



Creating
Opportunities
and **Inspiration**

USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program



Katpana Lake, Gilgit-Baltistan

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES
AND INSPIRATION



USAID SMALL GRANTS AND AMBASSADOR'S FUND PROGRAM

Dedicated to the People of Pakistan



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PREFACE

The USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program (SGAFP), through its diverse grants, has touched the lives of countless Pakistanis, rekindled hope and made myriads of dreams come true. This book weaves an exquisite tapestry of those dreams and hopes.

Taking a kaleidoscopic view of the impact of the grant projects, this book brings together a mosaic of varied inspirational stories.

Creating Opportunities and Inspirations celebrates the remarkable potential, resilience, and perseverance of Pakistanis who need just a little support and impetus to improve their lives. This book invites the reader to witness some of these captivating journeys. Stories selected and presented in this book represent over two million similar triumphant lives who benefited from the USAID's development assistance.

In the eight years of this Program, we were joined by numerous partners across Pakistan, both in the public and private sector, who played a vital role in carrying this Program forward. This book is also a reflection of those vital partnerships – without which the Program would not have had the success it achieved.

The Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program team hopes that this book provides readers with a glimpse of the impact the Program has had on the lives of individuals and communities around the country.

Saeed Ashraf Siddiqi,
Chief of Party,
USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program



Skardu, Gilgit-Baltistan

USAID SMALL GRANTS AND AMBASSADOR'S FUND PROGRAM

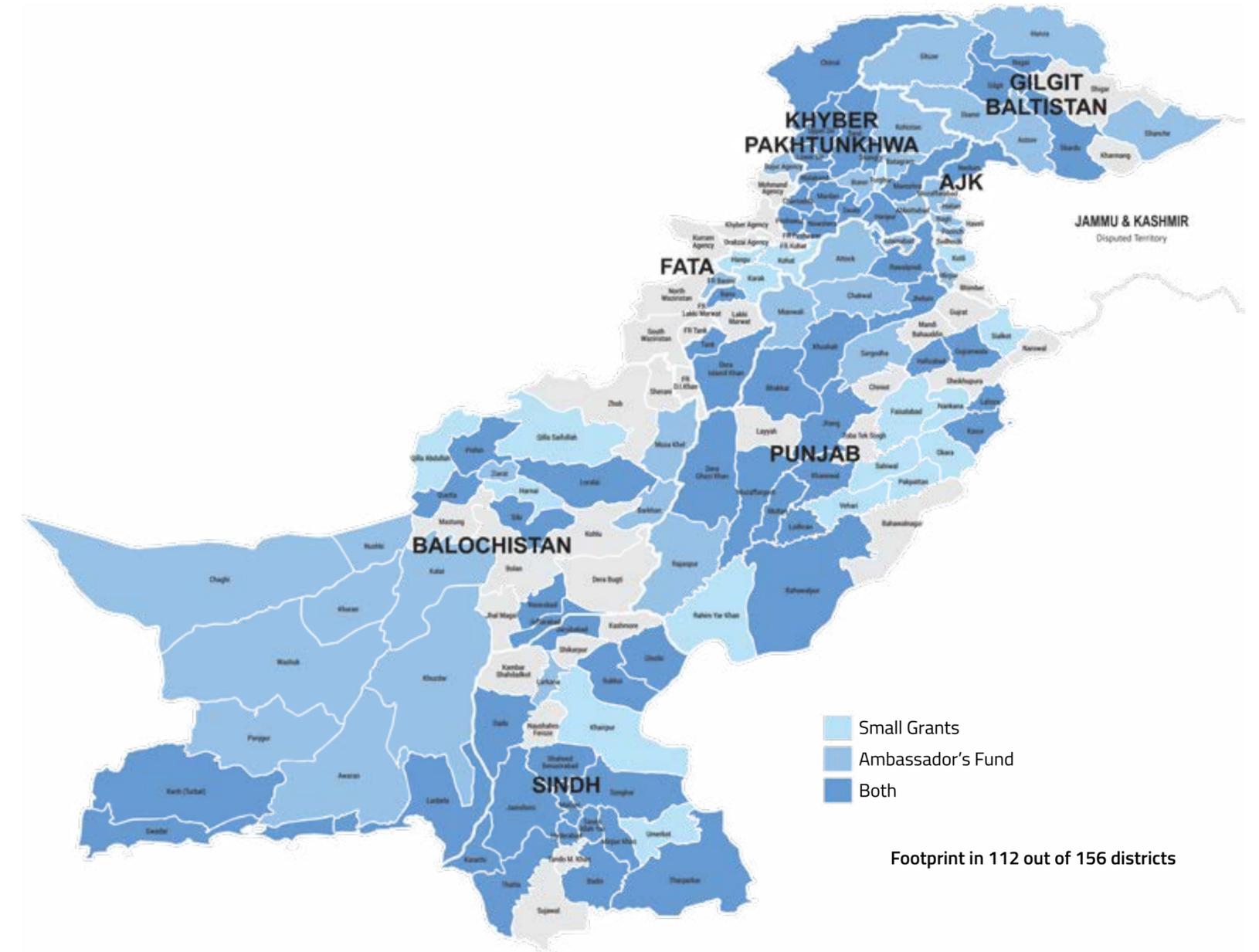
Initiated in September 2010, the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program - a cross-cutting grants Program supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by the National Rural Support Programme, awarded around 350 grants to support self-help initiatives of Pakistani organizations. Spread across the country, these grants addressed the short to long-term development needs of grassroots communities.

The Program awarded grants under two components: the Small Grants, and the Ambassador's Fund. The Ambassador's Fund focused on high-impact, quick implementation community-based initiatives in priority thematic areas including Women's Issues, Cultural Preservation, Entrepreneurship, Disaster Preparedness, and Wildlife Conservation; while the Small Grants Fund provided relatively larger grants in the areas of Economic Growth, Education, Energy, Health, Civic Participation, and Governance.

The Program touched and transformed the lives of over two million people -- 55 percent of whom are women -- by awarding grants in 16 diverse thematic areas. From helping children have access to quality education to providing healthcare services; from developing skilled workforce to improving women's access to justice; and from conserving nature to preserving heritage, it has covered a diverse range of development assistance.

The Program has channeled USAID assistance to some of the most remote and underserved geographic locations in the country, created successful models of community-based projects for replication, improved social services at the grassroots level and helped empower communities through their participation in the local decision-making processes. It has also fostered a culture of transparency and accountability in project implementation, and built the institutional capacity of local NGOs.

Although grants under this Program are called "Small", their impact has been enormous. They have created ripples in the fabric of society, making communities more resilient. They make communities more protective of the Earth, of Pakistan's rich cultural heritage, of children, of persons with disabilities, and of the underprivileged.



BUILDING CIVIC PARTICIPATION

Vision

To strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations for policy analysis, advocacy, and enhancing the role of citizens in decision-making processes.

Chitral, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Contributions



EMBARKING ON A A LEADERSHIP JOURNEY

Allah Mafi won the local government elections in 2016 from Hakeemwala Village in Nankana Sahib District of Punjab. Despite an increase in numbers, women politicians continue to face practical and technical hurdles towards becoming more prominent in making active legislation and key policy decisions at the national, provincial and local levels.

“I wanted to lead but did not know how to be a leader who would be taken seriously by men and women alike,” Allah Mafi commented.

To promote the role of women in democratic processes, USAID Small Grants and Ambassador’s Fund Program supported local NGO Women in Struggle for Empowerment (WISE) in Lahore and Nankana Sahib, Punjab.

Initiatives by WISE included formal training of these newly elected representatives to learn the salient features of the Local Government Act 2013, functioning of local government units, and information on women’s rights. Over 600 women attended these trainings to strengthen their role as elected representatives of the area.



From a passive councilor to a vibrant activist, Allah Mafi has achieved many milestones in a short period. She has tackled one of the biggest challenges her community faced – waste management. Allah Mafi led a successful cleanliness campaign in her village and supported more hygienic garbage disposal practices. Today, a waste disposal truck collects waste from a designated spot in the village where the community disposes their garbage.



“I had limited knowledge of the Punjab Local Government Act 2013 and other pro-women laws. I used to be a silent member in the meetings of elected representatives of my union council. I was hesitant to raise my voice in the presence of so many men. However, attending the trainings helped me gain confidence and gave me a better understanding of my role and responsibilities as an elected member,” told Allah Mafi.



“Women do not need a separate world, they need their space where they can fully exercise their potential. I am happy that I am helping and protecting women in my area. I want to set an example for my daughter, and all the girls in my area to aim for the sky. My journey as a leader has only just begun!” beamed an optimistic Allah Mafi.

Lack of leadership skills, little or no knowledge of the parliamentary system, absence of formalized structures and platforms for women to collaborate across party lines and on shared policy agendas have all impacted the role that women politicians can play.

KARACHI A SMART CITY

The USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program provided a grant to Shehri - Citizens for a Better Environment, an organization that educates citizens about their rights and the government's functions. They facilitate interaction between citizens and their service providers to promote participatory governance through Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for improving urban governance. The grant enabled Shehri to develop 'Humara Karachi' a web portal that brought information on the history, architectural heritage, natural and physical resources, government and non-government sector role in services provision in the city, all on one platform.



The website uses a customized crowd-mapping technique to produce reports on the issues such as garbage disposal, overflowing sewers, encroachment, and trees being chopped, that inform citizens on what is going around them. Faryah Buksh, a final year student of Development Studies at the NED Engineering University, Karachi said that the map helped her with her project on garbage management.

Shehri also encouraged university students through a Hackathon to develop corresponding applications for smart phones. These apps allowed citizens to have a more proactive role and participate in decision making. Mariam Vadria, whose app Livelib was one of the Hackathon winners, is running a project to revive public libraries in Karachi. Mariam feels that the opportunity provided by the Hackathon and their win has added high value to their work.

These efforts have not only flagged dire issues, but also informed a common citizen about the power of one-voice. The web portal is just a small step towards transparency and citizen involvement in decision making but they say that a journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step...!

