

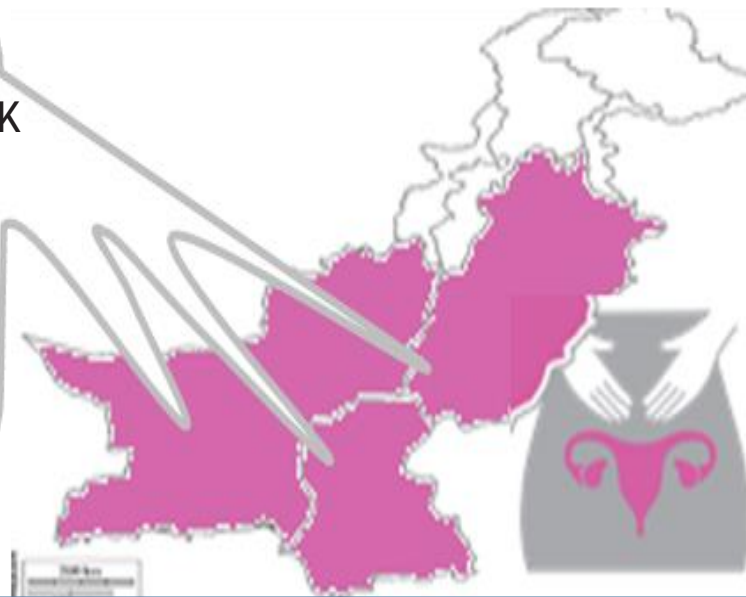
# “How can we leave the traditions of our Baab Daada” Socio-cultural structures and values driving menstrual hygiene management challenges in schools.

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## Introduction :

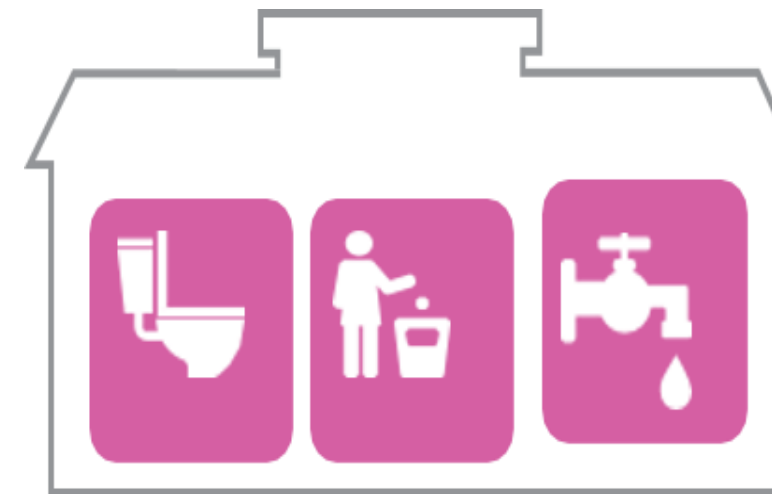
A small body of literature suggests a key element of cultural practices surrounding reproductive health in Pakistan, including menstruation, is the ‘**culture of silence**’. Part of a larger value system that is embedded within the gender order of society, **information around menstruation is actively withheld until after the onset of menstruation**. A number of studies have suggested girls knowledge around menstruation and hygiene practices is inadequate and is often associated with profound psychological and emotional problems.

A research study was conducted in Baluchistan, KPK and Punjab provinces in Pakistan to assess pubertal girls’ needs for information around menstruation and its management.



## Methods :

1. Qualitative Research
2. Data collected from six districts (three urban and three rural )



3. Participatory activities with girls (n=498) aged -19 years, both in- and out-of-school.
4. Observations of school water, sanitation and disposal facilities.



5. In-depth interviews with key informants (parents, teachers, and health workers, education officials and school administrators).

*“When I had my first period, I did not know anything about it. I was at home at that time. I was getting ready for school one morning when I felt my shalwar (pants) was wet. I was surprised because I had not sat in water or anything. I went to the washroom and checked my shalwar. I got very scared and I thought that I had developed cancer.” (9th grader, Lasbela, Balochistan )*

## Results :

- A poorly maintained, girls-unfriendly School WASH infrastructure was a result of gender-insensitive design, a cultural devaluation of toilet cleaners and inadequate governing practices
- The design of school WASH facilities did not align with traditionally-determined modes of disposal of rag-pads, the most common used absorbents



- Traditional menstrual management practices situate girls in an ‘alternate space’ characterized by withdrawal from many daily routines

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## Advocacy :

1. **Pakistan Puberty book** developed and submitted to Provincial education departments for approval: Book is **approved in Sindh**
2. Research articles have been submitted to peer reviewed journals .
3. Research evidence has been shared at multiple forums including SACOSAN VII, MHM Day seminars and events, MHM virtual conference New York etc

