

---

# How are Menstrual Relief Programs Designed and Implemented to Meet the Needs of a Vulnerable Population?

Anoosha Hasan

## Abstract

Being one of the most affected countries from climate change, Pakistan is prone to natural catastrophes such as storms, droughts, earthquakes, and floods. While these disasters impact the country as a whole, certain groups are left more vulnerable than others, particularly, individuals who menstruate, including women and adolescent girls. Menstrual health and hygiene in disasters is defined as the availability of clean spaces in the context of displacement and infrastructure destruction. Using Srilatha Batliwala's (2019) framework, this paper explores how the construction and perception of femininity and social norms exacerbate menstrual hygiene challenges in disasters. In Pakistan, menstrual relief programs not only address power structures during disasters but also challenge societal notions of femininity. The feminist theory of power by Srilatha Batliwala (2019) provides a comprehensive framework to explore the link between menstrual hygiene, gender, and unequal power dynamics in program design and implementation. Through an exploratory study, the paper aims to understand the perspectives of relief workers and program designers, with a specific focus on hygiene kits during the 2022 floods in Pakistan. These programs not only address immediate challenges but also reshape narratives around menstrual hygiene, challenging norms, transforming gender roles, and addressing unequal power dynamics at the grassroots level. These efforts promote a sense of irreverence within the discourse on menstrual hygiene.

## Keywords

MHM, menstrual hygiene program, natural disasters, floods, Pakistan

## Introduction

Menstrual hygiene management (MHM) is a crucial component of hygiene for all individuals who menstruate, particularly women and adolescent girls. UNESCO defines MHM as women and adolescent girls having access to menstrual hygiene products, soap and water, adequate sanitation facilities throughout the duration of a menstrual cycle, and information about how to manage it with confidence and dignity (Unesco 2019). While menstruation is a normal and healthy part of life for most women and girls, in many societies, the experience of menstruation continues to be constrained by cultural taboos and discriminatory social norms (World Bank 2022).

According to a 2017 Oxfam report on a consolidated gendered analysis, humanitarian crises profoundly impact women, men, girls, and boys due to established social, cultural, and political systems in both the public and private sectors. In particular, women and girls are at increased risk. As one of the countries most affected by climate change, Pakistan is susceptible to natural catastrophes such as floods, storms, droughts, and earthquakes, which exacerbate socio-cultural vulnerabilities. In the context of natural disasters, menstrual hygiene becomes an important concern because disasters drastically restrict access to essential health care, including menstrual hygiene. Since menstrual hygiene is taboo and seldom discussed openly, it leaves women and adolescent girls even more vulnerable. For instance, in the aftermath of the earthquake in Nepal in 2015, many girls did not go to school since the washrooms were destroyed and they could not change pads during menstruation (Budhathoki et al. 2017).

In Pakistan, more than 8 million women of reproductive age that were affected by 2022's unprecedented floods have taken desperate measures to manage their periods (Mansoor 2022). These floods identified Pakistan as one of the areas with high period poverty. The deep-rooted stigma around menstrual health in the province of Sindh exacerbates the challenges women and adolescent girls face while managing

their menstrual health in a post-disaster setting. For instance, Kapadia (2022) explained how patriarchal norms are strong in flood-affected areas, making it harder for women to express their needs to community workers and access relief packages (Interaction 2022).

Using Srilatha Batliwala's feminist theory of power (2019), this paper aims to understand how the menstrual relief programs in Pakistan are tackling the power structures during such humanitarian crises. In particular, this study focuses on ideology and the creation of social norms and everyday practices.

## Theoretical Framework

Srilatha Batliwala's (2019) feminist theory of power highlights that concepts like power are abstract, and explains that we each understand power relevant to our context. At the same time, understanding power in its many forms is critical to achieving social change, regardless of our specific areas of work, constituencies, or geographic location (Batliwala 2019, 4-6). According to Batliwala, the power structure is formed when the ideology justifying it is translated into everyday practices through the creation of social norms and rules (2019, 76). Therefore, it is imperative to understand how power structures exacerbate the challenges of designing and implementing menstrual relief programs in our society. Such challenges include addressing the deep-rooted stigma around menstrual hygiene that complicates the existing challenges faced by women and adolescent girls while managing menstrual hygiene.