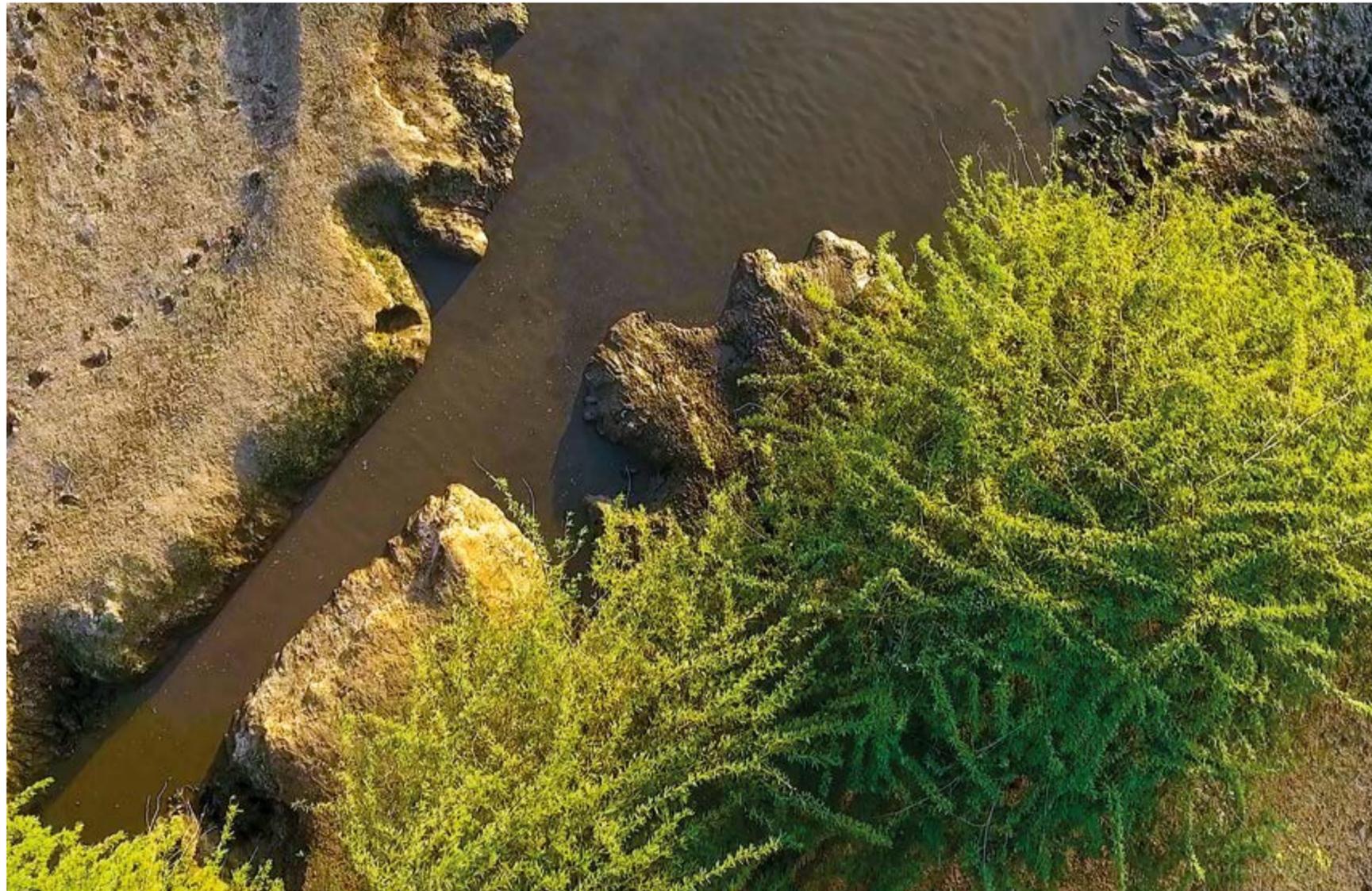


OUR IRRIGATION SYSTEM

The Indus Basin Irrigation system is the largest irrigation system in the world, covering an area of roughly 17 million hectares. However, water delivery via the irrigation system of Pakistan has deteriorated gradually due to neglected maintenance, ineffective operations and lack of coordination among water users and stakeholders.

To improve irrigation water management and agricultural practices in Faiz Ganj, District Khairpur, Sindh, the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program awarded a grant to Laar Humanitarian and Development Programme (LHDP). The project aimed to promote improved irrigation management practices through participation of farmers and government officials in the district.

After extensive mobilization and sensitization of farmers on efficient use of irrigation water and agricultural productivity, 630 farmers and government officials were trained on water management, agricultural extensions, livestock management, and leadership management skills. Moreover, 313 watercourse associations culminated into nine Farmer Organizations that have been registered under Sindh Water Management Ordinance of 2002.



"People here rely primarily on agriculture. The water shortage has caused many people to migrate and poverty has been on the rise. As the water table lowered further, people began selling their livestock to survive. Some even started to cut down trees and sold them to feed their families," narrated Abdul Raheem Rajper, a farmer from Faiz Ganj.

Improved agricultural practices have helped increase the average income of the participating farming families by over 30% and enabled landowners at Faiz Gunj Canal to stand for their water rights.

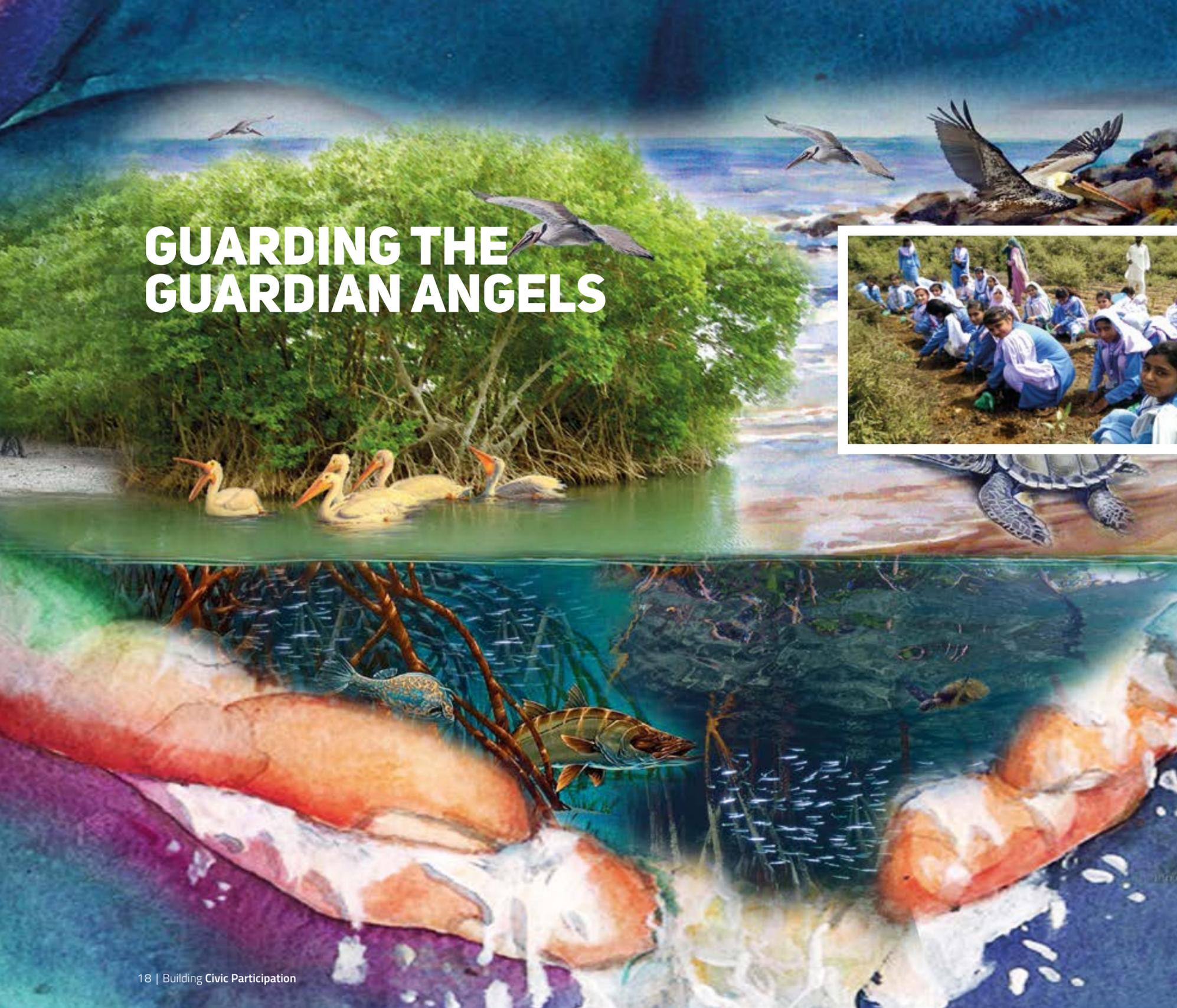


"Our agriculture productivity has increased by 40 maunds per acre ever since we started to apply modern agriculture techniques that we learned in the trainings. We have also developed links with the irrigation department and relevant government entities and can approach them to discuss our challenges," said Abdul Raheem Rajper.

"Because of our collective efforts we now have water. People are happy as the crop yield has increased. Now, we will try to bring the Irrigation Department and farmer organizations on one platform to collectively work on water distribution so that even more people can have access to the water in the irrigation canals," continued Abdul Raheem Rajper.



GUARDING THE GUARDIAN ANGELS



Karachi, the sixth most populous city in the world, has over 80,000 hectares of lush green mangrove forests along its coast. Mangroves are salt-tolerant trees and nature's way of preventing the land from wearing down as well as protecting Karachi's cyclone-prone coastline from storms and huge waves. These trees are also home to over 100 migratory birds including ducks and flamingos in winters. They are almost like guardian angels!

Unfortunately, these mangrove forests are under threat from deforestation. Whether it is the illegal timber industry or the repossession of coastal land by commercial companies, man-made decisions are causing severe degradation of these precious forests.

Under a grant from the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) worked to promote

integrated coastal management in Sindh and Balochistan including providing environmental awareness raising to 5,500 students and teachers in over 50 schools. Sadia is a student who has been part of the awareness raising sessions. Learning about the endangered mangroves forest had such a meaningful impact on Sadia and her classmates that they decided to plant mangrove saplings to help reduce the effects of deforestation in the area.

"Mangroves are shields that save us from cyclones and storms. Our teacher told us that the saplings that we planted today would take 10-15 years to fully mature. This is a long time. We need to take care of our young mangroves so that they can take care of us tomorrow. I have put up a beautiful poster in my room which describes how mangroves save our environment. I have taught my siblings about it so that they can share my desire to protect the trees that will be protecting us in the future," Sadia shared passionately.

Twenty-eight year old Ashraf Ali leads the Kokrai Village Development Group in Swat. A school teacher by profession, Ashraf began working with a local NGO, the Islampur Cottage Industries Association (ICIA).

“ICIA trained us on how to identify and analyze issues that we faced as a community. They emphasized the need for our participation in the development process. I feel that it improved citizen participation in development and decision making process when we developed and implemented our Village Development Plans,” he explained.



Ashraf continued, *“We all got together as Kokrai Village Development Group and shared the challenges we faced on a regular basis. After identifying our challenges, we began discussions on how we envisioned Kokrai for ourselves and our loved ones. Everyone presented their own view. In essence, we all wanted the same thing – a safe, clean and accessible village that would be an example for others. The construction and repair of a road was on top of everyone’s list.”*

The community development group met with the representatives of the local government and shared Kokrai’s development plan, putting up their case for the construction of a link road which had been damaged by frequent landslides and flooding. They succeeded in convincing the local government officials to construct a one-kilometer road and were allocated one million rupees for building this road.

“We have named the newly constructed road Kokrai Link Road as it links around 3500 villagers to main Marghzar Road and the nearby communities. This is also the shortest route to our basic health unit, police station and bus stop. This road has also linked us back to the main market, college, university, and sports ground. This is only the beginning. We have achieved our most challenging milestone documented in our development plan. Moving forward, we will join forces to work towards our other goals,” shared a proud Ashraf.

