

# FACES OF EMPOWERMENT

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME  
IN PAKISTAN



2020



## FACES OF EMPOWERMENT

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## Foreword

In my almost 4 years in Pakistan I have gotten the opportunity to learn much about this amazing country and its remarkable people. Sadly, I have not had the chance to learn much Urdu, but I have picked up little bits here and there. A very interesting idiom which I have learned is that *“Man and woman are two wheels of the same cart”*. Yet, one finds it interesting to observe that such an insight into the affairs of life has been so ingrained in the collective psyche of the people of Pakistan, has not become a practical part of their lives.

If life can be likened to a cart, then both the wheels have to be equal in size and must function equally well for the cart to travel anywhere. But such proverbial equality is not a reality in the Pakistani society even though women are almost half of the population. Women are restricted to rigid gender roles that stem from a long-gone era. They are not given equal opportunity to study, to express themselves, to make their own choices and to join a workforce.

Thanks to the continuous and unwavering support of our partners, giving women equal opportunities to grow and participate in life is part of UNDP’s mandate. And those who have become a part of our various projects, have demonstrated excellent initiative, intelligence and passion. Their vibrance and the desire to excel is a beacon of light for everyone. There is no doubt in my mind that if more women were allowed the opportunities that are their due, Pakistan would progress further in leaps and bounds.

The following pages contain photographs of some of the outstanding women that we have had the privilege of working with. This brochure is a homage to the strength, resilience and optimism of the women of Pakistan.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ignacio Artaza', enclosed within a simple oval-shaped line.

**Ignacio Artaza**

*Resident Representative*



## RABEL KHUBCHANDANI

*Children's rights activist*

Rabel is a banker by profession who has been involved in volunteer work. She has worked with different charities and humanitarian organizations.

She became a part of the UNDP Youth Innovation Challenge with the aim to spread awareness about child abuse. She has conducted awareness sessions in four different schools where children were educated about differentiating between good and bad touch, and what to do if they ever felt someone was behaving inappropriately with them. During her activities, Rabel found out that many schools refused to allow her to conduct these sessions on their premises. She feels that this is a conservative mindset shared by parents also. Although her awareness-raising activities have come to an end, she continues to research the subject further and hopes to publish it.



## NAYAB ALI

*Transgender rights activist*

Nayab Ali is one of the most prominent transgender people of Pakistan. She is an activist, educator, and one of the Master Trainers of UNDP. Despite suffering many personal tragedies like disconnection from her family and even an attempt at her life, she has grown to be a strong role model for her community and a leading fighter for their rights.

She has dedicated her life to activism and a struggle to protect the rights of the trans community. She co-chairs an organization against gender-based violence, serves as a strategic advisor for other similar organizations and has also founded the first school for the trans community. Among her numerous other accomplishments, she has also been the leading representative of her community in the process of developing the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018. It is a historic law that guarantees basic rights for transgender community and allows them to self-identify as male, female or a blend of both genders on their national ID cards, passports, driver's licenses and educational certificates. This act also outlaws discrimination against them.



## ANEELA NAZ

*Police Officer*

Aneela Naz is a Deputy Superintendent in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police. As a young girl, she dreamed of becoming a teacher but ended up joining the police force to fulfill her father's wishes.

She is a Master Trainer who has been a part of UNDP's programs twice. She received training regarding gender sensitivity and then provided the same training to other members of her department. She feels proud of the fact that she got the opportunity to educate other officers who were senior to her. She is of the opinion that the KP police should increase the number of women in its ranks manifold, as currently there are very few of them. She thinks that the entry criteria for women should be more lenient to make it possible for more women to join the force.



## RAMEELA DURRANI

*Entrepreneur*

Rameela is a social activist and entrepreneur from Swat. She has been a part of UNDP's Digiskills program.

She is a socially aware young woman who had been working in the field of education for her community. In addition to that, she was interested in starting a business. On a personal trip to the United States, she received many complements on the traditional clothes that she wore. That gave her the idea that the local handicrafts of her region were a marketable product. Based on that experience, she started her own dress design and production business. She also felt that this could be a good opportunity for her to involve other women from her community and provide them with an income-generation opportunity. Her training in Digiskills provided her with the know-how of digital marketing. She is currently marketing her products locally but plans to reach out at national and international levels also.

