



SANITATION
FOR MILLIONS



Sanitation for Millions' Journey on Menstrual Hygiene Management Activities in Pakistan

BACKGROUND

Sanitation for Millions is a global programme improving access to safe sanitation and hygiene with a focus on vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. More than two million people have already benefitted directly from the project's measures. Sanitation for Millions builds female-friendly and inclusive sanitary facilities at schools, healthcare facilities, and faith-based institutions, trains local professionals to operate and maintain them, and promotes safe hygiene practices through targeted campaigns and knowledge transfer.

Sanitation for Millions was commissioned by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) in 2016. With the BMZ as the lead donor, Sanitation for Millions has received additional funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Water Unite, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary, the Inter-American Development Bank, and share GmbH. The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH executes the global programme in close cooperation with local partners in Colombia, Jordan, Pakistan, and Uganda.







MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT IN PAKISTAN

Girls in Pakistan often lack knowledge and awareness about menstruation and safe menstrual hygiene practices. Due to taboos and socio-cultural practices, women are reluctant to discuss the topic, leaving girls unprepared and ill-informed for their first period. The absence of Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) in school curricula results in misconceptions on menstruation, which can have multiple consequences: While menstruating, girls and teachers often stay absent from school, affecting their labour activity and participation in community life negatively. Women and girls want to stay indoors because they are afraid of bleeding through their clothes, or because they cannot clean, change and dispose of their sanitary pads properly due to lack of access to water and adequate hygienic and private sanitary facilities at school and work. In addition, some girls resort to cutting up pieces of their clothes to use as sanitary pads, which they wash and reuse, sometimes even share with their sisters. These practices can lead to many hygiene and health related problems. To effectively and safely manage their menstruation, girls and women require access to WASH facilities, affordable and appropriate menstrual hygiene materials, information on good practices, and a supportive environment where they can manage menstruation without embarrassment or stigma.



SANITATION FOR MILLIONS’ APPROACH ON MHM IN PAKISTAN

Sanitation for Millions initiated its interventions in Pakistan in 2017, gradually increasing its emphasis on MHM. The programme employs both conventional and innovative tools and materials commonly used in Pakistan, such as construction of female-friendly sanitary facilities, awareness raising, and behaviour change and advocacy with the decision makers. The approach is rooted in leveraging the extensive experience and lessons learned from key stakeholders in Pakistan, including UNICEF, WaterAid, and other international and local partners. Simultaneously, Sanitation for Millions has developed a programme-wide approach on MHM, drawing from international best practices and GIZ’s extensive knowledge base.

Sanitation for Millions follows a holistic approach, addressing broader cultural and social factors that affect menstrual health and well-being. Activities are designed for long-term sustainability, working closely with local implementing partners, and considering how to involve male persons to increase male-allyship. All MHM activities must comply with the following quality safeguards:

- 💧 **Gender Sensitiveness:** The issues of puberty and menstruation are equally addressed to boys and girls and are a part of school curricula.
- 💧 **Target Group Oriented:** The target groups are addressed with the adequate didactical tools and culturally appropriate messages.
- 💧 **Cultural Appropriateness:** Social beliefs, religious norms, and customary laws are sensitively addressed, and societal sentiments are not violated.
- 💧 **Social Acceptance:** The target groups and all relevant stakeholders endorse and follow Sanitation for Millions’ approach and jointly work on achieving the common programme goals.





