

**Women's Health Camp: Safe & Sustainable Menstrual Hygiene Kits
Siddharthanagar, Nepal**

**Camp Jointly Conducted by
Pratiman-Neema Memorial Foundation (PNMF) in Collaboration with Women2be of New Mexico
<http://pnfoundation.org.np/womens-health-camp/>**

May 13, 2016

**Data Analysis and Report Prepared
by
Sustainable Development Lab Research Team
Nepal Study Center, University of New Mexico
(Dr. Alok K. Bohara & Siobhan Yilmaz)**

(Tentative Draft Do not Circulate without the Permission of the NSC)

October 2016

Many young girls face tremendous confusion and surprise with the onset of their menses, and this situation is often only exacerbated by the many cultural taboos and stigmas still currently associated with it in many developing nations¹. Additionally, there is also often a lack of good facilities in many developing countries, which increases the need for improving the quality and availability of sanitation and hygiene options to facilitate greater health among young females. Towards this vein, Women2Be, a non-profit organization based out of Albuquerque, NM took female hygiene packets, in the style of those put together by Days for Girls, to Nepal in May 2016. Along with providing girls and women these reusable kits, good for up to three years, educational information about female health and hygiene were provided and a survey to capture the current state of attitudes and behavior was also administered. From this survey collection, important preliminary conclusion can be drawn about how girls/women are managing their menses, current problems they experience, and current limitations to being able to practice good hygiene.

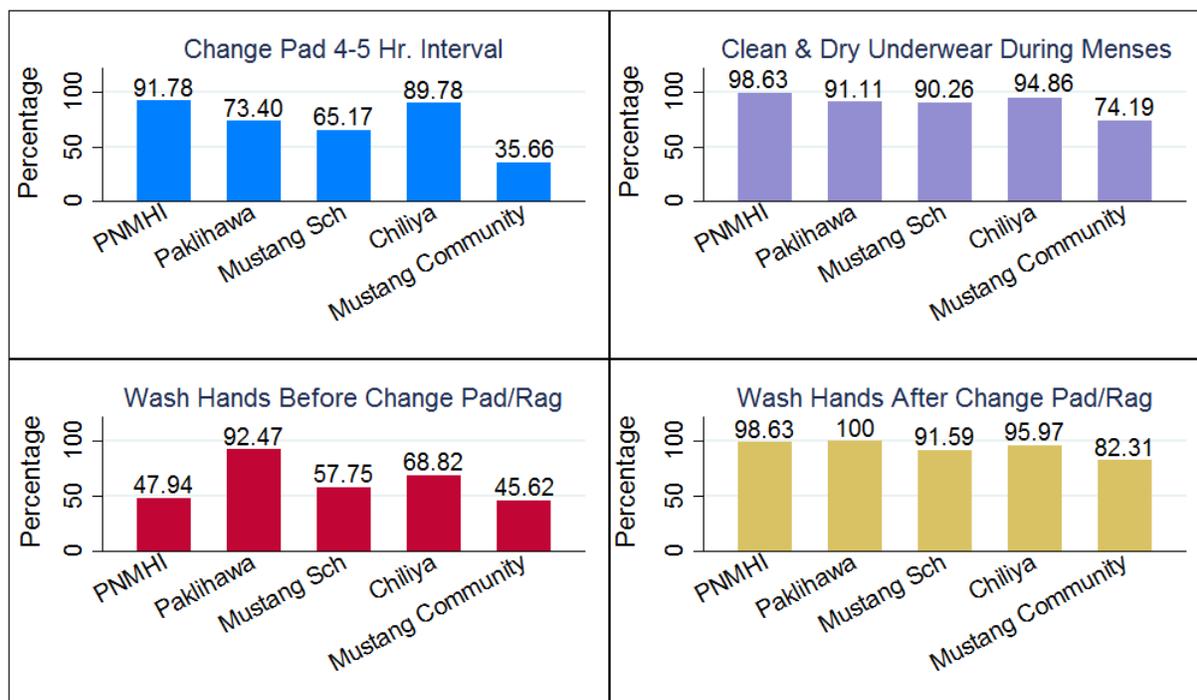
There were four different groups of women interviewed: school-aged and community women in two regions of Nepal – Bhairahawa (Siddharthanagar) and Mustang. The former is a primarily Hindu population in south-central Nepal and the latter a primarily Buddhist community in north-central Nepal. Table 1 lays out the distribution of the women sampled, wherein PNMHI and Paklihawa are schools in Bhairahawa and Chiliya is the community of women in southern Nepal surveyed.