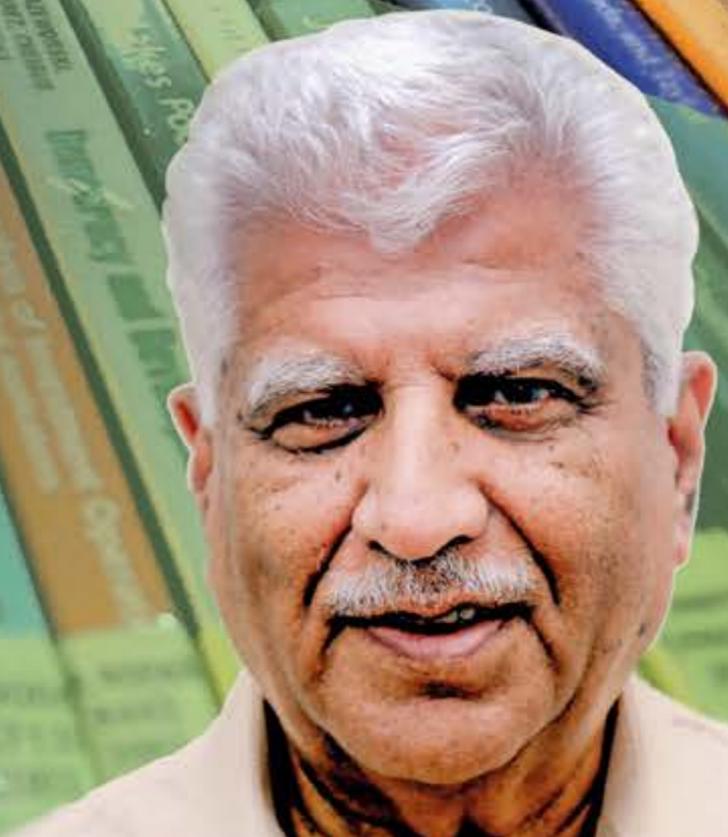
MANIFESTING THEIR DREAMS





PROMOTING RESEARCH

“Informed and evidence-based policy making has the ability to turn challenges into opportunities. The establishment of a resource center is an important step towards promoting empirical research on policy and governance, which will ultimately contribute to the development of Pakistan,” remarks Dr. Saeed Shafqat, Director of the Centre for Public Policy and Governance (CPPG) at Lahore’s Forman Christian College. Established with assistance from the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador’s Fund Program, the Centre upholds and promotes academic work aimed at citizens’ welfare, participative development and good governance.



“In this age of information revolution where answers to a citizen’s question are a click away, policies that result in inadequate planning and implementation increase the frustration of the people. With time, this frustration turns into helplessness. With evidence-based research, we hope to support that leads to improved planning,” added Dr. Shafqat, who is also a Fulbright Fellow.

The CPPG promotes a culture of critical thinking and analysis. The facility includes a state-of-the-art resource

center which has over 3000 books in addition to a vast online databank with literature, information material. Since its inception, the Center has carried out evidence-based research in the areas of urban planning, governance, energy reform, demography, urban policy, citizens’ engagement, youth, and conflict resolution among others.

The Centre is a resource for students, researchers, and policymakers alike, with the aim of paving the way for informed decision-making at all levels.



PRESERVING CULTURE

Vision

To promote the preservation of languages and dialects, culture, architecture, and recreational activities such as festivals and sporting events.

Contributions



13 grants



\$1 million awarded in grants



9 heritage sites preserved



8 endangered languages preserved



4 cultural resource centers established



250 individuals trained in traditional music

POLO FOR PEACE

THE GAME OF KINGS AND KING OF GAMES

The Baltistan Culture & Development Foundation (BCDF), through a grant awarded by the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program, organized two polo tournaments in Skardu and Gilgit in 2017. Over two hundred thousand people came to watch these traditional free style polo tournaments. The polo grounds in this region are some of the highest in the world, and offer a stunning backdrop for players to play against. BCDF continues to promote cultural activities and sports festivals for safeguarding the Balti traditions and heritage.

"My father is famous in Gilgit Baltistan. He was a remarkable polo player and made a name for himself in history. He is the one who taught me about polo and horse riding," shared a proud Bappo Kazim.

Polo is an ancient game which the Rajas of Gilgit-Baltistan used to promote and take active part in. Unfortunately, due to the high costs associated with it, the game of polo is on the decline.

"A horse's nourishment costs as much as feeding a family of ten people. It is getting expensive day by day. The lack of polo competitions has also discouraged polo players," said Wazeer Ali, Bappo Kazim's father.

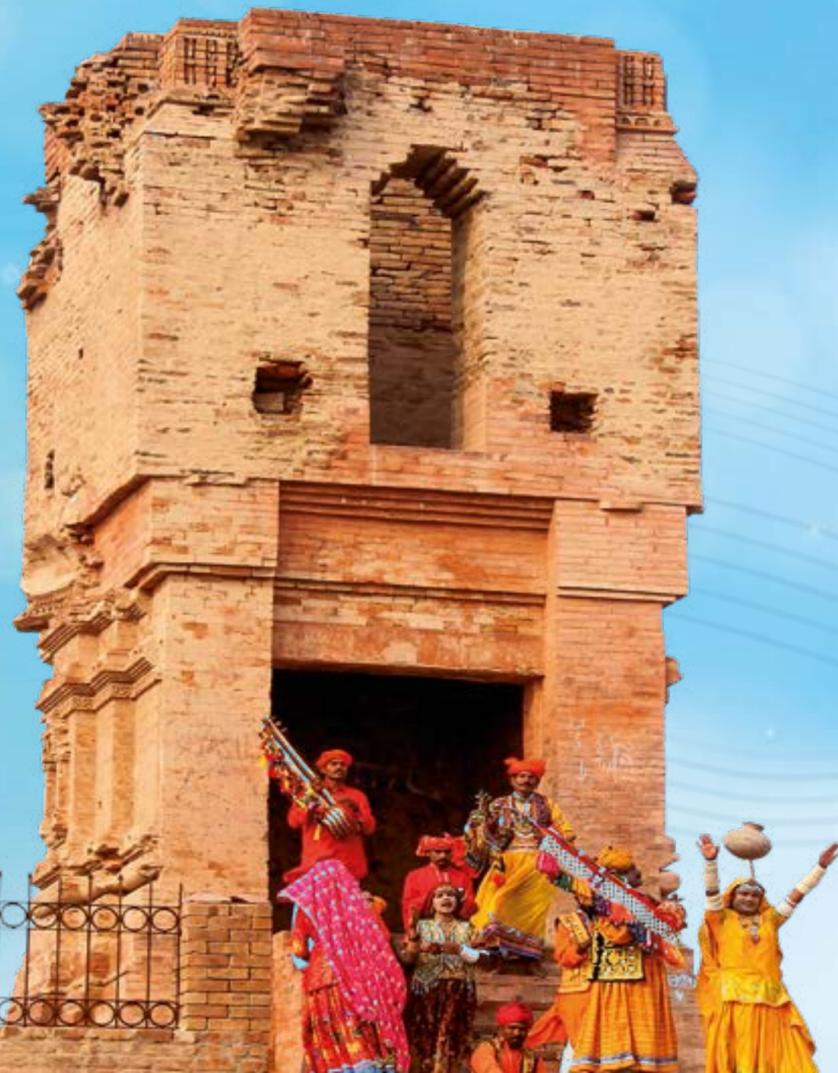
"There is no Polo without music. From the moment the teams enter the ground, the nuanced music underscores the ebb and flow of the game. And every aspect of the game is marked by unique melodies," explained Wazeer Ali.

He continued, *"These tournaments attract both national and international interest. We are the flag bearers of our own culture, we must take care to look after it."*



INDUS BLUES

Indus Blues, a 90-minute, documentary, brings to light the indigenous musical instruments of Pakistan and their lone players in an effort to revive them. From the alluvial plains of Sindh to the enchanting vastness of Balochistan, from the awe-inspiring mountains of Gilgit Baltistan to the electrifying hills of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and to the teeming fields of the Punjab, the feature film captures untold stories of musicians from across the country.



The film revolves around 11 dying musical instruments: Ghizhek and Charda from Gilgit Baltistan; Saarang and Raanti from Punjab; Sarinda and Chitrli Sitar from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; Saroz and Balochi Banjo from Balochistan; and Boreendo, Murli Been and Alghoza from Sindh, narrating the touching tales of musicians and craftsmen who play and craft these instruments.

Supported by the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program, the Foundation for Arts, Culture & Education (FACE) in partnership with Bipolar Films produced this documentary. In addition to the international film festivals, the documentary has been screened at several educational institutions.

"This has been a unique experience for me. I sat with these musicians and craftsmen and tried to envision their lives through their lens. Whether it was the public display of their artistic gift or quiet conversations with them, the close interaction took me to new highs as well as lows. One thing that left a deep imprint on me was the love and respect they have for their art," said Jawad Sharif, film director.

Financial constraints are the biggest factor that forces these artists to abandon music. To help keep indigenous instruments alive and provide a source of income to the musicians, a website <http://indusbluesfilm.com> has been created. It permits visitors to place online orders for customized traditional musical instruments, and commission musicians for performances, connecting the musicians of these far-flung areas of Pakistan with the world.

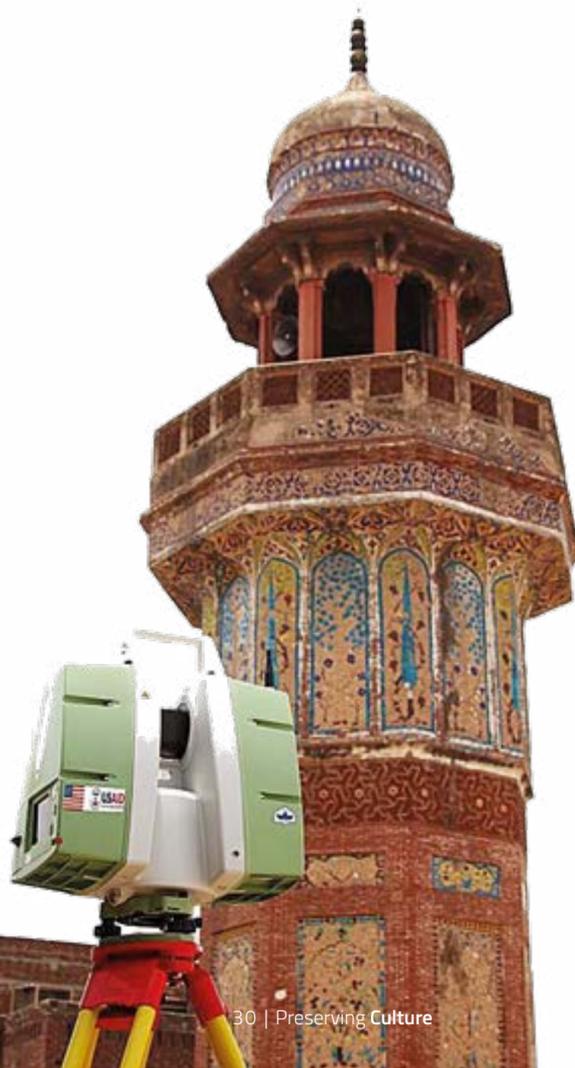
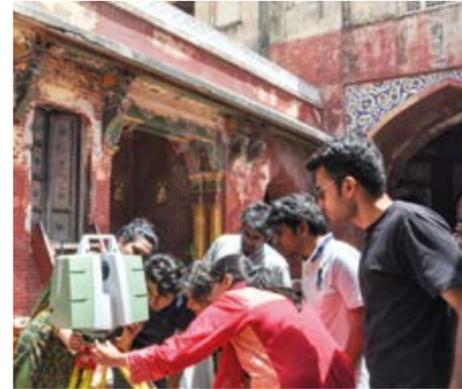
It allows the viewer to experience the sounds of these magical, endangered instruments, played to perfection in the deserts, plains, and mountains of Pakistan!





Under a USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program grant, the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) joined hands with CyArk, an international entity offering expertise to digitally save heritage sites before they are damaged beyond repair. In this endeavor, they were joined by the Aga Khan Foundation, provincial Archaeology Departments, and local universities. "Digital documentation and virtual tours of heritage sites offers a way to relive among the world's most ancient settlements," said Dr. Murtaza Taj, a teacher of LUMS who led the project.