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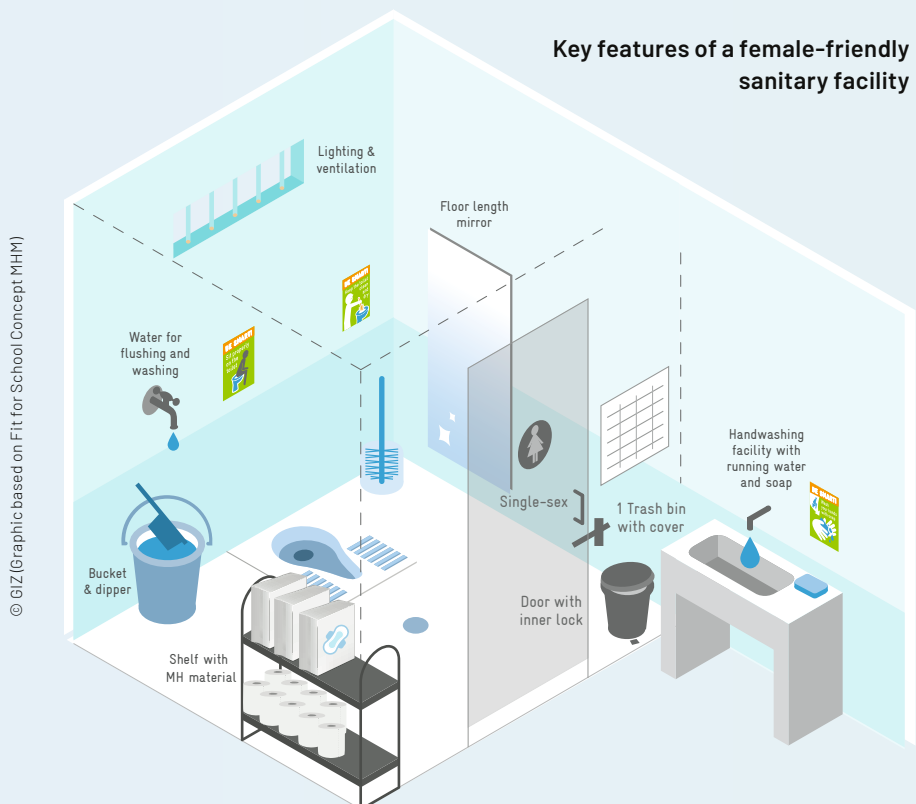
Sanitation for Millions (\$4M)

MHM Focused Oriented WASH Rooms 	Provision of MHM Kits 
Formation and Capacity Building of PTSMC 	Formation and Building of WA 
Behavior Change Communication (BCC) 	Provision of H Schools Student 
Construction Toilets 	Provision of Facility in 
Construction of Group Handwashing Pl 	Provision & Maintenance of Equipped Mobile 

Construction of female-friendly sanitary facilities

In the course of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) interventions, Sanitation for Millions Pakistan, in collaboration with its local partners Balochistan Rural Support Programme (BRSP) and Sabawon, implements the construction and rehabilitation of female-friendly sanitary facilities within public schools since 2019.

Significant attention was dedicated to the creation of female-friendly sanitary facilities in middle and high schools. These facilities are designed to provide girls and female educators with specific features and the privacy necessary for changing sanitary products and maintaining personal hygiene.



Around 20,000 adolescent girls have been reached through the female-friendly infrastructure and awareness creation events in public institutions of Pakistan on MHM.

It is worth highlighting that these new facilities were not solely about infrastructure. They were a proactive response to address one of the primary concerns voiced by parents – inadequate access to WASH services, which was a key barrier preventing them from sending their daughters to school. Consequently, these improved facilities aimed to serve as a protective measure, ensuring that adolescent girls would not miss classes or drop out of school.

The programme has not only focused on public schools, but also built inclusive female-friendly infrastructure in public health care facilities for patients and staff in the provinces of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP).



Awareness raising and behaviour change

When recognizing that WASH activities in schools serve as an ideal entry point to enhance the importance of MHM, these infrastructure measures were coupled with culturally sensitive behaviour change and hygiene awareness campaigns. Sanitation for Millions' awareness activities on MHM in public institutions (schools, health care facilities and faith-based institutions) contribute to providing access to precise information on menstruation and MHM, to building capacities for staff at public institutions as well as parents and other persons of trusts and to enabling peer-to-peer support. To further promote personal hygiene and menstrual health, so-called WASH clubs were established. These WASH clubs engaged both male and female students in the maintenance of sanitation facilities and played a vital role in fostering awareness regarding hygiene, with a particular focus on menstrual health, especially within girls' schools. Members of the WASH clubs then acted as multipliers and change agents.



ing Competition On ual Hygiene Day





The Menstrual Hygiene Day takes place every year on May 28 and was first commemorated by Sanitation for Millions in Balochistan in 2020 with the aim to

- 💧 Break the silence and raise awareness
- 💧 Change negative social norms around MHM
- 💧 Address the challenges and hardships many women and girls face while menstruating

Since then, Menstrual Hygiene Day has been commemorated every year in Balochistan and KP. Various stakeholders such as UN agencies, government departments, provincial parliamentarians, teachers and students participate and join hands to raise awareness and break the silence.

A pool of more than 250 trainers (public teachers and Lady Health Workers) have been trained on MHM in Balochistan and KP

Training of trainers

It is important to train female and male stakeholders, such as public school teachers and health practitioners to equip them with precise knowledge and confidence in speaking about menstruation. The aim of these trainings is to empower stakeholders to act as multipliers in MHM awareness and to improve menstrual hygiene for women and girls, covering key aspects of menstrual hygiene in different settings.