¹ LaSaine, Emma-Claire. "Why Menstrual Hygiene Remains a Challenge in Nepal." *The Borgen Project*, July 31, 2015. <http://borgenproject.org/menstrual-hygiene-remains-challenge-nepal/>.

All Women	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
PNMHI	73	9.89	9.89
Paklihawa	99	13.41	23.31
Mustang Sch	122	16.53	39.84
Chiliya	280	37.94	77.78
Mustang Community	164	22.22	100.00
Total	738	100.00	

The average age of all females surveyed was 27 years old, with girls as young as 12 and women as old as 57. In terms of products used during menstruation, 28% use old rags/clothes, 48% use disposable pads, and 24% reusable products. In total, 60% of women claimed that they experience extreme pain during their menses, and yet, only 13% use a hot pack, 14 % use pain medicine, and 17% report going to a doctor to deal with their menstruation discomfort. In terms of general hygiene practices, 84% of women report washing rags with just soap, with only 9% use some form of antiseptic. Figure 1 summarizes additional current hygiene practices. Of note is that while the vast majority of women, in all locations, wash their hands after changing their pads/rags, close to half of women and girls (excluding one of the Bhairahawa schools) do not wash their hands prior.

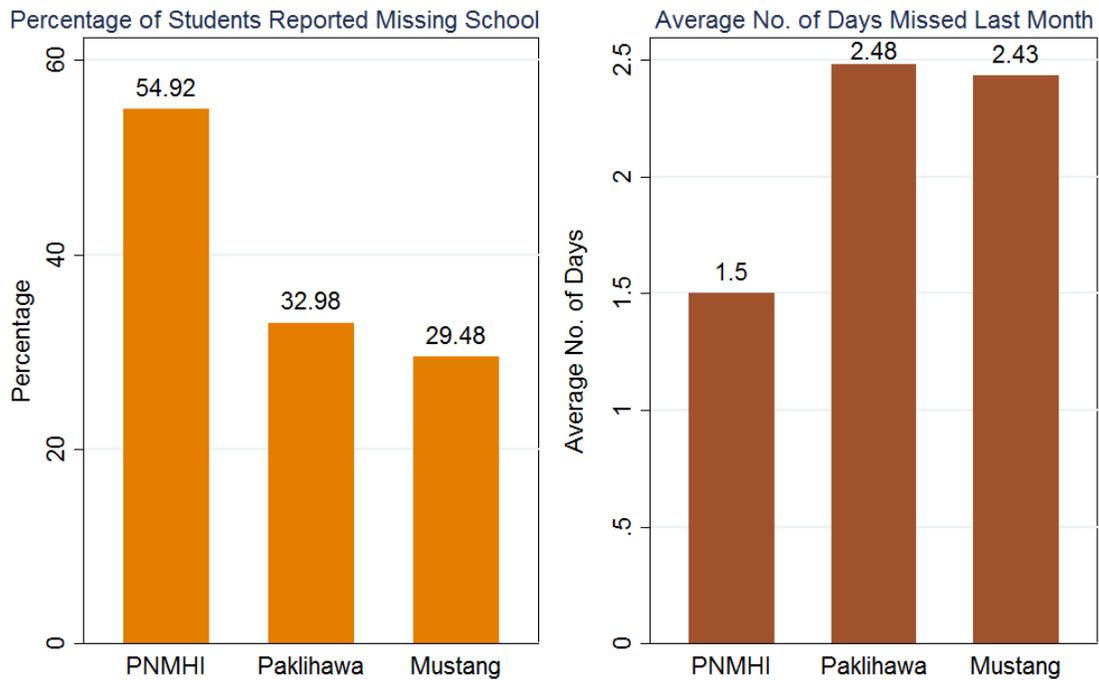
**Figure 1: Menstrual Hygiene Practices
By Female Group**



Source: Nepal Study Center, UNM. June, 2016

To allow for success in improving menstrual hygiene and sanitation, understanding of the most prevalent limitations is necessary. Of all women, 36% reported knowing someone who had to drop out of school due to menstrual problems and 18% missed school due to having to cover some of the chores for their mother, during her menses cycle. Figure 2 shows the extent of absenteeism among those girls still in school. One can see that the percentage of girls missing school is much higher in the Hindu-dominated population areas than Buddhist, with around 2 days per month being the average number of days missed.