Enabled by technology, you can now virtually visit these sites from the comfort of your home. Click on heritage360.pk and enjoy an immersive experience of Lahore's 17th century Masjid Wazir Khan, the magnificent Derawar Fort, Sindh's striking Masjid Khudabad, the imposing temple of Shiva Johi, the remains of Takht-e-Bahi, and a stupa in Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkwa, that harks back to a different time.



A VIRTUAL TOUR OF HERITAGE SITES

Cultural heritage sites in Pakistan tell a poetic tale of the history of this land, which goes well beyond its Independence in 1947. They are an emblem of Pakistan's cultural diversity and rich architecture and history. Many of these historical treasures have been ravaged by time, neglect, and vandalism.

While physical perseverance is necessary for these sites to be enjoyed by future generations, equally important is preserving these valuable heritage sites digitally. Digital scanning enables monuments to be documented in minute detail, helping create 3D plans and virtual tours.



OUR HISTORY A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME



The USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program supported Walkabout Films Private Limited (WFPL) to create short films featuring three UNESCO world heritage sites in Pakistan: Taxila Remains, Lahore Fort/Shalimar Gardens, and Rohtas Fort Jhelum.

The films strengthen the WFPL's Give Back Project that consists of a series of videos, photographs and educational packages on nature, wildlife, people and places, which are available to schools and colleges across Pakistan for free. The films are also available on WFPL's website, www.thegivebackproject.org.



NIGHTINGALES OF PAMIR



Nestled between the Pamir Mountains is an ancient land of flowers called Gulmit. Its Wakhi community and their language can be traced back thousands of years. Wakhi—an Indo-European language that stems from the Eastern Iranian branch of languages is spoken in parts of northern Pakistan, Afghanistan, China and Tajikistan but Gulmit is perhaps the richest region in terms of preserving it.

Inspired by a folk song sung by Wakhi women while grazing livestock in the highlands of Pamir, the Bulbulik Heritage Center was set up to pass on the Wakhi language to future generations through music. With support from the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador’s Fund Program, the center acquired a traditional house, inducted trainers and collected artifacts, including old photographs, written material and musical instruments.



The Bulbulik Center trains young people between the ages of 16 and 25 to play traditional musical instruments including the rubob (lute), tutek (straight flute), sitor (necked bowl lute), gabi (side flute), ghazhek (violin), and surinaye (oboe). The center has also documented folk songs in their efforts to preserve their culture.

Through USAID’s support, the youth of Gulmit are now performing at musical events across the country. Their professionally recorded songs, such as “Dilet Diwona (Wild Heart)” have been aired on local radio and TV networks. These Nightingales of Pamir are using the power of song to save their ancient language and culture!



Sultan Madad, a 21-year-old engineering student, learned about the center through social media. He said, “The sound of the rubob relates directly to our folk music. For me, exploring melodies in Wakhi language through the rubob was an adventure.”

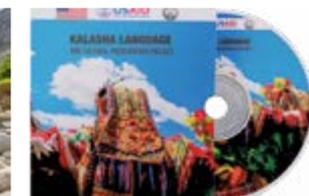
“Ever since I started learning music, I began recognizing music in nature, like the harmony of the streams and of the blowing breeze,” said Sidra, a 17-year-old girl who just completed high school and attended Bulbulik Heritage Center.



TREASURING THE KALASHA LANGUAGE



Historians note that Alexander the Great invaded what is now known as the Pak-Afghan region in the fourth century B.C. In Pakistan, the Kalash Valley, located in Chitral, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, is home to the centuries old Kalasha people that are believed to be descendants of Alexander the Great's invading army.



The Kalasha people became confined to three valleys known as Mumuret, Rukmu and Biri. Their language remained oral for centuries until documentation work in the region began in 1982. The language of the Kalasha people is one of the 3,000 languages which are expected to become extinct by the end of the current century if necessary steps are not taken to preserve them. The USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program supported the Ayun and Valleys Development Programme (AVDP), a Chitral based organization, for the preservation of Kalasha language and culture.

Under this project, purpose-specific research was conducted in Kalasha. Researchers discovered that there were approximately 300 people who were familiar with writing scripts of Kalasha language and only 1,500 people could speak the language. The study identified and documented over 200 folk songs, proverbs, and folklore. For

the first time, new books were published to document these materials and an audio disc was produced. In addition to the AVDP team and community linguists, the local elders and women contributed to this immense effort.

"It is a privilege to be part of this intervention. I have had the opportunity to interact with national and international linguists to learn how to preserve our language. The Orthography workshop was a particularly valuable learning experience," shared Luke Rehmat, a Language Development Officer with AVDP.

Kalasha language and culture has withstood the trials of time and remained intact against all odds. Through this initiative, the continuity of these timeless traditions and customs is ensured to expand these centuries old wisdom beyond the valleys of Kalasha.

PREPARING FOR **DISASTERS**

Vision

To prepare communities to respond to natural disasters, improving their resilience and enhancing their ability to complement government disaster relief efforts.

Contributions



12 grants



\$0.7 million awarded in grants



50,000 individuals benefited



64 schools facilitated in developing safety plans



90 disaster management committees formed



1,900 individuals trained in disaster management

THE SUPERKIDS OF THE HIMALAYAS



With support from the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program, the Khunjerab Villagers Organization (KVO) has set up disaster preparedness clubs in 46 local schools to promote preparedness for schools in the disaster prone areas of Gojal. They have reached over 4,000 students as part of this initiative.

"We have been trained in managing disaster risks in our community. We know how to evacuate a classroom or house or a village if something catastrophic occurs. We have practiced drills with each class. Our teachers have also taught us how to help children with special needs," explained Muhammad Kaif.

The northern border of Pakistan with China at Khunjerab is nearly 16,000 feet above the sea level and remains covered in snow most of the year. In this treacherous region of Gojal in District Hunza of the Gilgit-Baltistan province Adnan, Wajahat, Sarah and Muhammad Kaif are members of the Students Disaster Preparedness Group in their school.



Their schoolteacher Mehjabeen explained, *"Our area is extremely prone to a variety of natural calamities and disasters including heavy rains, floods, and landslides. It is important to enable our children to respond to these disasters."*



Stressing the need for disaster preparedness in children, Mehjabeen shared, *"We have conducted hazard hunts to identify, evaluate and eliminate hazards and developed safe routes to school. Children are better able to respond to emergencies. Through these activities, they have a heightened sense of awareness and the desire to keep their communities safe."*



"We have to take care of each other and make sure everyone is safe. I feel proud of the fact that I will be able to help my friends and their loved ones during an emergency," exclaimed Sarah.

RESPONDING TO NATURAL DISASTERS



Muhammad Moosa continues to relive the harrowing memories of the floods of 2010 when he and his family had to leave their home in Sohbatpur, Balochistan. He shared, “The flood came from the south side (Sindh). We were ordered to evacuate our homes immediately. I took my family and rushed to a relief camp in an adjacent district. Worried about the lives of my loved ones, I left everything else behind.”



Heavy rains in 2010, 2011, and 2012 flooded the Bolan and Nari rivers as well as the Sulaiman mountain range that affected the population of Sohbatpur. Only if the residents had the knowledge of basic disaster response practices they would have been able to handle the situation.



Muhammad Moosa explained, “We now have a Disaster Risk Management Plan for our village that would help us to take prompt actions in case a natural disaster strikes. Our instructor taught us how to identify major hazards, and its associated risks and vulnerabilities. If flooding were to occur again, I feel confident that we would be able to minimize our losses. I am now part of the Village Community Emergency Response Team.”



Bright Star Development Society Balochistan (BSDSB) collaborated with the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador’s Fund Program to train communities across 30 villages of Sohbatpur on Disaster Risk Management so that they could respond to disasters promptly.

LEARNING TO SURVIVE THE UNPREDICTABLE

Shimshal Valley, better known as the valley of mountaineers, might just seem like another beautiful remote valley that challenges brave adventurers from around the world. However, its importance goes beyond its attraction, harboring one of the most complex glacial ecosystems in the region.

To mitigate the adverse impacts of ever-growing occurrences of glacial lake floods, Focus Humanitarian Assistance (FOCUS) works to assist the people of Shimshal Valley. Equipped with data from years of monitoring the glaciers of the region, FOCUS, with support from the USAID Small Grant and Ambassador's Fund Program has been building resilience in the communities of Shimshal Valley.

Through community sessions, over 120 students and 300 community members have learnt about hazards, pre and post disaster responses, as well as basic first-aid skills. These sessions have not only trained members of the Community Emergency Response Team but also provided a refresher for the officials of the Gilgit-Baltistan Disaster Management Authority.

One of the attendees of the training, Zeenat, explained, "Living alongside the banks of these glaciers is a matter of life and death for us. We fear the pace at which the glaciers are melting. I feel like I am doing my part by volunteering as a member of the Community Emergency Response Team."

Early warning systems based on thermometer, rain-gauge, scales and velocity meters have also been installed near the four glaciers' river banks so that temperature, precipitation, discharge and

velocity readings can be taken at regular intervals. In case of an imminent disaster the communities in the five surrounding villages can now be mobilized swiftly so that members of the Community Emergency Response Team can ensure timely evacuation.

Due to the rising temperatures, the likelihood of increased frequency of glacier lake outburst floods cannot be ruled out. This initiative has ensured that residents are able to better understand, and therefore mitigate losses.

"The mighty glaciers of Shimshal - Khurdupin, Malanguti, Yazgil Glacier and Verjerab are amongst the largest glaciers of the world. Created over thousands of years and stretching hundreds of square miles, they have helped balance our ecosystem for centuries. Sadly, climate change has been severe and unforgiving," said Waheed Anwar, a geological expert from Gilgit-Baltistan.



TOWARDS ECONOMIC GROWTH

Vision

To encourage communities to become economically independent, nurture more competitive enterprises and create effective market environments.

Contributions



40 grants



\$4.7 million
awarded in grants



170,000
individuals
benefited



10,400 acres
of agricultural
land cultivated



12,500
individuals
received
vocational skills



1,670
enterprises
established

CHERISHING THE SOULFUL BALTI CULTURE

With support from the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program, Aga Khan Cultural Service Pakistan (AKCSP) developed the Balti Fort Exhibition Centre in Khaplu Palace, identifying and collecting numerous artifacts, manuscripts and local handicrafts.



"My father eagerly sought to preserve the culture and heritage of Baltistan so that it could be passed on to future generations," said Ascho Shah Jahan, the Rani (Queen) of Khaplu Palace in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Dating back to as far as the 7th century, the transcendental Balti architecture and traditions are inspired by the Tibetan civilization. The royal family donated Khaplu Palace in 2005 to AKCSP so that people from Pakistan and other parts of the world can have the opportunity to experience this cultural treasure.

"I have been giving a guided tour of almost two-thirds of the Palace to dozens of tourists every day for the past five years. Tourists, especially the youth, take keen interest in the century old jewelry, pots and personal anecdotes of the Balti royal family," said Mohammed Ali Khan, the official tour guide at Khaplu Palace.

Since the opening of the center in 2013, the exhibition area has been visited by thousands of tourists. The income generated by the center is spent on the maintenance and renovation of the palace and to address immediate needs of the surrounding community through the Khaplu Town Management Development Society.

