

Media Update

03 August 2017

UNICEF

Press Release

UNICEF launches campaign for menstrual hygiene awareness and appoints three Pakistani sport stars as menstrual hygiene champions

Islamabad, 3 August 2017: In a colourful celebration with over 200 adolescent girls from Islamabad, Sana Mahmud, captain of the national basketball team, Hajra Khan, captain of the national football team and Kiran Khan, an Olympic swimmer received their certificates and shields for this honorary appointment from Angela Kearney, UNICEF Representative in Pakistan here today.

In their role as menstrual hygiene champions Sana, Hajra and Kiran will use their extraordinary athletic success to engage and empower adolescent girls to bring the taboo subject of menstrual hygiene into the public discourse.

Research commissioned by UNICEF indicates that adolescent girls in Pakistan are often uninformed and unprepared for the onset of menstruation. Teachers are reluctant to discuss it in school leaving mothers and other female family members as the primary source of information. The study suggests unfounded beliefs and myths surrounding menstruation, including prohibiting girls from taking a bath during their periods, eating certain foods, or participating in certain social and religious events. Because of this misinformation, menstruation is often associated with profound psychological and emotional problems by adolescent girls. Exclusion and shame leads to misconceptions and unhygienic practices during menstruation. Thus, girls tend to miss school and refrain from social interaction.

In a bid to promote positive societal norms around menstruation, UNICEF is launching the 'Be Bold Be Free' campaign to increase awareness on menstrual hygiene among different groups of society. These include mothers



and teachers, fathers and boys to cultivate empathy and support for girls, as well as religious and community leaders to promote positive messages on the subject.

Speaking at the event, Neil Buhne, Resident Coordinator of the UN in Pakistan said: “Girls must have the same chances as boys to achieve their full potential in life. They deserve our full support and must be provided with the opportunity to do so. Therefore, we are very happy to be here today with three young Pakistani women who have achieved extraordinary things in life. Kiran, Hajra and Sana have climbed to great heights in their respective sports.”

Addressing the large gathering of young females, he said: “This tells us that each one of you too can be a winner. You can excel in sports, academics, arts or anything you set your mind to do. Nothing, and certainly not something as natural as your periods should ever stop you.”

Angela Kearney, UNICEF Representative in Pakistan said: “Periods are not only a woman’s issue but everyone’s issue. We all know that sometimes boys can be insensitive and even tease girls about their periods especially when they see a stain on our dresses.” “This causes embarrassment and many girls have reported this as one reason they miss school, because of the shame. We need to educate our brothers so they can empathise with their female classmates, so that they too understand that girls need support not teasing,” she pointed out.

Explaining her motivation to be a champion for menstrual hygiene, Sana Khan said: “Many girls view their period as a disease, as an illness, as some sort of impurity that requires them to be ostracized by the rest for a few days a month. I want to use my influence to help girls feel comfortable in their bodies, and understand the natural and biological reasons for why we experience what we do. When you are confident and aware of your body and all that it is capable of, you will be in a better position to protect it. That is why I play- because I feel a strength in my body that makes me feel invincible, and I wish that for every girl!”

Kiran Khan said: “My motivation for helping is none other than teaching young girls that myths should remain myths and they should not hinder them from becoming who they are. Hajra, Sana and I are living examples of stories of success in our respective fields and our menstruation cycle has never been a hassle in our way. Menstruation is not a disease but a blessing. We

bleed, that's why everyone else exist!"

Hajra Khan, "Menstruation remains a taboo in many societies and various negative cultural attitudes and beliefs are still associated with it. I've observed that some cultural beliefs about menstruation reinforce gender inequities and have negative impact on the dignity, health and education of women and girls and think that it is very important to talk about these issues."

To break the taboo and to initiate an open discourse about menstruation, UNICEF has produced a video with the three champions that can be downloaded from the link below and TV channels are encouraged to broadcast it.

During the event, several youth tech-preneurs, winners of UNICEF's Menstrual Hygiene Management Innovation Challenge, were awarded with prizes for their ideas to improve the lives of menstruating adolescents.

- **Download Link for photo of the event:** <https://we.tl/CKf2bXBQXL>
- Download Link for MHM video: <https://we.tl/hWhpFQz6rA>

Media contact:

Daniel Timme, UNICEF Pakistan, [+92 51 2097700](tel:+92512097700), dtimme@unicef.org

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About UNICEF

UNICEF promotes the rights and wellbeing of every child, in everything we do. Together with our partners, we work in 190 countries and territories to translate that commitment into practical action, focusing special effort on reaching the most vulnerable and excluded children, to the benefit of all children, everywhere.

UNODC

Press Release

The Government of Japan and UNODC Country Office in Pakistan (COPAK) stands committed to build the operational capacity of Anti Narcotics Force

Rawalpindi, 03 August 2017 - Mr. Cesar Guedes, the UNODC Country Office Representative in Pakistan and Mr. Takashi Harada, Counsellor (Economic and Development), Embassy of Japan, handed over Five (5) Progeny ResQ Handheld Raman Analyzers to Anti Narcotics Force (ANF) during the handing-over ceremony at ANF Headquarters, Rawalpindi.

The procurement of this state of the art equipment was one of the agreed deliverables under the Japanese funded UNODC project, which is aimed at strengthening border security against illicit drug trafficking and related transnational organised crime. This is also part of UNODC efforts to enhance the operational capacity of drug law enforcement, specially ANF, in line with its Country Programme (2016 - 2019). Senior officials from Embassy of Japan, UNODC and ANF were present at the occasion.

Major General Musarrat Nawaz, Director General, ANF thanked the Government and people of Japan and UNODC for their continuous support to the Government of Pakistan, especially ANF, for building their operational capacity in countering numerous existing and emerging challenges posed by drug trafficking in the country and the region. Lastly, Major General Nawaz assured his continued support in all mutual endeavours.

Mr. Cesar Guedes, the UNODC Country Office Representative in Pakistan, said that UNODC along with its international donors especially Japan is committed to strengthening operational capacities of ANF and other LEAs for addressing the drug trafficking and global organised crime issues through proactive responses. Mr. Guedes thanked the Government of Pakistan for committing to smooth implementation of the Japanese funded project activities (2016-2019) and specially thanked the Government of Japan for its commitment and generous financial support for this very important project.



Mr. Takashi Harada, Counsellor (Economic and Development), Embassy of Japan, acknowledged the efforts done by UNODC and ANF and highlighted the importance of this state of the art equipment to enhance ANF capacity for effective interdiction and investigation of illicit drugs. He reaffirmed Japan's commitment to helping Pakistan combat all types of transnational organised crime including illicit drug trafficking which hinder the economic development and over all prosperity of the country. He noted that enhancing the border security between Pakistan and Afghanistan is crucial as the stability of the region is essential to the national security of Pakistan.

UNODC is leading global efforts against drug trafficking and is the guardian of all international conventions on drugs and transnational organised crime. UNODC Country Office in Pakistan has been active for over 35 years and works in close collaboration with the Government of Pakistan. Its mandate is to assist the national institutions in their efforts to overcome the challenges associated with transnational organised crime, thereby contributing towards the nation's development.

For further information and confirmation, please contact:

- Ms. Rizwana Asad, Communications Officer, UNODC Pakistan, cell: [0301 8564255](tel:03018564255), email: rizwana.asad@unodc.org
- Sajid Abbasi, Senior Press & Information Advisor, the Embassy of Japan in Pakistan, phone: +92-51-907-2500, email: sajid.abbasi@ib.mofa.go.jp
