

# International Women's Day

#ACCELERATE ACTION

**SPECIAL EDITION**

MARCH 8, 2025





## #EQUALITYFORALL

*Message:*

The time for gender equality is now. Let's close the gaps in leadership, education, and opportunity for a brighter future.



## #ACCELERATE ACTION

*Message:*

A gender-equal world benefits everyone. Let's ensure equal pay, equal rights, and equal respect. #InclusiveFuture #Accelerate action



## #ACTFOREQUALITY

*Message:*

When women rise, communities rise. It's time to accelerate action for gender equality and create a more inclusive world.



## #ACCELERATE EQUALITY

*Message:*

Gender equality is not just a vision; it's a right. Let's break barriers, challenge biases, and create a world where everyone thrives.

This International Women's Day, we celebrate the resilience and determination of women like Sadia, who are breaking barriers and forging a path toward gender equality.

Sadia, a 40-year-old widow and mother of four, lives in a small village where she has always been the pillar of strength for her family. After the passing of her husband, she and her daughter, who works as a private school teacher, struggled to meet their daily expenses. With limited financial resources and no sustainable means of income, Sadia faced significant challenges in providing for her children. But she refused to let circumstances define her future.

In line with the vision of a gender-equal world, one free of bias, stereotypes, and discrimination, CESVI launched a skills development training initiative under the BRAVE project which is funded by FCDO in Sadia's village. This program aimed to equip women with practical skills, enabling them to achieve financial independence and break free from economic constraints. After a thorough needs assessment, local women were registered through interviews, and Sadia was among those selected for training in leatherwork. The training empowered women with the ability to craft school bags, clutches, and handbags, transforming them into skilled entrepreneurs. For Sadia, who previously only knew how to sew clothes, this opportunity was life changing. She quickly mastered leatherworking techniques, applying her existing sewing skills to create marketable products. More than just technical expertise, the training instilled in her a sense of confidence and self-reliance, proving that women can excel in any field when given equal opportunities.

"I used to only sew clothes, but now I am learning how to make bags from leather, which is very interesting for me. This training has improved my skills and opened new possibilities," she shared with pride.

With her newfound skills, Sadia is now fulfilling bag orders and dreams of starting her own small business. This initiative has not only equipped her with practical skills but also given her the courage to take control of her economic future. By achieving financial independence, she is not only improving her own life but also inspiring other women in her community to break stereotypes and seize opportunities.

Sadia's journey is a testament to the power of women's economic empowerment.

**On this International Women's Day, let us reaffirm our commitment to gender equality. Together, we can Accelerate Action and create a future where every woman has the chance to thrive, free from bias and discrimination, and where economic empowerment becomes a reality for all.**







## Empowering Women, Transforming Communities: The SUSTAIN Kamangar Project

In rural Pakistan, a remarkable transformation is taking place. On National Women's Day 2025, a vibrant gathering in Village Qadir Bux Depar, District Dadu, celebrated the empowerment of women under the SUSTAIN Kamangar Project—a collaboration between Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Sindh People's Housing Foundation (SPHF), and Goth Seengar Foundation.

At the heart of this initiative are 18 female construction supervisors, trained by CRS to oversee the rebuilding of 755 climate-resilient homes. Beyond construction, they promote hygiene, sustainability, and economic resilience, inspiring other women to take on leadership roles. The event brought together 60 rural women to discuss education, equal rights, and economic empowerment. Community leader Ms. Razia called for an end to early child marriage, aligning with broader efforts to address gender inequalities.

This initiative proves that empowering women transforms entire communities. As these women continue to lead, they are shaping a more resilient, inclusive future for generations to come.





## BREAKING BARRIERS:

### My Journey to Empowerment

As I wake up to another International Women's Day, I reflect on my journey—one of resilience, struggle, and triumph. This day is more than a celebration; it is a reminder of the power within me, the battles I have fought, and the barriers I have broken.

Growing up in Azad Kashmir, I witnessed how a patriarchal society confined women to household roles, limiting their opportunities. I defied these norms, pursuing education and leadership despite resistance. My journey, shaped by my work in disaster response since the 2005 earthquake, has been about proving that women can lead in every sector, including disaster risk management. I have trained and empowered women to prepare for disasters, breaking the misconception that such efforts are solely men's responsibility.

