



A campaign by the DASTAK Foundation to bust myths around menstruation



Introduction

The DASTAK Foundation has launched Mahwari Sawari, a transformative campaign to challenge and dismantle the deep-rooted myths and taboos surrounding menstruation in Pakistan. Menstrual Health and Hygiene (MHM) is not only a health concern but a fundamental human rights issue affecting millions of women and girls across the country. Alarming statistics show that 44% of girls in Pakistan lack access to basic menstrual hygiene facilities, 49% experience their first period without any prior knowledge, and 79% do not have access to the necessary products and sanitation facilities for safe and dignified menstrual management. Cultural taboos further amplify feelings of shame and silence. Mahwari Sawari is on a mission to bust these myths, promote MHM education, and advocate for policy changes that recognize menstrual equity as a critical human right. The campaign seeks to normalize menstruation, reduce period poverty, and empower women and girls by ensuring access to essential resources and creating a society where menstruation is no longer stigmatized. DASTAK is dedicated to fostering an inclusive future where every girl and woman can manage her menstrual health with dignity and confidence, free from shame or restriction.

MHM Session - 1

Date	September 06, 2024
Location	Garishau, Lahore
Participants	58
School Name	GGES Abdul Khair
Facilitator	Sahrish Kashif

On September 6, 2024, Sahrish Kashif led a "Mahwari Sawaari" workshop at GGES Abdul Khair in Garishau, Lahore, engaging 58 students in a session focused on body positivity and menstrual health. The workshop began with an introduction to the work of Dastak Foundation and ITA, followed by activities like the Menstrual Cycle Timeline, where students used a garden metaphor to understand their bodies better. Hygiene practices were discussed, and a Mythbusters survey helped debunk common misconceptions. Students embraced self-love with a Body Positive Affirmations activity, followed by an art segment to creatively express thoughts on menstrual myths. Participants shared positive reflections, with one remarking on how empowering it felt to discuss periods openly.



MHM Session - 2

Date	September 10, 2024
Location	Skardu, GB
Participants	60
School Name	Government Middle School Patowal Olding Skardu
Facilitator	Kaneez Fatima

The "Mahwari Sawaari" session on menstrual health and hygiene took place on September 10, 2024, at Government Middle School Patowal Olding in Skardu, with 60 participants. Facilitated by Kaneez Fatima, the Taleem-e-Mahwari Workshop aimed to dispel myths surrounding menstruation, providing participants with an in-depth understanding and increased confidence to discuss the topic openly. Many participants expressed that they had previously been unaware of the various options for menstrual hygiene management, and post-session evaluations showed a notable increase in awareness. The overwhelmingly positive feedback highlighted the session's impact on fostering open dialogue and empowering young girls with essential knowledge.



MHM Session - 3

Date	September 11, 2024
Location	Karachi, Sindh
Participants	52
School Name	Govt. Girls Higher Secondary School Block 6
Facilitator	Tuba Rafi

The First "Mahwari Sawaari" session on menstrual health and hygiene took place at a Government Girls Higher Secondary School in Karachi on September 11, 2024, with 52 participants. Facilitated by Tuba Rafi, the session aimed to debunk myths surrounding menstruation as part of the Taleem-e-Mahwari Workshops. In addition to discussing menstruation, participants explored restrictive socio-cultural norms and their impact on achieving personal ambitions. The session provided valuable insights and data on misconceptions that prevent menstruators from safely and respectfully practising menstrual hygiene, fostering an atmosphere of openness and empowerment.



MHM Session - 4

Date	September 11, 2024
Location	Gujranwala, Punjab
Participants	79
School Name	Pak Grammar School. Wahndo
Facilitator	Kinza Tehreem

On September 11, 2024, the "Mahwari Sawaari" workshop on menstrual health and hygiene took place at Pak Grammar School Wahndo in Gujranwala, Punjab, with 79 students. Led by Kinza Tahreem, an advocate of the Taleem-e-Mahwari campaign, the session empowered participants to embrace their bodies and question menstrual taboos. Students expressed gratitude for the opportunity to learn about menstruation openly, sharing that both parents and teachers had previously avoided the topic. The session exposed a concerning gap in support, as some teachers hesitated to join role-playing activities, with one making an insensitive comment that underscored the stigma surrounding menstruation.



MHM Session - 5

Date	September 13, 2024
Location	Ghizer, GB
Participants	50
School Name	Eagle Mountain and Aga Khan Diamond Jubilee School Glodas
Facilitator	Muheen Zaman

On September 13, 2024, the "Mahwari Sawaari" workshop was conducted at Eagle Mountain and Aga Khan Diamond Jubilee School Glodas in Ghizer, GB, reaching 50 participants under the guidance of Muheen Zaman. This session aimed to dismantle stigmas, encourage open discussions on menstrual health, and promote safe and dignified menstrual practices in schools, homes, and communities. While some students use sanitary pads, many expressed limited awareness of proper hygiene practices, and cultural restrictions often hinder physical activities during menstruation. Participants also discussed the prevalent view of menstruating girls as "unclean" or "weak" and the challenges in openly discussing menstruation, particularly around male family members, emphasizing the need for greater menstrual health education and equity.



MHM Session - 6

Date	September 18, 2024
Location	Karachi, Sindh
Participants	120
School Name	Khatoon e Pakistan
Facilitator	Tuba Rafi

On September 18, 2024, the "Mahwari Sawaari" workshop was held at Khatoon-e-Pakistan School in Karachi, where 120 students from grades 9 and 10 engaged in an impactful session on menstrual health, facilitated by Tuba Rafi. The 4-hour workshop included discussions, activities, and role plays aimed at dispelling common myths about menstruation. For many participants, it was their first opportunity to openly discuss periods. Students expressed newfound understanding, with one remarking, "Until today, I thought periods were an illness," and others committing to share their knowledge with family members. The session proved transformative, fostering openness and encouraging students to advocate for menstrual health in their communities.



MHM Session - 7

Date	September 23, 2024
Location	Karachi, Sindh
Participants	22
School Name	School of Stars Welfare Organisation, Machar Colony
Facilitator	Tuba Rafi

On September 23, 2024, Tuba Rafi led a "Mahwari Sawaari" session at the School of Stars Welfare Organisation in Machar Colony, Karachi, engaging 22 young girls in a transformative 4-hour discussion on menstruation, personal care, hygiene practices, and setting healthy boundaries. For many participants, it was their first time discussing periods openly. The girls expressed heartfelt reflections, with one saying, "Now I'll take care of myself since I know about my body," while another hoped the workshop could reach more girls in her community who don't attend school. The session's empowering impact underscored the importance of spreading menstrual health awareness and inspiring change within communities.



MHM Session - 8

Date	September 24, 2024
Location	Jamshoro, Sindh
Participants	40
School Name	Government Girls High School
Facilitator	Sannum Kabooro

On September 24, 2024, Sannum Kabooro facilitated a "Mahwari Sawaari" session at Government Girls High School in Jamshoro, Sindh, engaging 40 adolescent girls in an open, supportive discussion on menstruation. The workshop emphasized menstruation as a natural, healthy process, creating a safe space for participants to share experiences and ask questions. The interactive session fostered an energetic atmosphere where girls actively challenged harmful myths, embraced body positivity, and gained the confidence to discuss menstrual health openly, contributing to breaking the silence and stigma around periods.