"This is my first visit to Gilgit-Baltistan. The magical beauty of the region, the rich heritage and warmth of the Balti people has touched my heart. I was so amazed to see the artifacts and manuscripts with such historic and artistic importance. I feel lucky that our country has remnants of the ancient Balti culture," shared Saad Aslam, a university student from Lahore who was traveling with a group in the northern areas.



FROM DUNES TO DYES: A STORY OF REVIVAL



“I learned block printing and needlework from my mother who had learned these from her mother. Most of my aunts and sisters are experts in embroidery. However, we were never able to use these skills to earn a living,” shared Mooli, a 45-year-old from Tharparkar.

Knowledge about shades comes naturally to women in Tharparkar. Hailing from stretches of hillocks, sandy dunes and gravel plains, they are adept in creating hundreds of different shades of a color and then donning them in various forms.

The Thardeep Rural Development Program (TRDP) works to transform this heritage into an income generating activity. With support from the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador’s Fund Program, Mooli and her peers from 12 villages of Mithi and Diplo tehsils were given training in advanced embroidery and block printing techniques to cater to a wider market.

“Like us, colors have families,” said Mooli. *“Previously we used four or five colors but now, having been taught about color families, we brought innovation to our work. We learned about current fashion trends and modified our traditional designs accordingly to attract more people.”*

TRDP linked the Tharparkar embroiders and block printers with famous clothing chains to create greater access. For the first time, these artisans have been exposed to the world of competitive fashion.

“The exposure made us realize that there was a whole world out there to be explored. We are now linked with big buyers to display our work through catalogues and exhibitions. We now know about organizations that deal in selling hand-made, high quality art and craft work at fair prices,” told Mooli.

TRDP has been a wind of change for the 1,200 artisans of Thar in many ways. They learned that despite being talented, their skill needed to be adapted to stay relevant and current for other audiences. Most importantly, there was a revival and appreciation for this art itself!





AN UNBROKEN PROMISE

The Gupis Rural Support Programme (GRSP), with assistance from the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program worked to improve food security and income of local farmers in Ghizer by building an irrigation network in 2012. The consequent construction of water channels helped bring over 500 acres of barren land under the irrigational network, making it viable for cultivation.

"I still remember the day from over a decade ago when I stepped into this house as a bride," recalled Farzana, a farmhouse owner in the village Hamaras, Gupis, District Ghizer, Gilgit-Baltistan. "My mother-in-law entrusted me with the keys of the house and made me promise to take care of the family. Since that day, I swore to myself that I would look after the farm – my new home."

Ghizer remains covered in snow for more than half a year. Due to harsh weather conditions, irrigation and utilization of land is very limited.

"Agriculture is our primary source of income but due to lack of resources, only 40% of the land could be utilized for agricultural purposes. This was barely enough to grow food to meet our family's needs," said Zahir, Farzana's husband.

"However, GRSP and USAID helped us increase our crop yield by expanding our agricultural land. As a consequence, our livestock also expanded," he added.

"Apart from apricot, walnut and cherry trees, I also grow vegetables now. The continuous supply of water allows for good growth. I not only use my crops and vegetables in my kitchen, I also share homegrown vegetables with my neighbors. When I see my mother-in-law strolling through the cultivated land, my heart swells with pride. She had entrusted me with her most valuable property, and I am glad I have done it justice," said Farzana.





RETURNING TO SCHOOL

In 2010, when news of Kalam river overflowing reached Sherin Zada, a watermill owner, he knew that the worst was yet to come. The devastating floods robbed people of their homes, material wealth, and hope. Sherin Zada's mill was completely destroyed leaving him financially crippled. His 12-year-old daughter, Gul Bano, had to quit school as they could no longer afford it.

"The flash floods destroyed our homes, roads, bridges, and markets. With the watermills destroyed, people had to transport their grain to other markets at additional costs. It was a difficult time," recalled Sherin Zada.

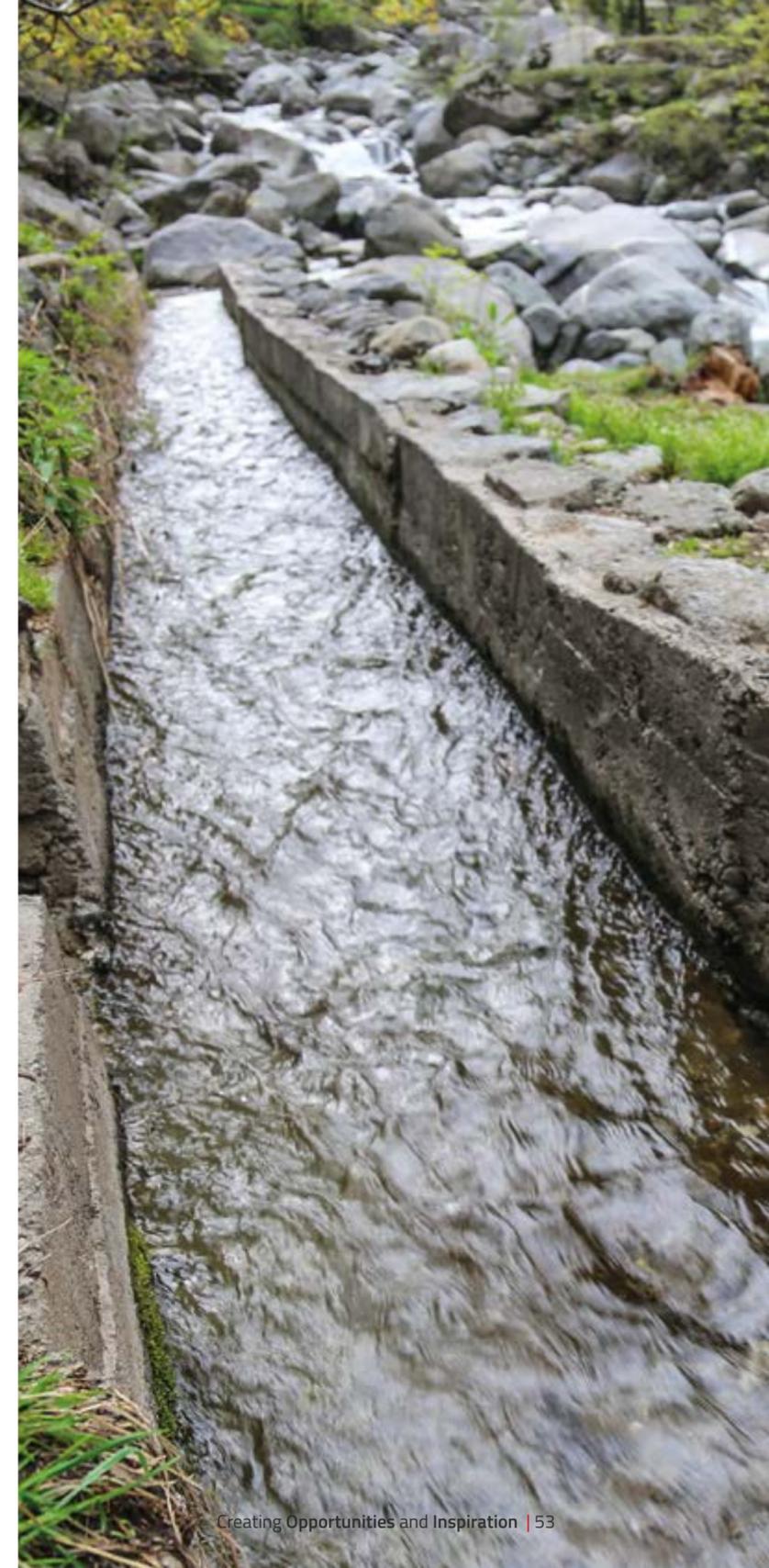


The Community Awareness Raising & Advocacy Ventures Around Needs (CARVAN) in partnership with the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program rehabilitated 42 watermills in five union councils of Swat to restore businesses and provide local grinding facilities for the communities.

Sherin Zada's watermill was also restored through this initiative. He grinds wheat and maize in his mill harnessing the power of a mountain stream that runs across his land.

"My new watermill, a replacement of an old mud structures with far more sturdy and disaster prone cemented structure has not only restored my income; it has increased it," said Sherin Zada with a smiling face.

"The previous mill would grind only 10 to 15 kg of grain per hour, which barely compensated for the labor. The new watermill grinds double the amount of grain. I can now provide for my family, and most importantly, Gul Bano has resumed school. If it wasn't for this mill, she might be working as a domestic worker in someone's house."





BETTER HALVES, NOW BETTER FARMERS

“Oh look, our women are going to become farmers!” was the talk of the town among the men in a village in Muzaffargarh.

Approximately 500 women farmers worked with the Potohar Organization for Development Advocacy (PODA) to transform their roles from assistants to frontline farmers in one of the most women-hostile districts in South-Punjab of Pakistan. The women attended trainings on tunnel farming, compost farming, seed preservation, legal & financial literacy, marketing skills, and the efficient use of water.



After attending the first briefing by PODA, Maqsooda Mai, a 53-year-old farmer, informed her husband how the project wanted to increase the crop yield. Her husband laughed at her and said, *“If the project was meant for farmers, what were you, a woman, doing there?”*

Many women cited similar incidences where men mocked them as they worked with PODA to transform their traditional roles in agriculture. Much to the surprise of these men, they began to observe a significant increase in crop yield, and then, their attitudes began to change. The mockery subsided and gradually, the men started to discuss their work. Ultimately, they began taking advice from the very women they were making fun of! The conversations ranged from advice on matters such as seed selection and use of pesticides to water supply management and making tunnels.

The most notable achievement of this initiative has been a 40-50% increase in the crop productivity. It provides an excellent example of supporting innovations for women empowerment for improved food security in Pakistan.

Maqsooda Mai explained, *“Women farmers have made a marked difference and it is quite evident by the crop that has been harvested over the last few years. My one-acre land which previously yielded 25 maunds has yielded 40 maunds this year. This is due to the use of best seeds that suit the soil and the new farming techniques that I have learnt. In the beginning, my family and the people of my village did not take my work seriously, but now they are coming to see my one acre model plot that clearly shows higher and bigger wheat pods, standing tall in the field.”*



REHABILITATING A **CENTURIES-OLD IRRIGATION SYSTEM**

Originating in the first century BC in Persia, karez (pronounced ka-raise) is one of the world's most ancient irrigation systems. The karez of Balochistan are believed to be 1,500 years old, even before the formal concept of gravity was known. Joined by skewed tunnels, karez is based on a chain of well-like vertical shafts that tap into the underground water in such a way that large amounts of water springs to the surface without any artificial pumping.

In Panjgur, a District in Balochistan, archeologists have found marks of 7,000 years old Neolithic settlements. Farmers with small land holdings in Panjgur, Balochistan rely on the sophisticated karez system to supply water to their farms. However, lack of rain in the region filled karez with debris, clogging the wells and tunnels, thereby decreasing their efficiency.

The USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program partnered with the Anjuman-e-Imdad-e-Bahami Niazabad (AIBN) to extend and rehabilitate eight karez in the area to increase the water supply to 600 acres of agricultural land that provides income to over 3,000 people across twelve villages of Panjgur. Over 37,000 palm trees were planted on the land irrigated through karez.

"The distance between the start and the end points of karez is nearly 7 km. With AIBN's help, we have cleaned 11,600 feet of this karez enabling us to irrigate over 130 acres of land that holds 5,000 date palms," shared Muhammad Shareef who has been deputed by the local community to manage the Lalabad karez in Panjgur.