Figure 2: School Absenteeism



Source: PNMF & NSC

Additionally, when asked how hard it was for them to manage work and/or school during menses, 70% of women claimed it was hard or very hard. Figure 3 summarizes some other key indicators that women in Nepal are facing strong hurdles in their management of menstruation, based on behaviors. Notable is that rates of staying in a separate house are quite low (note the 10% maximum), but many other aspects of life are hindered by menses. Within the Hindu-dominated regions, entering the prayer room is quite low compared to Buddhist-dominated regions, and it is much more uncommon for women to enter the kitchen or attend cultural functions during menses in the southern regions. Interestingly, a majority of women from all groups are reported as cooking for their mom during her menses, perhaps reflecting greater cultural limitations in older generations.

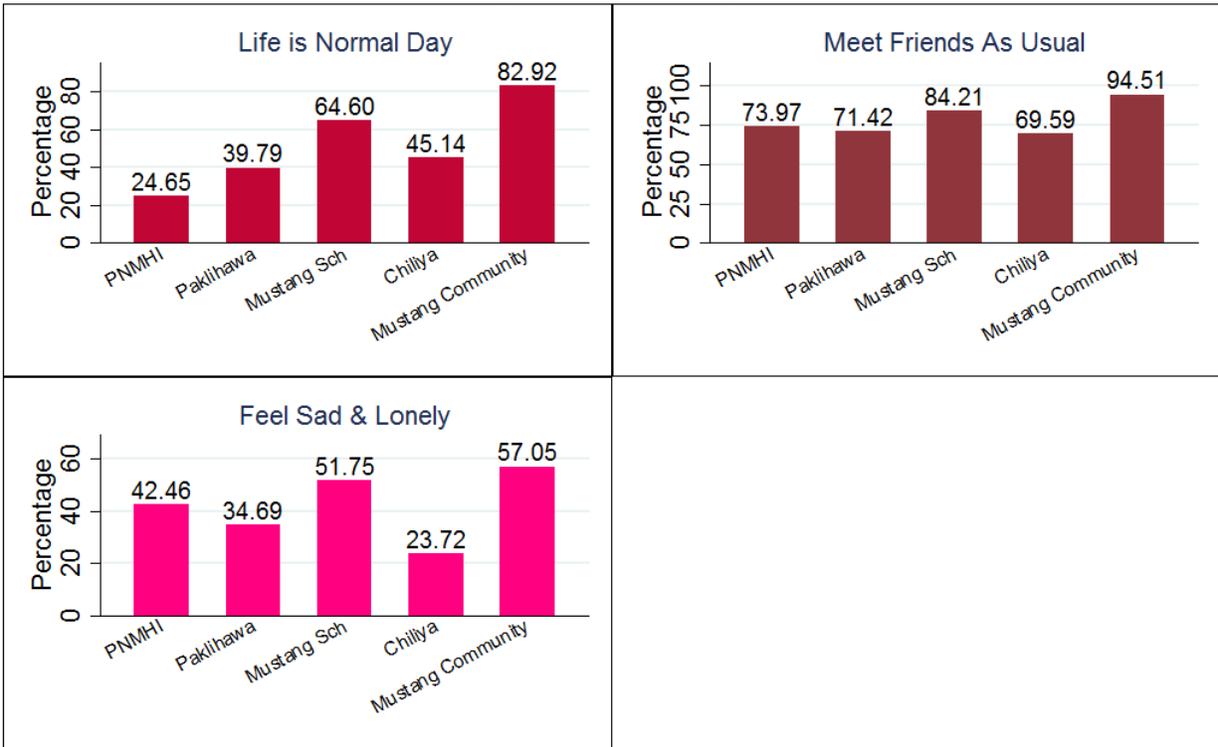
Figure 3: Cultural Environment During Menstruation
By Female Group