According to a 2017 report by WaterAid, even when gender inequalities are addressed, deeply embedded power relations and cultural taboos persist; most people—men in particular—find menstrual hygiene difficult to talk about (WaterAid 2017). This study explores how existing power structures in our society sustain the taboo and stigma around menstrual hygiene. Subsequently, it also helps us to understand how relief programs facilitate social change at the grassroots level and challenge these norms and taboos.

As Batliwala states, when activists try to change people's lives or tackle the injustices they face, they are trying to change power equations (2019, 2). Thus, addressing the systems of gender-based oppression that exist and affect the impact of climate change (including natural disasters) allows for acknowledgment and understanding of the problem, as well as advocacy and change (Arinder 2020). The menstrual relief programs in Pakistan not only confront established power structures during disasters but also cultivate irreverence toward prevailing societal norms.

## Study Design, Methodology and Methods

The paper uses an exploratory study as the methodology to explore menstrual hygiene and menstrual hygiene management (MHM) during the 2022 floods in Pakistan. Exploratory research is conducted when enough is unknown about a phenomenon or problem that has not been clearly defined (Saunders et al. 2007). Due to the stigma attached, a dearth of literature exists about menstrual hygiene management during floods. Using an exploratory research design would allow us to explore and understand menstrual hygiene managing natural disasters.

The literature review was conducted by examining a mixture of journal articles, studies, reports, and grey literature on the effects of natural disasters on the menstrual health of women and adolescent girls and the menstrual relief programs in Pakistan. There is much known about the aftermath of natural disasters on socio-economic factors such as poverty, loss of home, and food insecurity, but there is limited knowledge about menstrual health in this context.

In addition to the extensive secondary research, the study is supplemented with one in-depth interview with each core stakeholders, such as a flood relief worker and an NGO working on menstrual hygiene. One of the essential elements of understanding power relations in our society is to engage with the core stakeholders. According to Batliwala (2019), understanding power in terms of power structures and power relations is

very important for anyone who is an activist working for social change (Batliwala 2019). As such, interviews were conducted with stakeholders at both individual and organizational levels to gain insights into the design and implementation of menstrual relief programs. Using artifact analysis as one of the methods, the paper also analyzes the hygiene kits that were distributed as post-disaster interventions. Artifact analysis is a systematic examination of an object's material, aesthetic, and interactive qualities that contribute to understanding their physical, social, and cultural contexts (Hannington and Martin 2012). Therefore, it will help to analyze the contents of hygiene kits to understand their social, physical, and cultural context. Combining both methods would allow us to understand the general perception of menstrual hygiene and the process of designing and implementing menstrual hygiene programs.

The study focuses on Pakistan to explore the conditions of MHM during natural disasters. The study focuses on the effects of the 2022 floods and the role of menstrual hygiene programs in this context. Given the sensitivity of the research, the women and adolescent girls were not interviewed directly. Instead, using purposive sampling, the different stakeholders were interviewed to understand and explore how menstrual relief programs meet the needs of a vulnerable population. These stakeholders included the founder of the student-led NGO Mahwari Justice, Bushra Mahnoor, and a flood relief worker named Khanzadi.

## Analysis

The design and implementation of the menstrual relief programs was a detailed process with different stages. One of the interview participants, Mahnoor shared that period poverty during the floods had created a sense of urgency. In her words, "*kuch karna hai aur foran karna hai.*" (Translation: "*We need to do something and do it immediately.*") She further explained that due to the situation's urgency, the first batch of hygiene kits consisted of commercial pads, detergent, and underwear. After the first batch,

the commercial pads were replaced with microfiber cloths and biodegradable pads. The menstrual relief programs were designed in a way that they did not just grant pads to the women, but rather tried to start a crucial conversation. In Mahnoor's words, "*we didn't want just to raise funds and grant one thing to the flood victims, rather our point was to break the taboo associated with the name itself while referring to Mahwari.*" However, implementing the menstrual relief program to meet the needs of women and adolescent girls was still a challenge.

