

HerWASH: Helping girls stay in school



HerWASH: Project Summary

HerWASH is a 4-year project being implemented in Burkina Faso, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Pakistan. The project integrates the construction and rehabilitation of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) infrastructure with quality, gender-responsive, and age-appropriate menstrual health and hygiene education.

HerWASH in Action

In Pakistan, menstruation is a highly stigmatized topic, and cultural and religious taboos create barriers to open discussion and proper education on managing menstruation hygienically and with dignity. As part of the HerWASH project, our community partner, the National Rural Support Programme, engages community members in workshops that build knowledge and awareness on menstruation and menstrual hygiene management (MHM).

Ms. Razia, a Sign Language teacher at the Special Education and Rehabilitation Centre in district Thatta, Pakistan, participated in one of the MHM workshops, and was inspired by what she learned. Prior to Ms. Razia's training, the Special Education and Rehabilitation Centre's one toilet was non-functional, with no access to running water. This meant that students would have to return home during the day to use the toilet, and students stayed home from school entirely while menstruating.

After the workshop, Ms. Razia was determined to bring change to the Centre. She met with the Head Teacher to educate him on the importance of functional gender-inclusive toilets that require more than simply access to soap and water. Ms. Razia argued that the toilets should also have covered garbage receptacles to dispose of sanitary materials, a hygienic place to dry cleaned reusable pads, and doors with locks. As a result of this conversation, Ms. Razia secured funding to rehabilitate the Centre's toilet into a fully functioning and gender-inclusive space.

Now that the female students have a safe place to manage their periods, Ms. Razia has begun conducting workshops with the Centre's student-led WASH club, empowering them to become MHM champions. WASH club members have even begun conducting MHM awareness sessions with other students to share their newfound knowledge on menstrual hygiene and health.

Ms. Razia's commitment has had a true ripple effect in the community – her students now have open conversations with their female family members and friends, spreading their knowledge of MHM and dismantling harmful taboos and misconceptions that were previously associated with menstruation.



Working with the Centre's WASH Club, Ms. Razia has secured monthly funds to purchase MHM products, including: underwear, sanitary materials (reusable and disposable), detergent for reusable pads, paper bags for proper disposal of sanitary products, hand-soap, toilet paper, and tissue boxes. Pictured above: Ms. Razia hands over one month supply of MHM products to WASH club members.