Source: PNMF & NSC

Figure 4 provides evidence that, emotionally, women are also suffering from lack of support, whether physical or emotional, during their menses. It appears that women and girls in Mustang regions (Buddhist-dominated) have a greater ability to live their lives as a normal day than is seen in the southern regions of Nepal, reflecting the lower taboos. Additionally, from 30% to 57% of women report feeling sad or lonely during their menses.

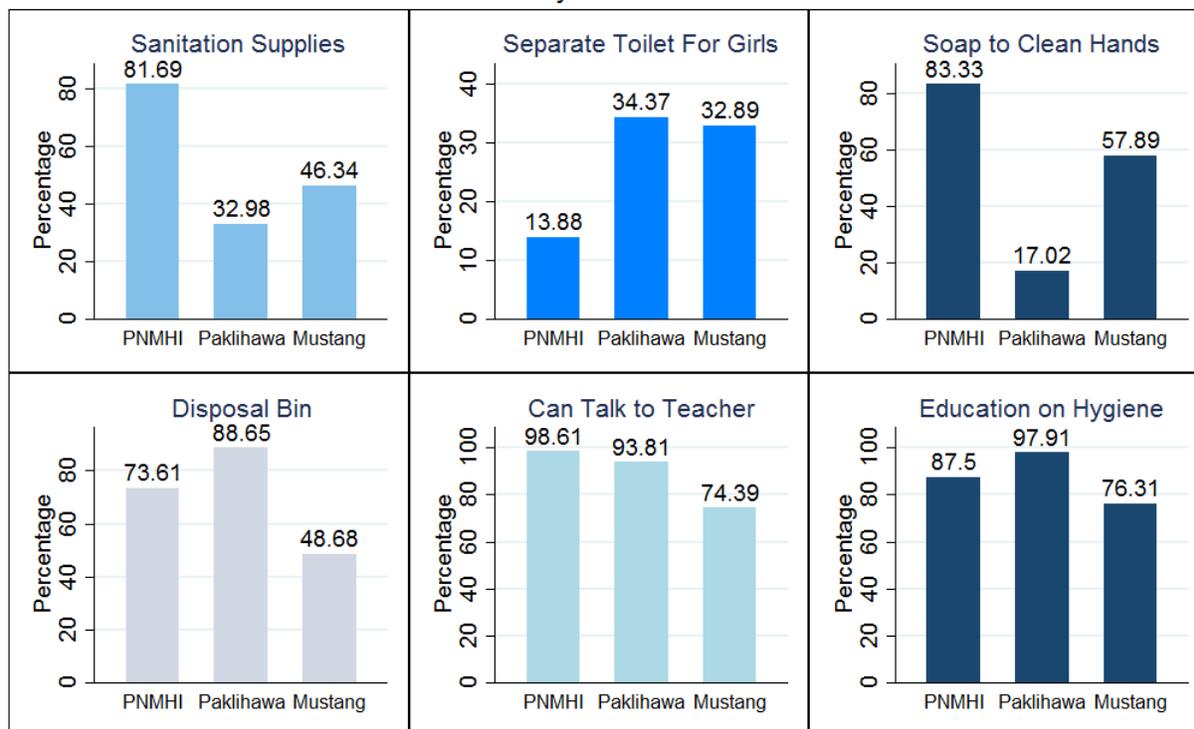
Figure 4: Emotional Environment During Menstruation
By Female Group



Source: PNMF & NSC

Taking all of these findings into consideration, it definitely appears that there is a call for more interventions in Nepal to aid in improving the situation/lives of women in regard to menstrual hygiene management, attitudes, and facilities. Likely, one of the key areas of focus will prove to be schools, given that there is a lack of proper facilities (Figure 5), which can be much more easily tackled than cultural taboos which must slowly change as society's demands change.

Figure 5: Menstruation Supporting Infrastructure At School
By School



Source: PNMF & NSC