Earning trust in a male-dominated field was a challenge, but I persevered. Women, once unaware of disaster preparedness, are now trained, active in Emergency Response Teams, and decision-makers in their communities. My advocacy has always emphasized that an empowered woman strengthens not just her family but society as a whole.

Benazir Bhutto's words inspire me: "As a woman, I fight for the rights of women. As a human being, I fight for the rights of all." Like her, I stand for a future where women in Pakistan can lead and thrive.



***International Women's Day is a movement—a statement of strength and change.  
Today, I celebrate me. I celebrate us. Happy International Women's Day!***





## IMPACT REPORT

As part of the consultancy project under Human Appeal, a series of training sessions and practical workshops were conducted with women entrepreneurs in Shaheed Benazirabad, Sindh. These sessions aimed to empower beneficiaries by enhancing their skills, guiding them to create marketable products, and enabling them to utilize online platforms for sustainable income generation. This report highlights the progress, outcomes, and insights gained from these activities, including participation in an exhibition at Expo Center Karachi, the analysis of product sales trends, and the groundwork for the project's final phase.



[Read full report](#)



## Project Title:

Improving Access to GBV Prevention and Response Services for Vulnerable Afghan Nationals

## Overview:

This project aims to improve GBV prevention and response services for Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) holders in Sohrab Goth, Karachi, by addressing GBV, harmful practices like child marriage, and promoting gender equality. It focuses on providing accessible services to vulnerable women and girls, strengthening the protection environment, and raising community awareness. The project will benefit 31,428 individuals in the targeted area.

## Activities:

- Service Mapping: Strengthen referral pathways for survivors by mapping available services.
- Helpline Transition: Ensure sustainability by transitioning established helplines for continuous support.
- Capacity Building: Provide training to staff and stakeholders to improve service delivery.
- Case Management & Referrals: Offer case management services and referrals for GBV survivors.
- Establish WGFSSs: Set up Women & Girls Friendly Spaces for psychosocial support and protection.
- Awareness Raising Sessions: Conduct community sessions to raise awareness about GBV prevention and rights.
- Quarterly Stakeholder Meetings: Facilitate coordination meetings with stakeholders to improve service integration.

## Outcomes:

- Enhanced Referral Pathways: Improved access to services through comprehensive service mapping.
- Sustainable Helplines: Institutionalized helplines offering long-term support for survivors.
- Improved Capacity of Staff & Stakeholders: Strengthened skills and knowledge of service providers in GBV prevention and response.
- Effective Case Management: Timely and effective intervention for GBV survivors through case management and referrals.
- Safe Spaces for Women & Girls: Women & Girls Friendly Spaces (WGFSSs) established to provide protection, skills-building, and psychosocial services.
- Increased Community Awareness: Enhanced community knowledge on GBV prevention and available services.
- Strengthened Multi-Sectoral Coordination: Regular coordination meetings to align stakeholders, improving service delivery and policy alignment.

