

Media Update

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UN-Habitat

Press Release

Government and Humanitarian Partners Highlight the Need for Proper Menstrual Hygiene Management in Pakistan on Menstrual Hygiene Day 2016

Even though half of the population menstruates, there are no existing policies supporting the creation and implementation of proper menstrual hygiene management conditions in Pakistan

Islamabad – 26th May, 2016: More than 100 representatives from government, international and national development organizations, civil society, youth, convened at the Pakistan Institute of Parliamentary Services, in Islamabad to commemorate the International ‘Menstrual Hygiene Day 2016.’

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 menstrual hygiene management (MHM). This year, the global theme of the day is “Menstruation Matters for Everyone, Everywhere.”

In Pakistan, a panel discussion focusing on how the health, education, and sanitation of adolescent girls is impacted by lack of proper MHM was organized. Panelists included government representatives from across the country delving into much needed solutions to tackle the taboo and associated problems that females especially young adolescent girls face. The event was organized by the MHM Working Group, a coalition of



humanitarian organizations working to champion menstrual hygiene rights in Pakistan.

The event was chaired by Hon. Ms Romina Khurshid Alam, Media Coordinator Young Parliamentary Forum, Member National Assembly, and Member Sustainable Development Goals Taskforce. Other representatives from government and a host of experts from across health, academia, media, donors, private and the humanitarian sector were also present.

Speaking at the occasion, Hon. Alam stated, “It is great to see not just women but also men standing up for menstrual hygiene management in Pakistan. I am thankful to the MHM Working Group for raising their voice and providing a platform to engage in a discussion for proper MHM facilities, especially in schools. It is about time that the silence around menstruation is broken and policy level recommendations are brought up in Parliament. The SDGs Taskforce has been working for devising policies which are gender-sensitive, and this discussion has encouraged us to further stress on inclusion of MHM at state-level.”

In her opening note, UN-Habitat Country Programme Manager, Bella Evidente while commenting in relation to MHM said, “In our society, menstruation is surrounded by stigma and misinformation. Inadequate MHM directly affects a female’s self-esteem, health and education. This platform provides much needed spotlight on an issue which remains a silent topic in Pakistan. As a result, the needs of women, especially in regards to sanitation, have never been brought to the fore-front, and sadly, not all women have access to the tools they need to manage their menstrual cycles. It is time that all sectors come together to break the silence around MHM by supporting strong policy implementation across all state levels.”

In her closing remarks, UNICEF representative, Angela Kearney underscored the serious consequences of lack of proper hygiene management facilities on young girls. “It is unfortunate and unacceptable that the management of menstruation continues to present significant challenges for women especially in lower income settings. Adolescent girls bare most of this brunt as they lack the knowledge and services to manage menstruation which in turn affects their learning experiences. Research shows that marginalized girls can miss up to two to four consecutive days of schools every four weeks due to their periods. This of course has serious implications on their learning,” she said.

The core objective of the event was to promote sharing and learning of experiences from various interventions being conducted across the country and at the same time engage government to take a more proactive stand to implement policies and fund 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.

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About the MHM Working Group:

The Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) Working Group is a coalition of humanitarian organisations working to champion Menstrual Hygiene rights in Pakistan. It is anchored on a vision to create a society where girls/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, PIEDAR, Save the Children, IRC, Hands, IRSP, RSPN, Agahe, NRSP, AHKMT, WSSCC, and UNGEI.

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