One of the challenges they faced in implementing the program was getting in touch with people who could help them with the menstrual drives in the flood-affected areas. Mahnoor explained that, in the worst-affected areas, the men they reached out to refused to cooperate. The men used to say, "*bibi hum aisa kuch nahi karna chahtay aur yeh humara kaam nahi hai, hum ap ke saath tawaan nahi karsaktay.*" (Translation: "Madam, we don't want to do such things, and this is not our job; we cannot cooperate with you.") Consequently, the existing power structures within these areas restrict women from meeting their menstrual needs. As a result, the program had to be strategized so that they could only depend on the women.

Since Mahwari Justice was a relatively new NGO and the response needed was immediate, it only met the practical gender needs. Practical needs arise from the actual conditions women and men experience because of the gender roles assigned to them in society (Bureau for Gender Needs 2000). If practical gender needs are met, the lives of women (or men) would be improved without challenging women's subordinate positions in society (Masson 2015). Subsequently, the menstrual relief programs were helping women to manage menstruation without challenging their societal positions. However, the program was also meeting strategic gender needs, but at a very minute level. Strategic needs are the needs required to overcome the subordinate position of women to men in society and relate to women's empowerment (Bureau for Gender

Needs 2000). The menstrual relief programs had information sessions, which were not just helping women learn about menstrual health, but also served as the starting point for a crucial conversation.

Moreover, while most men in flood-affected areas were of no help, some men responded differently. Mahnoor explained that when the NGO was founded, they started making awareness videos on their social media pages. Before every drive, they called for volunteers. She shared, "*There was this one day when a father and his little daughter came to help with the menstrual relief drive.*" The NGO is transforming gender norms and bringing a change in thinking at a grass root level.



**Fig 1: Contents of a hygiene kit**

## Hygiene Kits and Artifact Analysis

It is crucial to provide practical menstrual relief for women and adolescent girls in flood-affected areas. Hygiene kits provide immediate relief to an extremely vulnerable population. Analyzing the contents of hygiene kits is important to understand the social, physical, and cultural context.

During the 2022 floods, several NGOs distributed different kinds of hygiene kits. Mahwari Justice distributed thousands of hygiene kits all over Pakistan in flood-affected areas. While analyzing the contents of hygiene kits, several questions arise that are answered in detail below.

*What is the Process of Designing the Kits?*

According to the participant and co-founder of Mahwari Justice, there were four different types of hygiene kits. The first was designed for an immediate disaster response and consisted of underwear, commercial pads, and detergent. Shortly after that, another type of hygiene kit was created that incorporated feedback from flood victims; it consisted of reusable cloths instead of commercial pads because women preferred them. However, reusable cloths were not practical during the floods as there was no clean water for washing. Moreover, the participant shared that it was constantly raining, so the cloths could not be dried. Subsequently, the cloths were replaced with microfiber towels and drawstrings. The flood victims shared the menstrual product that they were more comfortable with, and the NGO provided them with that. The most preferred hygiene kit consisted of disposable pads, which were the most feasible for women and adolescent girls. Similarly, in a post-disaster study in Nepal, most respondents (77.8%) preferred disposable pads as adsorbents, as they were perceived to be cleaner, more hygienic, easier to use, and more comfortable than alternative options (Budhathoki et al. 2018).

*Did the Kits Address Needs?*

The biodegradable pads were either too expensive or not available commercially. Therefore, Mahwari Justice contacted different doctors and physicians and researched how to make biodegradable pads. After extensive research, the NGO used cotton and gauze to make the pads. As seen in figure one, the kit consisted of underwear, detergent, cotton and gauze pads, and a bar of antibacterial soap. Since many areas were under flood water, these pads were easier to dispose of and sustainable.

The figure shows that the contents are an amalgamation of light and dark colours; black underwear, white pads, white soap, and detergent in a zip-lock bag. The dark-coloured underwear was given on purpose to ensure that the period stains don't ruin the garment. According to a participant, the women in flood-affected areas used to wear dark-coloured *shalwars* drenched in

period blood because they didn't have anything else to wear. Providing women with undergarments and menstrual products enabled them to practice menstrual hygiene with dignity.

The detergent and antibacterial soap were added to provide flood victims with adequate supplies to wash their underwear or use for other hygiene needs. One of the flood relief workers reported that, after the distribution of the first batch, the women continuously asked for more hygiene kits because they thought these pads were easy to use. Therefore, the contents of hygiene kits met the needs of a vulnerable population.