"People love the dates from my orchard. I have 280 date palms of numerous kinds. From June to August, these date palms are in full bloom. My family and I pray for the safety of our palms from the monsoon rain because these trees need water at a specific time and quantity. Because of the Lalabad karez, I have been able to ensure timely and sufficient water to my garden that has resulted in lots of dates!" exclaimed Murad Baksh, a farmer benefiting from this project.

PROMOTING EDUCATION

Vision

To improve access to education and promote inclusive education by improving teachers' skills through training programs, establishing libraries, and building school infrastructure.

Contributions



73 grants



\$11.5 million awarded in grants



400,000 individuals benefited



17,800 out-of-school children enrolled



4,700 teachers trained



1,196 schools supported

Shangla, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

IDA A LOVES HER SCHOOL

“When my son, Mujahid Qaiser, was born, I promised myself that I would give him the best possible education we could afford. With four daughters and a son, money was scarce. One day, someone told me about a private school in a nearby town,” shared Shahnaz Bibi. “I visited the school. The building was magnificent, but I was worried about not being able to afford it. The principal welcomed us and chatted with Mujahid and me. I learned that not only was the fee affordable, there was a concession for siblings, which meant Mujahid’s younger sister could also go to the same school.”



Mujahid and his sister Idaa Fatima now go to M. H. Sufi Foundation School in Village Bagh Nao, Pindi Bhattian, Hafizabad. The school emphasizes quality education in rural areas. Admissions are open for everyone on first-come-first-get until the seats are filled.



“Iidaa’s three older sisters went to a public school. Most of the people in our village have to send their children to public schools where the quality of education is not very good. Iidaa and Mujahid’s teachers talk to students and their parents with great respect. In only a few months, Iidaa and Mujahid have learnt many etiquettes which my elder daughters learned much later,” Shahnaz Bibi said.

The Foundation constructed this school with support from the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador’s Fund Program and helped train the teaching faculty on advanced teaching methods and techniques. “I love my school. One of the best things about my school is that the teachers make our classes fun. And of course, I love that Mujahid and I go to the same school!” exclaimed Iidaa.





"I want to be a software engineer. Bill Gates is my inspiration. I am in awe of his creativity and intelligence and want to be like him when I grow up," shared Shahrukh Ali, a third grade student at the Mehnaz Fatima Inclusive Education Centre, Gilgit.

Shahrukh is wheelchair bound. Although his friends Haseeb and Shehroz are always ready to help him, Shahrukh prefers to wheel himself on the wheelchair ramp. He confessed, *"I prefer to do things on my own. I want to be able to take part in as many activities that I possibly can. I like the feeling of being included. I may have limitations but it doesn't stop me from doing what I want!"*

The Mehnaz Fatima Inclusive Education Centre is a safe haven for Shahrukh and many other children who have special needs. From Down syndrome to speech issues, physical disabilities to vision loss, the Centre provides quality education to these students with a focus on optional learning facilities and community awareness in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan.

With support from the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program, Mehnaz Fatima Educational & Welfare Organization (MFEWO) constructed a new building block and established a computer lab at the Inclusive Education Centre in 2014.



A SCHOOL WHERE **COURAGE BEATS DISABILITY**



Nine-year-old Hadiqa Rani struggles with developmental delays. Although challenging, she is in second grade along with other students her age. She requires special attention from her teachers to ensure she keeps up with her classmates. Hadiqa and many other students with special needs are learning, playing and growing together, one small step at a time.

"This centre is Gilgit-Baltistan's first inclusive education centre. The construction of a new block and computer lab has enabled us to facilitate more children. We treat children with special needs with dignity and respect. Our teaching staff has especially been trained in inclusive education," explained Tahira Sher, Vice Principal of the school.



A RISING STAR

Rameela is a young woman who lives in a small village, called Najvi on the outskirts of the hilly town of Madyan in District Swat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. Najvi accessed via a muddy and rock-strewn pedestrian path, has no functional school. Growing up, it was a challenge for Rameela to go to school as it was very far from her house. She would rise while it would be dark and go to her cousin's house who would accompany her on that long, winding hill track. Her cousin could not keep up and eventually she dropped out of school. However, in the face of these daunting odds, Rameela pursued her education on her own and eventually secured her bachelor's degree.

"I dreamed of becoming a doctor when I was a child," she recalled. "This was what my father always envisioned for me but our meager resources never allowed me to fulfill his wish." When Rameela was 17, she realized that the majority of the women and children living in their village were illiterate. She was keen to help them, but did not know what to do.



Around that time, the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program awarded a grant to Peace and Development Organization (PADO) to establish and run 15 community-based schools that would provide special three-year informal education courses in various locations across Swat, where children did not have access to formal schooling.

Over the life of the initiative, 1,350 students studied this specially prepared syllabus to qualify for admission into the sub-district's mainstream public schools. These community-based schools were provided with furniture, books, and supplies while the communities provided space and shelter for the school.

Rameela's father volunteered to provide two rooms adjacent to his house for the school. She received intensive coaching and became a certified community teacher. Since 2012, she has been teaching 30 children of various ages in each class.

"The people in my village didn't realize the importance of education, but with their children reading books, gathering knowledge, and doing math they can see that education does make a difference in everybody's life," said Rameela.

Looking at her enthusiasm and the success she achieved, the U.S. Government invited Rameela in 2016 to United States on a state-sponsored visit. This was her first and only international experience. She was astonished to meet the American families that in her own words, "...were as simple and friendly as people in my village!"

Rameela's father is proud to see his daughter make a difference. Her family is respected by the community for Rameela's contribution. She has been elected the youngest village councilor but her school continues to be a glittering example of what determined and competent youth in local communities can do with just a little help.

FREEING UP THE CAPTIVE COLORS

"I may not be able to hear, but now I have the ability to communicate. I use sign language to express myself. Occasionally, I like to paint. To me, the colors I use are synonymous with my emotions. They reflect my moods and feelings. My art teacher is amazing. She is the one who taught me how to sketch and paint," expressed Areej Talpur, a thirteen year old girl from Mirpur Khas.



The residents of Rashidabad in Tando Allahyar, Sindh, hesitate to send their children, especially girls, to school due to the unfair stigma associated with the mental capabilities of the hearing impaired. To this end, the Family Educational Services Foundation (FESF) has been working to raise awareness and dispel myths regarding the hearing impaired. As part of their work, FESF has established the Deaf Reach School in Rashidabad to promote education for the hearing impaired.

The Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program supported the Deaf Reach School by providing furniture and equipment, and assistance for its academic program. This included capacity building of parents and teachers, and vocational training program for students.

Every day, Areej's mother wakes her up early morning to get ready for school. Areej eagerly awaits the school van that takes her from her home in Mirpur Khas to the Deaf Reach School in Rashidabad—about half an hour away.



In order to facilitate families with individuals with hearing impairment, the Deaf Reach School provides bi-weekly classes for parents to learn sign language. Areej's mother attended these classes and is now able to communicate with her daughter through sign language.

"I learnt sign language in my school. This changed my life. Suddenly, I could communicate with the people I loved. I started to have conversations with my mother and siblings," Areej expressed. *"I really enjoy communicating with my best friend Asna Gul. From clothes to sports to paintings, we discuss so many things!"* Areej shared excitedly.



After attending her classes for the day, Areej signs an enthusiastic goodbye to her friends and classmates – she cannot wait to see them the next day. At home, she tells her mother all about her day. Not a day goes by that she is not thankful to finally have the ability to communicate.



FROM NO ONE TO SOMEONE! A DEAF GIRL'S STORY

Shumaila's mother, Shamim, could not detect her inability to hear until she was three years old. Her family was devastated. Shumaila was subjected to children's mean remarks due to which her mother began to limit her to the house where she would help her with everyday chores. She constantly strived to find a way for her daughter to feel 'normal.'



"My mother is my greatest support, a pillar of strength," expressed Shumaila, now an 18 year-old teacher determined to excel. *"Despite cruel and insensitive comments regarding my condition, her unwavering belief in me remained strong,"* she added.

Knowing that Shumaila could not attend a regular school due to her hearing impairment, Shamim kept on searching for an alternate and finally found the Muhammad Azam Khan Special Education Center (MAKSEC) Charsadda, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This was a turning point in Shumaila's life. She was enrolled after a comprehensive screening and initial hearing assessment.

"The day I received my matriculation certificate was the most unforgettable day of my life," she shared. *"It was the culmination of not only my struggles but my mother's as well. I was overjoyed when the school management offered me a job. I am now a regular member of the teaching faculty. I feel that I have a special connection with the students since I have faced, and continue to face the same challenges that they face,"* she expressed.

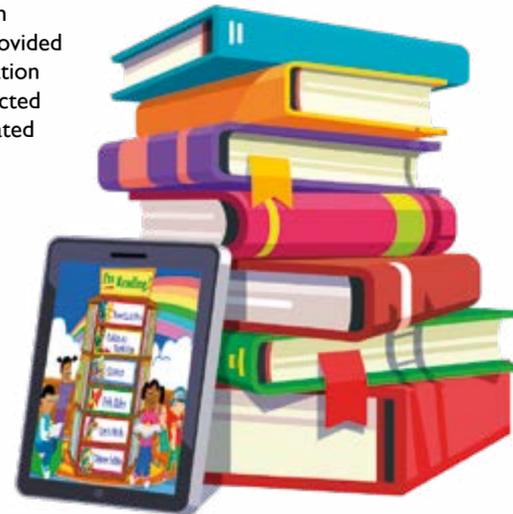
MAKSEC is a charitable school that did not have the means to upgrade. The USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program provided two grants enabling the school to procure modern equipment, construct an Audiology Laboratory, and introduce online computers in the classrooms. The grant also enabled them to train their staff in sign language and connect to a network of similar schools.

Shamim said, *"Shumaila has proved her worth. She has become a living example for students and that makes me so proud of her. She gives strength and confidence to many other hearing-impaired children to overcome their challenges. She is playing an important role in helping them live a more fulfilling life."*



READ TO GROW **READ TO KNOW**

Through a USAID grant, Development in Literacy (DIL) worked towards improving English language reading skills of students in Grades 3-5 in 16 schools across the country. They provided access to electronic books on fiction and non-fiction through tablets. For the implementation of this grant, eight schools were selected in Khairpur (Sindh) while four schools were selected in Dir (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and Rawalpindi (Punjab). Over 900 students have demonstrated remarkable improvements in English language reading skills.



"I like watching TV dramas and the way actors deliver their dialogues. When I am alone in my room, I try to imitate these actors. They tell a story. I also want to be a storyteller and I want to tell my stories in English," shared Aliza, a 4th grade student in a DIL school in Rawalpindi.

"My teacher introduced me to the tablet. When I held one for the very first time, I was thrilled. It was like a mini television. The tablet has English stories which we can read and listen to. My favorite story is The Four Friends. When I do not know how to pronounce an English word, I click on the word and the tablet says the word out loud. This is what I like most about it," explained Aliza.



Gaining confidence in her English speaking abilities, Aliza participated in the "Readers Theater" - a segment of a Reading Carnival held in her school.

As an aspiring actress, Aliza confided, *"My English speaking skills have improved a lot. Now I can easily read and speak long sentences. I played a farmer in a play at our school. We all practiced our lines. It was a lot of fun. My family also attended the event. My mother enjoyed my performance, especially all my English lines. She was so proud!"*



STITCHING TOGETHER A BETTER FUTURE

The USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program awarded two grants to the Alpha Foundation (AF) for enrolling 1,700 working children including 1,300 girls into education centers. These students were taught accelerated learning courses to sufficiently equip them before they join public schools.