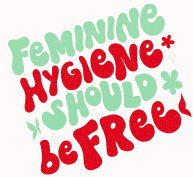


*Community awareness raising session  
(CBP Activities) at WGFS Karachi*



*Males Awareness Raising Session*



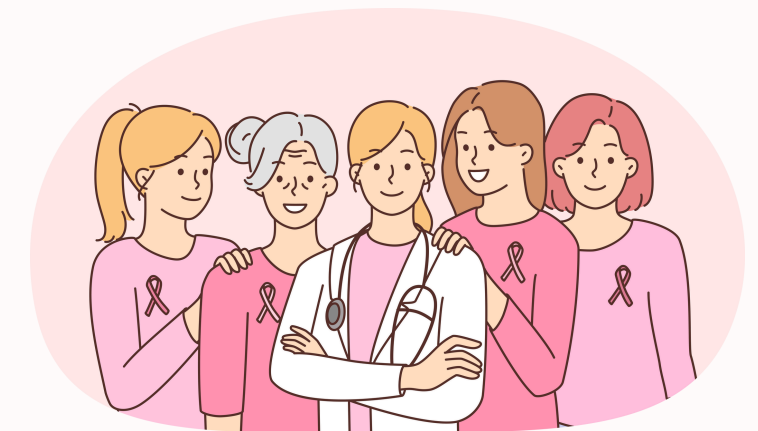


## SUCCESS STORY:

### Provision of life-saving and integrated Health care and nutrition services

The challenge of childbirth in a new land was immense for Afghan refugees who made their way to Pakistan four decades ago, losing citizenship and privileges as well as their financial stability. A transformative project of provision of life-saving and integrated Health care and nutrition services for crisis-affected people in Pakistan funded by GFFO and implemented by Malteser International Pakistan provided essential health care through professional and dignified labour room services, including care by female doctors and free of cost essential medications. This initiative led to the welcoming of a total of 1685 (586 refugees) lives in the Basic Health Units of MI and restored dignity for women like Nahida, who experienced safe, compassionate births. It also fostered community resilience by integrating refugee and host communities, empowering local women through Village Health Committee participation, and building a network of trusted local people, demonstrating the profound impact of prioritizing women's health in crisis-affected populations.

Accelerate Action' is the call, and this project stands as a testament that by providing free-of-cost birth services, we are ensuring that every woman, regardless of her circumstances, has access to safe maternal care. This initiative is more than just healthcare. It's a commitment to dignity, equity, and stronger communities. When we prioritize women's health, we're not only saving lives but also creating a foundation for a healthier, more resilient future for all.



## CASE STUDY:

### Healing Through Support: The Psychological Rehabilitation of a Rape Survivor background

YA, an 18-year-old rape-victim, an Afghan refugee residing in District Mardan, sought psychological support at an MdM-supported health facility in Bageecha after experiencing significant distress. She arrived at the facility five days after reporting that she had been raped by a family member. Despite her insistence on the assault, her family was reluctant to acknowledge her claims. Given the sensitivity of the situation, the attending medical doctor sought her consent for a medical examination to confirm the incident. Also, recognizing her psychological distress and behavioral reactions, the team referred her to a psychologist for further assessment and mental health support.

YA's symptoms indicated a diagnosis of major depressive disorder (MDD) that started five to six days before her visit to the MdM facility. There was no prior record of psychiatric treatment or mental health conditions.

#### Case Management and Intervention:

A structured psychological intervention plan was initiated for YA, consisting of three therapy sessions alongside ongoing medical care. Her initial WHO-5 Well-being Score was 5, reflecting extremely low well-being. Therapy addressed anxiety, sleep disturbances, and communication challenges, using cognitive techniques. By the third session, her score improved to 17, showing significant progress.

YA also received medical assistance and was informed about legal support for filing a case against her abuser. Her primary concern was psychological recovery, including abortion care if needed, which MdM provided confidentially. She was also guided on creating a safety plan.

By the end of treatment, YA reported significant emotional improvement, attributing her progress to the coping skills learned. Her journey highlights the vital role of integrated mental health and psychosocial support in trauma recovery, empowering her with resilience for long-term well-being.



## EMPOWERING WOMEN, STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES:



### Mercy Corps Fight Against Tuberculosis

Women are central to stability, progress, and long-term development. At Mercy Corps, we believe empowering women strengthens communities, reduces poverty, and accelerates sustainable development. In Pakistan, access to healthcare is crucial for women's well-being, yet diseases like tuberculosis (TB) hinder their ability to work, care for families, and participate fully in society.

Anum, a 45-year-old factory worker, brought her daughter Alisha to YCDO Hospital in Multan, suspecting a seasonal illness. A Mercy Corps TB screener identified TB symptoms and confirmed Alisha's diagnosis. Further screening revealed a family history of TB, leading to comprehensive testing. Despite initial hesitation due to cost and distance, Anum's family of six underwent screening at a Mercy Corps X-ray camp, uncovering four active TB cases, including Anum's drug-resistant TB. With support from trained doctors, Anum and three daughters began TB treatment, while her husband and another daughter started TB Preventive Treatment (TPT).