*Did the Kits Convey the Intended Message?*

A small poster displaying information about how to use the pads was distributed with the hygiene kits. In addition, the midwives, doctor camps, and flood relief workers conducted small, unstructured, and unofficial information sessions to brief women about how to use the pads. Furthermore, the NGO constantly incorporated feedback from the women in flood-affected areas. Mahwari Justice not only created and distributed cotton and gauze pads, they made an informational video about how to make biodegradable pads and disseminated it on their social media platform, which made a difference on an organizational level. Mahwari Justice was meeting the needs of a vulnerable population and spreading information about the locally made pads which initiated a conversation about hygiene kits.

## Results and Discussion

Using thematic analysis, the data was analyzed in six steps: familiarization, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up to avoid any researcher bias (Caulfield 2019). The two interviews were transcribed and coded, and significant major themes were generated and reviewed. A website called Mural Board was used to organize the data. The findings were divided into three major themes, which will be discussed below.

### *Food, Water, and Menstrual Hygiene*

One of the major themes that emerged from primary and secondary research was the importance of menstrual hygiene compared to food and water during natural disasters. During times of crisis and disaster, humanitarian response seeks to provide relief support for the suffering population by meeting essential needs comprehensively and predictably where shelter, food, clean water, and medicine are prioritized (Pandit et al. 2022). One participant shared that it is not one or the other: it's food, water, *and* Menstrual Hygiene. A post-disaster study in Nepal found that menstrual hygiene was the sixth highest perceived need—listed by 18.8% of the respondents—followed by safety and first aid. Food and shelter still were the top two choices (Budhathoki et al. 2018).

While the literature review and interviews demonstrate that menstrual hygiene needs to be a top concern along with food and water, it is an idea still not widely accepted by the people. Batliwala (2019) explained that as a society, we are ideologically trained from childhood—before we can question or challenge ideas presented to us. As a result, we internalize ideologies without conscious awareness. One of the challenges to wide acceptance of the concept “food, water, *and* menstrual hygiene” is unequal power relations and gender dynamics. The gendered power structure within our society diminishes the importance of menstrual hygiene during disasters. An article about menstrual health during floods stated that men question the importance of sanitation kits, claiming that pads are a luxury item instead of a necessary one (Awan 2022). In addition, some even compared providing menstrual products to providing shaving cream for male flood survivors, which highlights the patriarchal power structures in our societies. The co-founder of Mahwari Justice stated that the criticism is crucial because it means that people are talking about menstrual hygiene. While menstruation remains ensconced in societal stigma and cultural taboos, menstrual relief programs are actively working to disrupt these norms, fostering a sense of irreverence that challenges traditional perceptions and practices.

### *Stigma, Lack of Awareness, and Everyday Practices*

Due to the stigma attached to menstrual hygiene, it is seldom discussed openly. Menstrual hygiene is a taboo subject that many women in South Asia are reluctant to discuss in public (Wickramasinghe 2012). In Assam, the field workers who interacted with adolescent girls in villages in the district of Sonitpur found that during menstruation, they were forced to sleep on the floor, even during winter, though sometimes they were given hay to spread on the surface (Bhattacharjee 2019). Similarly, the flood relief worker shared that the adolescent girls were forced to sit separately while they were menstruating, even though there was only one shaded area for everyone in the flood-affected area.

It is not only men; women also label period blood as ‘impure.’ According to a participant, women in flood-affected areas do not say they are menstruating. Instead, they say that “*ke mein napaak hoon.*” (*Translation: “I am impure.”*) When women don’t talk about their menstrual health, they are internalizing their patriarchal ideology. Furthermore, women not only teach the rules of gender to their sons and daughters but police and discipline other women (Batliwala 2019). For instance, one of the participants shared that adolescent girls were not allowed to talk about menstrual hygiene in front of their mothers or elderly women in flood-affected areas. The ideological conditioning converts the people most oppressed in that power structure—women, Dalits, people of colour, or the poor—into its protectors (Batliwala 2019). In other words, women uphold the stigma and taboos around menstruation.