Provision of MH material

It is not enough to provide infrastructure and information; making MHM supplies available at public institutions or given out as part of trainings or awareness sessions can support MHM improvements, especially in trying to increase self-esteem of the women and girls. Public institutions, like schools, should have or should receive a supply of MHM materials, like sanitary pads and clean school uniforms, which can be taken by schoolgirls and teachers when needed. This helps to overcome barriers caused by a lack of MHM supplies.



Advocacy on policy level

The topic of menstruation is still considered a low priority among many governments around the globe, which is reflected through the disregard of the issue in their policies. This could be explained due to limited capacity, financing, and lack of awareness. Engaging and providing knowledge to key actors at different levels can influence government officials to consider MHM as a topic in the relevant policies. It is important to facilitate exchanges between civil society organisations and parliamentarians to coordinate the implementation of MHM between different bodies and to allow an exchange at regional level. Advocacy work with government counterparts and parliamentarians is important in order to raise awareness on the issue and to reach the inclusion of MHM into policies at national and provincial level. Additionally, the prioritisation of female-friendly sanitary facilities should be kept in mind and advocated for throughout activities on all levels and with all counterparts.

This need of cooperation across different actors and levels has lead Sanitation for Millions to launch the first MHM working group secretariat in Balochistan under the leadership of the health department as chair and the education department as co-chair for regular coordination among the working group members and organisations, such as UNICEF, Islamic Relief, and IRC, amongst others. The secretariat is operating efficiently and has successfully united all relevant stakeholders on a shared platform with a unified agenda on MHM. Inspired by this model, Sanitation for Millions is now also supporting the secretariat of the MHM working group in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which is coordinated by the Water and Sanitation cell of the Local Government department.





Cooperation with the private sector

The private sector plays a critical role in meaningful implementation and sustainability of MHM interventions at all levels. It helps in leveraging resource contributions (technical, financial, and material) from companies, foundations, organized groups, and other private actors, which contributes to improved MHM.

Sanitation for Millions has been collaborating with SANTEX, a private company that manufactures MHM products (sanitary napkins, panty lines, etc.) in Pakistan. Through this partnership, training sessions with public teachers of Balochistan were implemented and MHM products were distributed to teachers and public students.

To foster greater collaboration among various stakeholders, including UNICEF, WaterAid, IRC, and government departments across provinces and in cooperation with the private sector, Sanitation for Millions initiated a dialogue on bio-degradable sanitary napkins. Building upon this, Sanitation for Millions conducted a market feasibility assessment for biodegradable sanitary napkins in close collaboration with the private equity Santex.



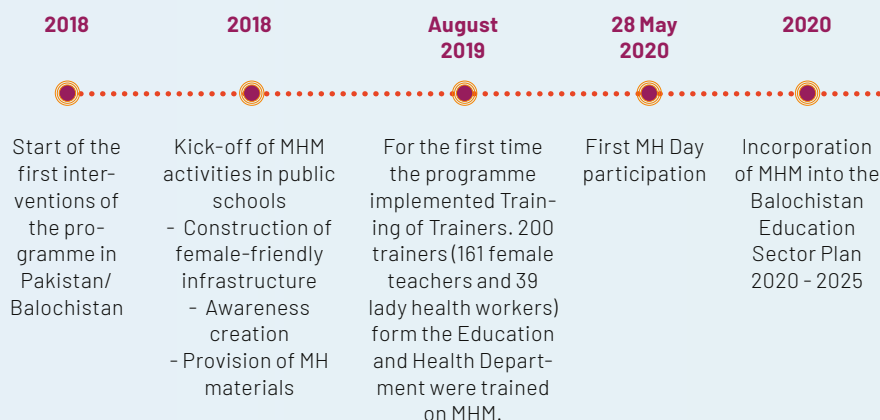




OUTLOOK

What's next? To continue advocating for MHM integration, Sanitation for Millions Pakistan intends to replicate the establishment of a secretariat for the MHM Working Group in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. A policy will be developed for the province of Balochistan to integrate MHM in all departments, and the national MHM working group will be reactivated under the leadership of the Ministry of Health. The programme will also expand trainings on MHM to health workers and ensure that the health system in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has a female-friendly infrastructure. In order to improve the supply of menstrual products, Sanitation for Millions will increase its engagement with the private sector on possible joint ventures for MHM products.

TIMELINE





**January
2021**

Launch and establishment of MHM working group secretariat Balochistan

**January
2023**

Inclusion of MHM into Lady Health Care Worker training manual

**February
2023**

Incorporation of MHM indicators into the health management information system 2 of Balochistan

October 2023

Contribution to the development of a training manual for trainers on MHM





SANITATION FOR MILLIONS



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