"Every day, I would sit down to work early in the morning after completing household chores. I stitch shoes to make extra money. My mother works as a housemaid, and my father is a rickshaw driver. They are unable to make enough money to support our family of five," shared 12-year-old Mubeen.

Mubeen has been sewing shoes since she was six years old. The designs and leather are delivered to their single-room house in Kasur, Punjab. The family shares two beds, keeps food in a tin box instead of a refrigerator, and cooks meals inches from where they sleep. There's no bathroom. Instead, a moat of open sewage passes outside their makeshift front door.

"One day, a representative from the Alpha Foundation visited us. She told my mother that they facilitate education for those who could not afford it. My mother needed some convincing before she agreed. I was overjoyed. I started going to school within a week," Mubeen said.

"At first Mubeen's mother argued that there wouldn't be anyone at home to watch the younger children. I told her that Mubeen could bring her siblings along. She was also worried about how they were going to make ends meet but eventually she agreed. When she saw the positive change in Mubeen, she was grateful," said Feroza, a teacher at the accelerated education center.

"My cousin used to make fun of me because I couldn't even write my own name. It would really hurt my feelings. But now, I can read and write. I love to read whenever I have some free time," Mubeen shared.

A SECOND CHANCE AT HOPE

In Balochistan, two out of every ten children have to travel at least one hour to reach school. Education is nothing short of a luxury. In an area where there is only one middle school for eleven primary schools, a middle school for girls is rare.

Through the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program, the Women Development Community Organization (WDCO), a local organization, established four middle schools for girls that were unable to continue their education. The middle schools also permitted young women, who had to drop out of school, to return and resume their education.

"I was really sad on the last day of primary school. I was afraid I would be forced to stay at home as the nearest middle school was almost two hours away. Only the boys were sent there to study. I kept my fifth grade books with the hope of resuming my education one day," shared Nadia, a primary school dropout.

"There came a time when I thought we would never have a middle school in our village. When my parents told me that they had admitted me into the newly built middle school, I couldn't believe it. I was so happy!" shared a delighted Nadia.



Kulsoom is one of the older students in the school. She had to drop out of school when she was 10 since the middle school was far from her house.

"I got married 10 years ago when I was 14. I have two daughters. When a middle school for girls was constructed in our village, I was overjoyed! Now my daughters would be able to go to school, and so would I!" she recalled.

Nadia and Kulsoom have gotten a second chance to go to school, however, many other girls are not as lucky. There is still a long way to go until access to education can be a reality for many young girls in the remote areas of Pakistan.





REVIVAL OF A TEACHER

Motivation drives teachers to enable their students to get involved in the learning procedure. However, for the public school teachers in rural Sindh, innovative thinking and continuous motivation are major challenges as opportunities for professional development are scarce.

Hameeda is a teacher at the Government Girls Primary School Buzurg Saleh in Union Council Makhdoom Bilawal in Dadu, Sindh. She had always dreamt of becoming a teacher. However, lack of opportunities and a boring routine almost killed her enthusiasm. "It is easy to lose interest when you have to do the same thing again and again," she said.

"Ms. Hameeda is my most favorite teacher. She is always kind and motivates me to work hard so that one day, I can become a pilot, my greatest dream," explained nine-year-old Momal.



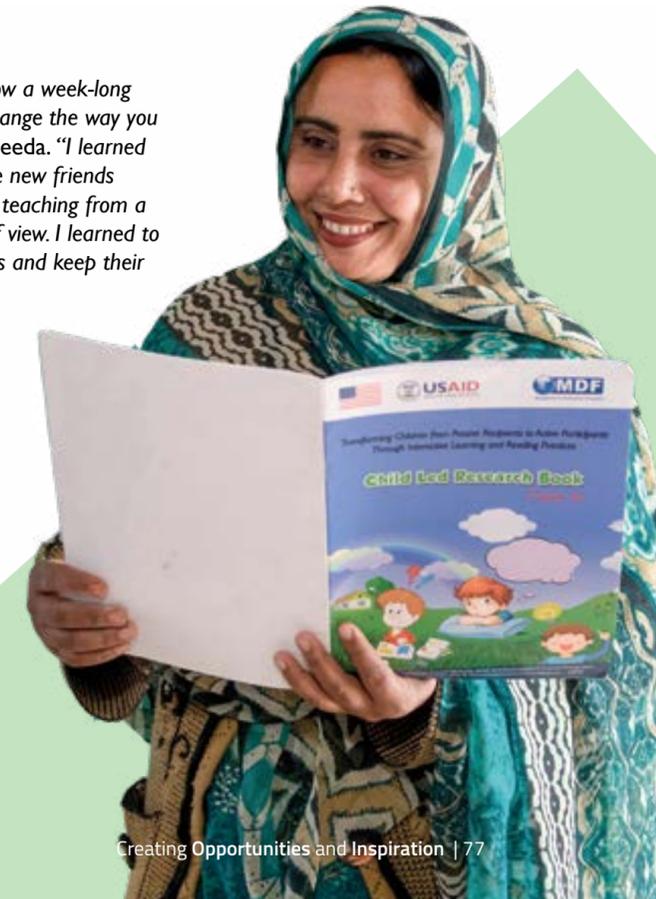
A small organization called the Management and Development Foundation (MDF) arranged a six-day teacher training workshop with support from the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program. The workshop trained 110 teachers in Makhdoom Bilawal on interactive learning and reading practices. The trainers taught them exercises to develop critical thinking skills among students. The grant also provided teaching aids and books for small children.

"While learning how to motivate my students to learn, I was being motivated to teach them!" exclaimed Hameeda. *"It renewed my faith in my profession. I shudder to think that I had almost lost faith in myself and my work."*



"My daughter has developed keen interest in education. She enjoys reading storybooks in English and have started attending school with great enthusiasm," said Hura Bibi, Momal's mother.

"It is amazing how a week-long workshop can change the way you work," said Hameeda. *"I learned new things, made new friends and experienced teaching from a student's point of view. I learned to motivate students and keep their interest alive."*



SUPPORTING GREEN ENERGY

Vision

To promote alternate energy means, improving energy use and providing technical support and training to emphasize renewable energy sources.

Contributions



33 grants



\$4 million awarded in grants



77,000 individuals benefited



380 bio-fertilizer plants built



2,450 homebased solar panel systems distributed



12 micro-hydel plants constructed

Gwadar, Balochistan

OUR VERY OWN POWER STATION

The Satpara valley with its Dari, Miraq and Mailpen villages is located 16 km away from Skardu City between the famous Deosai Plains and Satpara Dam. The temperature there drops to below -10°C (14°F) during winters. With extreme weather conditions, scarcity of basic facilities coupled with rising costs of kerosene oil often force residents to leave the valley and migrate to Skardu in the hopes of a better life.

“For the greater part of my life, there was no electricity in our village. We used kerosene oil lanterns or candle lights. I prayed that my children never had to live like that,” said Niaz Ali, a father of three.

The USAID Small Grants and Ambassador’s Fund Program partnered with a local organization called KSAN Local Support to install a 150 KW Micro-Hydro Electric Station. The project was completed in 2014 and has since been providing electricity to over 1,200 residents.



“We have taken the entire responsibility for the operation and maintenance of our hydropower station,” said Muhammad Jaffar, the local lineman. *“The villagers unanimously agreed to contribute to the maintenance expenses.”*



As a result of electrification, people procured common household items like televisions, stoves, electric heaters and mobile phones. This dramatically improved the quality of life of the people in these distant villages. Women used to fetch firewood every day to cook and heat up their homes. The arrival of electric stoves relieved them and also decreased smoke-ingested breathing issues.



“My daughter Naeema irons her school uniform every night. It gives me pleasure to see my children enjoy the benefits of modern technology,” said Niaz Ali.



AND THE DARKNESS TURNED INTO LIGHT!

Zahran is one of five villages under Union Council Suntsar in District Gwadar. It is some 70 km from the famous port of Gwadar at the southeastern end of Pakistan. Between the two lies a desert that is very hard to cross.

With only 30 households, this faraway land had no phone service, electrical grids or a water pipeline. Life there and in the adjacent villages was archaic, almost reminiscent of the cavemen's era.

One day something unusual happened. A local organization called the Rural Community Development Council (RCDC) received a grant from the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program to provide green energy to five villages of Suntsar, Zahran being one of them. Under this project, solar energy units were installed in houses, public schools and basic health units, benefiting over 2,000 people.

"For decades, my mother and aunts sacrificed their sleep to ensure that their children could sleep well. They would fan us with a hand-held fan through the night all summer long," said Shah Jahan, a young technician from the village who learned to manage and repair solar fixtures, and now acts as a technician across the Union Council. *"The solar energy brought them much relief. Now they go to sleep as soon as all the children do."*

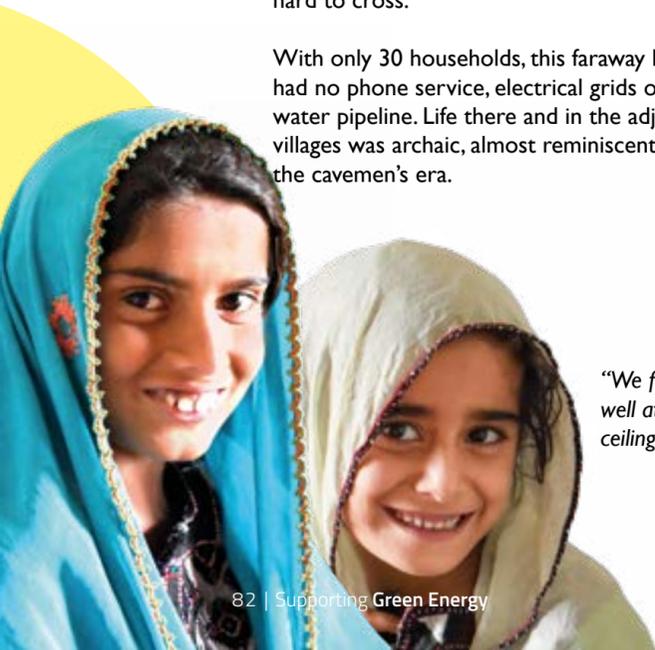


Shah Jahan's house is made of mud and roofed with dry leaves. But with a little effort, he was able to install lights and a fan in his house. This small step impacted the family in a big way.

"The villagers quickly embraced the idea of solar energy. Each family contributed 5% of the total cost of solar units, which is now used for meeting the repair and maintenance costs," said Shah Jahan.

A little support turned the remote and forgotten communities' darkness into bright lights and helped them to sleep comfortably through hot summer nights.

"We finally have electricity in our village. My siblings and I sleep well at night, thanks to the cool breeze of the newly installed ceiling fans," Shahzaba and Meera said joyfully.





MY GREEN LANTERN

Living in a world without electricity could be very difficult for many of us who have easy access to electricity. However, according to a rough estimate, over 40 percent of Pakistani households are not connected to the national electricity grid.



Twelve-year-old Roshana's village Meenh Wasayo Mallah in District Badin of Sindh Province is also off-grid. It is only 36 km away from the grid station but the nearest power transmission lines are situated 16 km away from the village.

She has always seen her father reminding her mother to keep the kerosene lamp out of the reach of all children. Her parents fear a fire incident in addition to the fact that they never have enough money to keep the lamp burning every night.