The stigma around menstruation results in a lack of awareness regarding menstrual hygiene. One of the participants shared that women in interior Sindh thought that using sanitary napkins or pads from hygiene kits would cause them to fall ill. Moreover, the co-founder of the NGO explained that the awareness levels in these areas were so low that the women were using dry leaves, rags, and cow feces as an alternative for menstrual products. In one instance, a woman in

Lasbela, Balochistan shared that both of her daughters were using the same cloth during menstruation. However, the recent menstrual relief programs are shifting the narrative around menstrual hygiene on a minute level. The information sessions along with the distribution of hygiene kits have explained the importance of menstrual hygiene and the risks of not using an appropriate menstrual product. Furthermore, the women have started being vocal about their menstrual needs: they began asking for sanitary napkins and cloths for themselves and their daughters. Additionally, the woman who believed that using sanitary napkins would make her ill started to use pads, as per the flood relief worker's instructions.

#### *Lack of Shelters and Private Spaces*

*"Kabhi kisi par aesi muhsil na aye"* (translation: *I hope no one faces such difficulties*), said a flood relief worker while describing the situation of flood victims, especially women and children living on roads. Women were crying and asking for help for their daughters because they had no shelter. In this context, the menstrual relief programs needed to be planned in a way that considered the lack of shelter. Another participant shared that adolescent girls used to be so ashamed that they would wait an entire day to go to the fields to change because their clothes had red stains on them. Moreover, there was only one bathroom that was shared by everyone, which made it more difficult for women to meet their menstrual hygiene needs. This resulted in an increase in diseases and infections such as urinary tract infections (UTIs) and vaginosis. One of the participants shared that the medicines for UTIs were finished on the first day of the relief camp.

Since the NGO worker was also conducting relief drives, she was aware of the situation in flood-affected areas. The reason for introducing four different types of hygiene kits was to ensure that the supplies were adequate and practical in a post-disaster setting. Additionally, she also stated that the design of the hygiene kits was centred on the flood victims and not the other way around.

The NGO workers were constantly in touch

with women, midwives, and doctors to ensure that the hygiene kits that they distributed were practical.

## **Conclusion**

Menstrual hygiene is more than just access to sanitary napkins; it is access to toilets, clean water, sanitation, and access to information. There is sufficient data on menstrual hygiene and natural disasters as separate topics, however there is a dearth of data available when both are discussed together. In Pakistan, the literature and data concerning menstrual health and menstrual health management during natural disasters is scarce. Regarding the policies, Pakistan has no laws that directly or indirectly pertain to the component of menstrual hygiene. Yet, the 2022 floods have identified Pakistan as one of the countries with high period poverty. Moreover, the relief work that the local NGOs are doing is part of an immediate emergency response, which is unstructured, disconnected from the other relief policies, and not enough. An analysis of international literature explains that it is important to incorporate menstrual health into disasters and emergencies. Given the paucity of data and literature on MHM in Pakistan, this study used an exploratory design with a limited sample, which limits the scope of the research. However, the study will serve as a starting point for more questions that could be explored in depth later.

Understanding menstrual hygiene in a post-disaster setting through the experiences of flood relief workers and NGOs provides insight into the existing menstrual hygiene conditions. Therefore, the study explored the conditions of menstrual health management during natural disasters to ensure that in the future, women and girls have the fundamental right to safety, privacy, and dignity to manage their menstrual health during natural disasters. Despite its critical importance, menstrual hygiene management continues to be neglected in Pakistan's disaster response efforts. This exploratory study advocates for robust policies that integrate menstrual health into disaster preparedness and response strategies, emphasizing the need for further research.