## ALISHA

*Transgender rights activist*

Alisha is a highly educated transgender rights activist who is working as a consultant for the UNDP. The scope of her work covers gender minorities and inclusion of transgenders.

Alisha has been working as a transgender rights activist for the past few years. She feels that there has been a positive change in the society and people are becoming more tolerant and accepting towards the transgender people. She feels that the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018 has been a major step in this direction. However, she is of the opinion that its implementation at provincial level and further lawmaking would yield considerable results for the rights of transgender people.



## NEELUM AKHTAR

*Entrepreneur*

Neelum Akhtar is a young entrepreneur from Haripur, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. She started her business to promote handicrafts made by different artisans, particularly women, about four years ago. She initially reached out to artisans of her own region but slowly expanded her reach all over Pakistan.

She participated in a micro-entrepreneurship training program organized by UNDP. This training helped her organize her business better and come up with new ideas to develop it further. Her company has now established pick-up points all over the country. The artisans of that particular region can not only use these pick-up points to deliver their wares to the clients, but also to display their work. Neelum has also started arranging events where handicrafts are displayed and promoted. Initially she started selling through word of mouth and a Facebook page, but has now developed her own website with the aim to sell internationally.



## AMBREEN FATIMA

*Driver*

Ambreen is the first woman driver hired by UNDP Pakistan. She has many years of experience of driving a cab and having been employed by other NGOs as a driver. She chose driving as a career because she feels that one should always try to take the road less traveled. There are not too many women professional drivers in Pakistan, so she decided to become one. She feels very proud working for UNDP.



## BISMA JATOI

*Volunteer*

Bisma is a student of University of Sindh who has served as a United Nations Civic Education Volunteer for two terms. The scope of her work has been civic education of the masses, particularly the importance of getting a Computerized National Identity Cards.

She worked in the Tando Jam area of Hyderabad. It is an underdeveloped area where women do not get their CNICs made, at least not before they are married. Due to this, they do not get to vote in elections either. It also limits their chances of benefiting from any government programs or travelling. During the course of her volunteer activities, she managed to convince the families of a few women to get them their CNICs. This has inspired other families to get their daughters CNICs as well. Bisma believes that women can play a greater role than men in the development of a country and it is imperative for them to become active members of the society.



## **BUBBLI MALIK**

*Transgender rights activist*

Bubbli is a prominent transgender activist and a guru (traditional elder) of her community in Rawalpindi. She is also a Master Trainer who has been a part of UNDP's capacity building initiatives and has been passing her knowledge to others.

She founded an organization by the name of Wajood, that has been working for transgender rights and empowerment for many years. Her organization focuses primarily on depathologization, empowerment and violence. She has also used her influence to create awareness about HIV in the transgender community. Another aspect of her work is destigmatization of transgenderism and support for trans youth.



## MUBICA BABAR

*A successful farmer from Hunza*

Many visitors have likened Hunza to paradise on earth. Yet, this paradise becomes rather uninhabitable in winter. With snow and temperatures consistently far below zero, it becomes very difficult to venture outside, and any and all resources to get through the cold must be gathered in the summer. The inability to get any fresh food not only makes life bland, it also causes health issues. Most of the population lives financially constrained lives. These conditions compound their troubles indirectly.

UNDP is managing a highly successful initiative in this region that educates local women on operating tunnel farms. Mubica is one of the trailblazers in this field. She is running a successful tunnel farm that not only helps her grow fresh produce for her family but also lets her sell the surplus in the local markets.



## **FIZZAH AAMIR**

*Animal rights activist*

Fizzah is an animal rights activist from Karachi. She has always felt for the plight of stray animals. Our Youth Innovation Challenge provided her the opportunity to do something about it.