Mercy Corps' intervention goes beyond treatment—it empowers women to take charge of their health. Early detection and access to healthcare not only save lives but also strengthen women's roles as agents of change. While the fight against TB continues, initiatives like TPT offer hope, ensuring a healthier, more resilient future for women and their families.





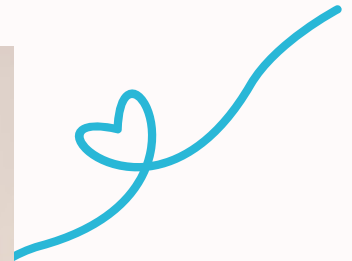
## YOUR SPACE, YOUR COMFORT

The Girls Guide Association Centre in Lahore, Pakistan, has been a hub for over 500 girls monthly, improving their life skills and seeking knowledge. However, the center faced a critical challenge - a dire shortage of girls-friendly toilets. Muslim Hands Pakistan collaborated with Girls Guide Pakistan to revolutionize sanitation by constructing girls-friendly toilets at five centers in Punjab. The project included Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) sessions and Incinerators for safe and convenient disposal of menstrual waste. The transformative journey reached 550 girls and women, including 20 dedicated staff members and 500 monthly visiting students. Nearly 30 disabled students benefited from improved access to sanitation facilities. The installation of girls-friendly toilets has acted as a powerful eraser of difficulties, ensuring seamless access to girls-friendly toilets, especially during the menstrual cycle.



## FUTURE CARDIOLOGIST

Maryam, a graduate of the Muslim Hands School of Excellence in Islamabad, has been pursuing her dream of becoming a doctor since childhood. Financial constraints made her dream seem unattainable, but Muslim Hands provided essential assistance, including covering entry exam fees and admission costs. Maryam is now enrolled in Gujranwala Medical College and is grateful for their support and encouragement in her journey.



## A WOMAN-LED BAKERY

Dream Come True



At 29, Kaneez Fatima is the first female beneficiary of Qatar Charity (QC) to run a bakery in Rawalpindi's bustling market. Her journey is one of resilience, breaking gender norms to achieve financial independence in a male-dominated industry. After losing her father, the sole breadwinner, Fatima struggled to support her family. With a basic graduation, she had limited opportunities until QC Pakistan stepped in to help her establish a women-led bakery. In early 2023, QC conducted a market assessment, selected a prime location, and provided extensive support, including business registration, staff training, equipment installation, and financial planning. Today, her fully operational bakery employs vulnerable women from disadvantaged backgrounds, empowering them with sustainable livelihoods.

***"I am proud to own this bakery, providing opportunities for other deserving women. QC has been a ray of hope in my life," Fatima shared with a smile. Her bakery stands as a model for social enterprises, proving that with the right support, women can thrive as entrepreneurs and create meaningful change in their communities.***

**Project Information:**

The Integrated Socio Economic Development project, being implemented by local partner SSEWA PAK aims develop communities through economic empowerment by equipping them with necessary skills and tools to contribute in society's betterment.

**ACCELERATING ACTION:****Shaheen's Journey from Hardship to Empowerment**

At just 22, Shaheen refused to let financial struggles define her family's future. As the eldest among her siblings, she carried the weight of responsibility, determined to break the cycle of hardship. With limited resources but unwavering resolve, she seized an opportunity, a six-month beautician course by SSEWA-Pak, designed to equip women with skills for financial independence.

With dedication, Rohama learnt makeup techniques and salon management. Upon completing the course, she transformed one room of her home into a small beauty parlor, launching her own business with minimal resources. Today, earning a sufficient income daily, she has not only contributing in her family's financial situation.

Shaheen's success is a testament to the power of skill development in accelerating women's empowerment. She stands as a beacon of hope in her community, proving that when women are given the right tools, they can drive change not just for themselves, but for those around them.

As the world marks International Women's Day with the theme Accelerate Action, Shaheen's journey is a powerful reminder that investing in women's skills is investing in a brighter, more equitable future.





# #ACCELERATE ACTION