## References

- IRSP. 2017. "Menstrual Hygiene Management in Pakistan." Published November 13, 2022. <http://irsp.org.pk/menstrual-hygiene-management-pakistan/>.
- Share-Net Team BD. 2017. "Menstrual Hygiene: Challenges during Natural Disaster - Share-Net Bangladesh." <https://www.share-netbangladesh.org/menstrual-hygiene-challenges-natural-disaster/>
- Dawn. 2022. "Group Comes to Aid Flood-Hit Women's Menstrual Hygiene." Published September 2, 2022. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1707913>.
- Ali, Tazeen Saeed and Syeda Naghma Rizvi. 2009. "Menstrual Knowledge and Practices of Female Adolescents in Urban Karachi, Pakistan." *Journal of Adolescence* 33 (4): 531–41. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19589587/>
- Arshad Ali, Shajeea, Mariam Baloch, Lubna Riaz, Ayman Iqbal, Ramsha Riaz, Bushra Perveen, Maham Siddiqui, and Asadullah Arshad Ali. 2020. "Perceptions, Practices, and Challenges Regarding Menstrual Hygiene Among Women in Karachi, Pakistan: A Comparison Between General Population and Healthcare Workers." *Cureus* 12 (8): 1-38. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32968560/>
- Awan, Purniya. 2022. "It's 2022 And Men Are Still Asking If Sanitary Napkins Are Important." *The Express Tribune*, August 31, 2022. <https://tribune.com.pk/article/97625/its-2022-and-men-are-still-asking-if-sanitary-napkins-are-important>.
- Batliwala, Srilatha. 2019. *All About Power: Understanding Social Power and Power Structures*. Crea. <https://creaworld.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/All-About-Power.pdf>
- Bureau for Gender Equality. 2000. *Gender! A Partnership of Equals*. International Labour Organization. [https://inee.org/sites/default/files/resources/ILO\\_2000\\_Gender-A\\_partnership\\_of\\_equals.pdf](https://inee.org/sites/default/files/resources/ILO_2000_Gender-A_partnership_of_equals.pdf)
- Bhattacharjee, Mayuri. 2019. "Menstrual Hygiene Management During Emergencies: A Study of Challenges Faced by Women and Adolescent Girls Living in Flood-prone Districts in Assam." *Indian Journal of Gender Studies* 26 (1–2): 96–107. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0971521518811172>
- Budhathoki, Shyam Sundar, Meika Bhattachan, Enrique Castro-Sánchez, Reshu Agrawal Sagtani, Rajan Bikram Rayamajhi, Pramila Rai, and Gaurav Sharma. 2018. "Menstrual Hygiene Management Among Women and Adolescent Girls in the Aftermath of the Earthquake in Nepal." *BMC Women's Health* 18: 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-018-0527-Y>.
- Caulfield, Jack. 2019. "How to Do Thematic Analysis | Step-by-Step Guide & Examples." *Scribbr*, June 22, 2019. <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/thematic-analysis/>.
- Haider, Sarah. 2022. "Devastating Floods in Pakistan and People's Menstrual Woes." *Geo tv*, September 1, 2022. <https://www.geo.tv/latest/437293-devastating-floods-in-pakistan-and-peoples-menstrual-woes>.
- Krishnan, Sneha and John Twigg. 2016. "Menstrual Hygiene: A 'Silent' Need During Disaster Recovery." *Waterlines* 35 (2): 265–276. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26600765>.
- Khuhro, Rashid, Bashir Memon, Ayesha Maria, and Zaffar Junejo. 2021. "Information Sources of Menstruation Hygiene Among School and College Girls in Sindh, Pakistan." *AMCAP: Journal of Emerging Social Scientist* 1 (1): 61-70. [https://www.researchgate.com/publication/350664107\\_Information\\_Sources\\_of\\_Menstruation\\_Hygiene\\_among\\_School\\_and\\_College\\_Girls\\_in\\_Sindh\\_Pakistan](https://www.researchgate.com/publication/350664107_Information_Sources_of_Menstruation_Hygiene_among_School_and_College_Girls_in_Sindh_Pakistan).
- Logan, Nick. 2022. "Women and Girls in Flood-Stricken Pakistan Need Menstrual

