</i>) ▪ Discussion on Policy Dialogue and Recommendations ▪ Speech by UN Representative

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Speech by Religious Representative (Chairman, Council of Islamic Ideology)▪ Speech by Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Health▪ Speech by Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Education▪ Speech by Minister of State, Ministry of Climate Change
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