As a part of her activities, Fizzah has rescued animals and gotten them adopted. She has also gotten stray cats and dogs neutered so that they cannot reproduce further. She feels that every living thing is born with a purpose. Due to abandonment of animals and no measures to control their reproduction, they become pests and receive inhumane treatment. However, most of them can become useful if they are looked after. In her own neighborhood, she started feeding stray dogs. Once they got used to receiving food, they started treating that neighborhood as their home and started guarding it at night. Consequently, the instances of petty theft have been minimized there. She feels that our society needs to be made aware about animal rights and humane treatment for them.



## **FARAH BIBI**

*Beneficiary who voted for the first time in Sahiwal.*

Like most women of her village in the outskirts of Sahiwal, Farah had never had her CNIC made. The idea had never even crossed her mind. It was the men folk's purview whether a woman should get one made or not, and they deemed it unnecessary. As a result of this mindset, most women of their village have no official existence.

Through their partners, UNDP made considerable efforts to get members of the area to register themselves for a CNIC. Thus, the people of Farah's village also came to know the benefits of becoming a part of the government's database. Through this, the women also got their identify cards. Farah is very proud that she got to vote in the by-elections held in their constituency last year.

## JAVERIA

*Volunteer*

Javeria is a United Nations Civic Education Volunteer who has conducted civic education campaigns in Lasbela, Balochistan. She is a graduate of Lasbela University who became a volunteer after finishing her education.

She joined the volunteer program because she found that most of the people of her area were completely oblivious to their rights and responsibilities as citizens. As most of the women of that region hardly ever venture out of their homes and have minimal exposure, they are even more ignorant about these matters. Javeria has conducted awareness sessions not just for women but has also reached out to men. She has been the first woman to go to bazars and marketplaces to address men to impart civic education and to give them handouts. She also came up with a novel idea to conduct her sessions inside public buses. It was not an easy task for a young woman from a conservative and extremely patriarchal area. However, she believes that the gender stereotypes must be broken, and someone has to take lead and set an example for others.



## SABA BATOOL

*Restauratrice*

Saba is a restauratrice from Hazara Town, Quetta. As an enterprising young woman, she tried her hand at different businesses including establishing a small institute where she trained other women to make handicrafts. Saba came up with the idea to start a restaurant during a particularly turbulent and difficult time for her community. She realized that as they were spending all their time within their own neighborhood, they had no opportunity to go out to eat. Also, quite a few of them found the cost of eating out unaffordable. So, she decided to make a restaurant that offered delicious meals and provided a place for the women of her community to hang out.

She received a two-month entrepreneurship training arranged by UNDP. Since then, she has expanded her one-room restaurant within her house to a large hall in the neighborhood. The restaurant is being run by a group of women. Not only they are catering to their own community but have also started taking orders for deliveries outside their neighborhood.



## HAMNA AKRAM

*Lawyer*

Hailing from Orakzai district in the former FATA, Hamna is the first woman lawyer in her family. When she chose to study law, some members of her extended family tried to dissuade her because they felt it was a male dominated field and hence no place for a girl.

She has been practicing law for two years. In the course of her practice, she found that though there are many experts in the fields of civil and criminal law, there were not many practitioners of tax law. So, when she learned about the tax law training conducted by UNDP, she jumped at the opportunity. This two-month training opened a new professional avenue for her, and she chose this to be her field of expertise. She is now practicing tax law and is one of the very few women tax lawyers in Peshawar.



## **IQBAL JAHAN**

*Women's rights activist*

Iqbal Jahan is a women's rights activist from Swat who has been involved in business, local politics and philanthropy. The focus of her work has mainly been women's rights, particularly in marital disputes. Most women suffering marital disputes or violence have trouble finding legal recourse. Iqbal Jahan provides assistance to such women by connecting them to lawyers.

She received paralegal training through a UNDP program. Based on her training and experience, she has also formed her own NGO by the name of Women's Rights and Development Organization Swat (WORDS). Her organization focuses on women's rights, social mobilization, health, education, and disaster relief.

# Thank You!

to the continuous and unwavering support of our partners, giving women equal opportunities to grow and participate in life is part of UNDP's mandate.



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**United Nations Development Programme**

4th floor, Serena Business Complex  
Khayaban-e-Suharwardy, G-5/1, Islamabad, Pakistan



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