- Products. These Women Are Trying to Help.” *CBC*, September 4, 2022. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/pakistan-floods-women-menstruation-1.6572539>.
- Mathrani, Sanjay. 2022. “Matter of Menstrual Hygiene in Umerkot.” *Daily Times*, September 14, 2022. <https://dailytimes.com.pk/997251/997251/>.
- Moore, Emma. 2022. “The Effects of Climate Change on the Menstrual Health of Women and Girls in Rural Settings within Low-Income Countries.” M.P.H. thesis, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University. <https://doi.org/10.7916/bqyy-vh75>
- Muralidharan, Arundati and Anjali Singhania. 2021. *Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management during Emergencies: A Framework for Action in India*. New Delhi: WaterAid India.
- Kiger, Michelle E., and Lara Varpio. 2020. “Thematic Analysis of Qualitative Data: AMEE Guide No. 131.” *Medical Teacher* 42 (8): 846–54. Doi:10.1080/0142159X.2020.1755030.
- Narang, Gaurvi. 2022. “A Menstrual Campaign Amid Pakistan Floods is Making Right Noises. But Some Men Can’t Take It.” *The Print*, September 2, 2022. <https://theprint.in/go-to-pakistanmmid-pakistan-floods-a-menstrual-campaign-is-making-right-noises-but-some-men-cant-take-it/1113487/>.
- Oxfam. 2017. *Consolidated Gender Analysis for Disaster Response in Pakistan*. Oxfam Policy and Practice.
- Pandit, Kashfi, Mohammad Jadi Hasan, Tazul Islam, and Tareq Rakib. 2022. “Constraints and Current Practices of Menstrual Hygiene Among Rohingya Adolescent Girls.” *Heliyon* 8 (5): 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e09465>.
- Rizwan, Sheharyar. 2022. “Efforts to Fulfill Menstrual Hygiene Needs in Flood-Ravaged Areas.” *Dawn*, September 26, 2022. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1711989>.
- Sommer, Marni, Margaret Schmitt, Tom Ogello, Penninah Mathenge, Magdalena Mark, David Clatworthy, Samantha Khandakji, and Ruwan Ratnayake. 2018. “Pilot Testing and Evaluation of a Toolkit for Menstrual Hygiene Management in Emergencies in Three Refugee Camps in Northwest Tanzania.” *Journal of International Humanitarian Action* 3 (1): 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41018-018-0034-7>.
- UNFPA. 2022. “Women and Girls Bearing the Brunt of the Pakistan Monsoon Floods.” *UNFPA Pakistan*, August 30, 2022. <https://pakistan.unfpa.org/en/news/women-and-girls-bearing-brunt-pakistan-monsoon-floods>
- VanLeeuwen, Crystal and Belen Torondel. 2018. “Improving Menstrual Hygiene Management in Emergency Contexts: Literature Review of Current Perspectives.” *International Journal of Women’s Health* 10: 169–186. doi: 10.2147/IJWH.S135587.
- House, Sarah, Thérèse Mahon, and Sue Cavill. 2017. “Menstrual Hygiene Matters.” *WaterAid*, October 25, 2017. <https://washmatters.wateraid.org/publications/menstrual-hygiene-matters>.
- World Bank. 2021. “A Holistic Approach to Better Menstrual Health and Hygiene: Entrepreneurs in Action.” *World Bank Group*, May 24, 2021. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2021/05/24/a-holistic-approach-to-better-menstrual-health-and-hygiene-entrepreneurs-in-action>.
- Wickramasinghe, Deepthi. 2012. “Managing Menstrual Hygiene in Emergency Situations: How Far from Reality?” Presented at the Asia Regional Sanitation and Hygiene Practitioners Workshop, Dhaka, Bangladesh, January 31-February 2. <https://www.washcluster.net/node/29511>

## Acknowledgments

I extend my gratitude to everyone who has supported me throughout this journey. First and

foremost, I am deeply thankful to my family, my mother for her unwavering encouragement and my dad for his ability to always find the right words to guide me.

I am equally grateful to the participants of this research, whose willingness to share their valuable time and insights made this study possible. My sincere appreciation goes to my advisor, Dr. Shama, for her guidance and thoughtful feedback, which have been instrumental in shaping this work.

To my friends, Fauha, Sameen, and Zoha, thank you for always listening to my passionate discussions about this paper and for offering your constant support. Lastly, I want to acknowledge those who discouraged me from pursuing this topic. Your doubts only provided me with more reason to pursue it.

## **Author Biography**

Anoosha Hasan graduated with a degree in Social Development and Policy from Habib University, Pakistan. In addition to her major, she pursued a minor in Computer Science. Last year, she was involved with an NGO that empowers individuals with disabilities. Currently, she is working in an NGO focused on providing access to justice. Anoosha participated in a course where she worked on a project exploring the link between climate change and sexual and reproductive health. This experience further motivated her to critically examine the prevailing power structures in our society that particularly leaves women more vulnerable.