Taking Action on MHM Research under Pakistan Approach to Total Sanitation (PATS)

Virtual Conference on MHM
By Naeem/Klawitter /Aziz
UNICEF Pakistan

UNICEF/PAK2011/Asad Zaidi
Outline

1. Pakistan Country Background
2. UNICEF WASH in Schools Programme in Pakistan
3. Desk Findings: Analysis of Menstrual Hygiene Management
4. Unfinished business: Ongoing research, preliminary findings
5. What works: Using research tools for MHM
6. What doesn’t work: Sharing field experiences
7. Program strategy: Way forward
Background

Adolescent girls education in Pakistan

– Nearly 30% of primary school aged children are not enrolled in school
– Girls’ education features in all government education policy documents, but state-sponsored education system suffers from fundamental structural problems.
– The lower enrollment and retention rates among girls in Pakistan are a result of religious and cultural practices that restrict demand for female education.
Background

Popular practices and beliefs

- Cultural restrictions and discriminatory gender roles exacerbate women's difficulties during menstruation.
- The extent to which girls are constrained is determined by different tribal and family ideologies.
- There is a blurring of boundaries between cultural practices and religious beliefs.
- Examples: Early marriage, invisibility of women (and their needs), menstruation is a public taboo.
Child friendly WASH facilities were provided in 4,093 schools all over Pakistan.
MHM Study Findings
Selected Results

Study on Menstrual Hygiene Management in Union Council Muzaffarabad/Azad Kashmir, 2010

UNICEF intervention area after Earthquake 2005

(Sample Size: 200 school girls)

School dropout during menstruation

Availability of protective material
Selected Results, cont.

Type of material used

Knowledge about menstrual hygiene

Knowledge or misbelief?
Selected Results, cont.

Unable to afford protective material

Level of knowledge improved after earthquake intervention

= Opportunity!
Limited but good: Low cost sanitary pad production
Limited but good: MHM IEC material
Summary: Problems associated with Menstruation

1. Shame during menses
2. Information on menstruation is provided by close family members, if at all
3. Teachers’ unwillingness to discuss menstrual hygiene
4. Missing 3-4 days of school + ridicule by boys + lack of facilities = poor school performance
5. Lack of designated washrooms with water & disposal facilities in schools
6. Changing, cleaning & drying of re-useable menstrual clothes is a cumbersome process
7. Unable to afford conventional sanitary pads

= Limited Coping Strategies
Unfinished Business
Unfinished business in MHM study: Ongoing research

- An advanced MHM study, including action research in six schools, is being carried out by UNICEF Pakistan between July and November 2013.

- The objective is to:
  - better understand the impacts of menstruation on the education of girls so that PATS programme activities in schools can integrate MHM into their design
  - examine girls’ sense of self-efficacy and confidence when managing menstruation en route to and in the school setting
  - ascertain community awareness of MHM barriers faced by girls in schools and at home, and the role of communities in enabling girls to undertake MHM

| No. of schools in AJK and KP: | 573 |
| Total No. of schools included: | 44 |
| Total No. of girls included in MHM study: | 1,094 |
Key Learning
What works: Using research tools for MHM

1. Asking the same questions to different key respondents separately, e.g. mothers, girls, members of the School Management Committee (SMC), male/female sanitary workers (Ayas), and teachers.

2. Active listening

3. Formation of purposive focused groups, especially homogenous groups grade wise

4. Asking participants during the group discussion to propose solutions to problems they face

5. Eliciting preference of girls by showing them actual MHM related items

6. Showing ‘pictures of different expressions’ is helpful to get the full involvement of girls in a group discussion

7. Using local language and local expressions

8. Rapport building by talking about a favorite TV series
What doesn’t work: Sharing field learning

1. Using ‘pictures of different expressions’ to facilitate discussion in a short time
2. Allowing teachers or head teachers to supervise the discussion, even if they insist
3. Assembling discussion groups with respondents of different ages or from different grades
4. Interviewing a SMC member in presence of teacher – they feel obliged to praise teacher
Key Lessons

Poverty
High cost of commercial sanitary pads

Policy on Menstrual Hygiene Management in Schools
Lack of clear policy on menstrual hygiene management in schools

Information & Awareness
Inadequate information and general lack of awareness about menstruation and menstrual hygiene

Accessibility of Facilities
Inaccessibility to menstrual pads & female friendly and clean WASH facilities in schools

Social Norms
Discussing menstruation is against accepted social norms
For more information, please contact:

Simone Klawitter, PhD
Chief Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
Pakistan
Sklawitter@unicef.org

United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)
Pakistan Country Office
90 Margala Road, F-8/2
Tel: 051-209-7848
www.unicef.org

© United Nations Children’s Fund
Photo © UNICEF/PAK2011/Asad Zaidi