Roshana recalled, "When I was younger, I always wanted to touch the lamp's flame. Its flickering light was captivating. My mother always stood guard not to let me near the lamp." When she grew older her mother bought her a 'Qaida' (beginner's guide to help read the Quran). "She wanted to teach me but she would be so busy during the day," said Roshana. "We would study the Qaida



under the lamp's light when she would finish the household work but our lessons were always short because my eyes would burn due to the lamp's smoke."

The Laar Environmental Awareness Forum (LEAF), received a grant from the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program to provide over 1,000 solar lanterns and install 10 solar street lights in 22 villages of Badin, including Roshana's village. Over 4,000 people benefited from this grant.

"My village now has solar streetlights and we have two solar lanterns in our home," said Roshana. "We now have smoke-free light. My parents are relaxed, and I can now read well into the night," she added with a smile.



“My son never returned home after he went to fetch water in this merciless desert. We found his body after a few days from several miles away from home. He was only fifteen. This is not the first time someone from our area has lost a loved one in the quest for water,” said Muhammad Yousaf, a grieving villager in Nushki, Balochistan.



A SOLAR OASIS IN A KILLER DESERT

Neighboring the Afghanistan border, Nushki, also known as the valley of golden deserts, rarely receives rain, creating a drought-like condition in the area.

“We have no choice but to drink from the same ponds where stray animals drink and bathe. Our children frequently suffer from waterborne diseases,” Muhammad Yousaf said.

The government has constructed several tube wells in the area, however, due to persistent power shortage and high fuel costs, they often lay useless. With support from the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador’s Fund Program, the Azat Foundation (AF) installed solar powered water pumps and constructed water storage tanks in various villages in Nushki to provide clean drinking water to more than 4,000 people.



Muhammad Yousaf now leads a local water committee. *“A two kilometer water pipeline has been installed from the storage tank to our village. The improved water supply means that we do not need to travel in search of water anymore,”* said Yousaf. *“The tube well in my village works all the time now, saving tens of people from the often-treacherous task of fetching water. I do not want any other child from this village to die while fetching water. Clean water is a blessing and I encourage the community to take good care of the tube wells.”*





ENCOURAGING ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Vision

To promote the development of entrepreneurship by establishing economic enterprises and training individuals in vocational skills, making them economically independent.

Contributions



23 grants



\$1.3 million awarded in grants



200,000 individuals benefited



2,240 individuals received tool kits



2,850 individuals provided entrepreneurship training



5,150 individuals trained in skill development

Nagar Valley, Gilgit-Baltistan



"I was two when my mother realized that I could not walk like other children could. That is when I was diagnosed with polio. My mother was devastated. It wasn't until I was 17 years old that my father got me a special shoe and a stick to move around independently for the first time," shared Saba.

"After graduating from school, I spent my time at home. Even simple chores like doing the dishes or cooking was a challenge for me. I wanted to help my mother but she was the one who would always end up helping me. These were the lowest times of my life," she continued.

A SANGUINE **SABA**



"Ever since my courses, I have set up my own home business. I am independent now and also contribute to the running household expenses. I am grateful and optimistic about the future," she said.

Through the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program, the National Disability & Development Forum (NDF) has transformed the lives of 60 physically challenged women from Nawabshah, Sindh, by helping them become social entrepreneurs. These women who once required assistance for small tasks are now running home-based enterprises completely on their own.

Saba heard about a new vocational center for physically challenged women opening up near her home. "I joined the NDF Vocational Center. I learned skills such as sewing, and participated in the basic course for beauticians. These classes boosted my morale and created opportunities for me that I never thought I could have."



ON HIS WAY TO A SUNLIT FUTURE

Most households in Mirpur, Azad Jammu and Kashmir have family permanently settled in the United Kingdom and other parts of the world. These people usually support their kin from abroad, enabling them to live better lives. Many homes now have solar systems installed thanks to the family members abroad. Presently, there are very few solar technicians available that can provide maintenance support for the solar systems.



After driving the rickshaw and trying to overcome his financial troubles for a couple of years, Zafar came across an opportunity provided by a local organization called the Sukhi Development Foundation (SDF). The SDF had partnered with the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program and were aiming to provide training to 100 individuals to install, maintain, and repair solar energy systems. The training also included a business enterprise course to help develop the trainees' entrepreneurial skills. Zafar signed up.

The growing solar systems in the area required frequent installation and maintenance services that the existing technicians were unable to meet. This was a clear opportunity for Zafar, who had a technical background, to set up his own business.



One of the less lucky was Zafar Iqbal Bhatti, a retired public servant who used to work as a technician at a government facility. After retirement, he bought an auto-rickshaw to earn a living for his family. However, their income was meek due to the ever rising costs of living, and fewer work opportunities for senior citizens.

"Completing the course gave me confidence to work in this field," Zafar said. "I opened up my own shop and the business flourished. I can now easily manage the expenses of my three school-going children. I am also trying to win enough projects to enable me to buy a piece of land and build a small house for my family. That is my lifelong dream."





FRIENDSHIP WOVEN INTO BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP

The USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program supported the Naunihal Development Organization (NDO) and established wool enterprise development centers to provide trainings in wool processing to women. This includes shearing, weaving and setting up market linkages. Over sixty women are currently enrolled in the program.

Laila, Raheela and Kulsoom, best friends since childhood, are enrolled at the wool enterprise development center in Askordas, Nagar Valley.

"From sheep shearing to shawl weaving, it would take my grandmother over a month to make a woolen shawl. It was a long and cumbersome process. However, this training taught us alternative techniques to weave shawls. Now, my friends and I can weave a shawl in a matter of days," said Laila.

"The raw sheep wool doesn't cost much, but its market value increases manifold when it is turned into a shawl. In the past, with dated wool processing techniques we could not earn much," said Raheela. *"Our existing skills in spinning, weaving and shawl making are now far more refined. The thread we make from clean wool using new technology is a much better quality product and is sold for twice the price of wool produced with traditional methods,"* added Kulsoom.



Laila, Raheela and Kulsoom have gone from being just friends to business partners. These young entrepreneurs are inspiring role models for young women who want to expand upon existing skills and create business opportunities. They have developed a strong network and are raising their voice for women's economic empowerment.

EARNING WITH COMPASSION

"I am a big believer in the importance of helping others. If I don't help someone today, how can I expect anyone to be there for me in my time of need? As a mother of three children, I want to set an example for them so that they can be compassionate, helpful citizens tomorrow," said Nazia Muhammad.

Nazia enrolled in the Women Entrepreneurs Aapis (sisters) Program organized by the Research and Development Solutions (RADS) to develop and cultivate social entrepreneurs at the grassroots level. With assistance from the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program, RADS has helped twenty women social entrepreneurs, strengthening their skills including mobilization and communication. Nazia and her peers have reached out to over 2,000 homes in Rawalpindi.

"Thanks to the management training, I have set up a tuition center where I tutor twenty students. Combined with my earnings as an Aapi, I am now financially independent. By contributing to the day-to-day expenses of the house as well as my children's education, a lot of domestic strife has been reduced. Above all, from being an unemployed, home based individual, I have now become an aapi to so many people!" Nazia shared.



"As an aapi, we have focused on basic healthcare for women as part of this program. Following the training, we had a door-to-door campaign to raise awareness for the need to have accessible information on maternal healthcare. We covered topics such as family planning, vaccinations and preventive health services," explained Nazia.

The aim of this community-based, women-led, health and social entrepreneurship model was to help women overcome deeply ingrained individual and societal inhibitions and become engaged in work that brings benefits to them and their communities.



SUPPORTING HEALTHY POPULATIONS

Vision

To improve maternal and child healthcare by establishing health centers, training midwives, and sensitizing communities in basic health and hygiene practices. In addition, to improve existing water systems and support public education on better hygiene practices.

Contributions



30 grants



\$3.3 million
awarded in grants



600,000
individuals
benefited



142,000
women and
children
received
healthcare



66 health
units
strengthened



540 water
filtration plants
installed

Sukkur, Sindh

REGAINING THE LOST VISION



“Things started to blur. At first, I did not know what was happening. Then the faces started to fade and I was left only with blurry shadows,” said Razia Sultana, 53. This was the onset of cataract.

Razia’s husband, Muhammad Fareed, a policeman, was unable to save enough money for his wife’s cataract surgery. His biggest challenge was to feed a family of nine people. Desperate to seek help, someone referred him to the Layton Rahamatulla Benevolent Trust (LRBT).

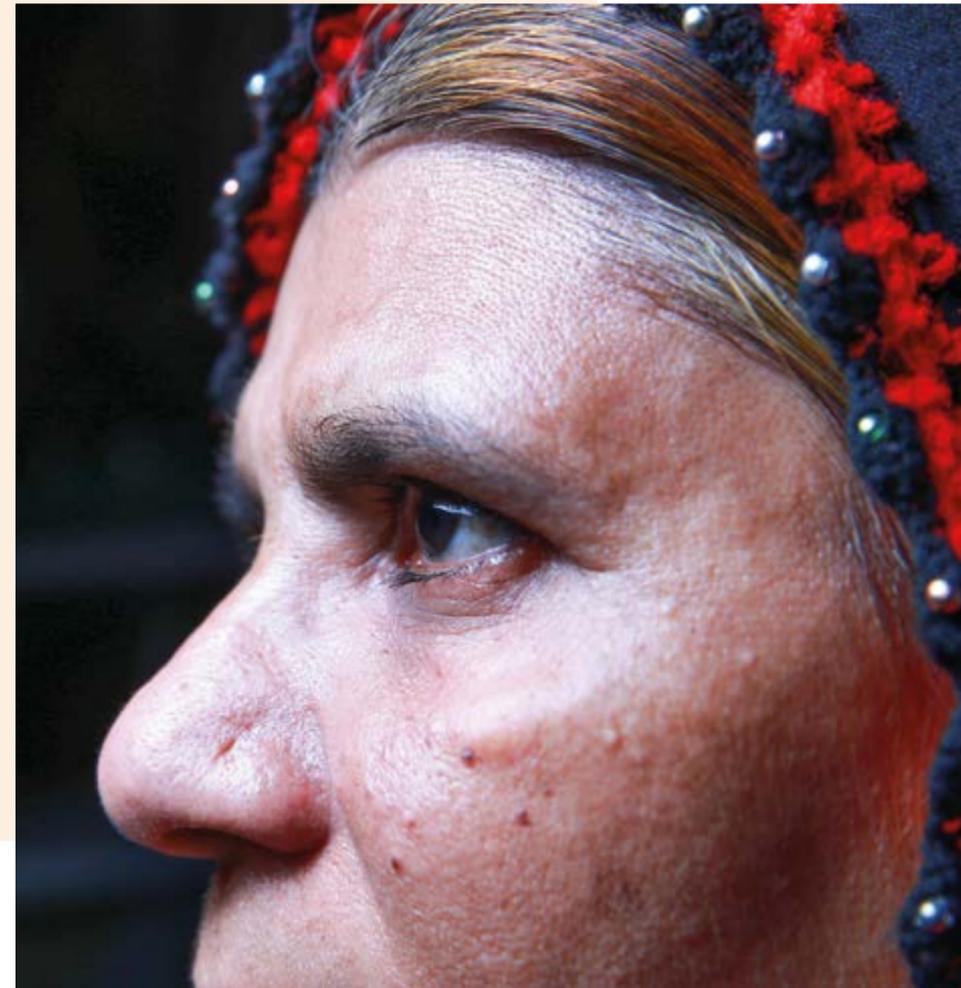
With support from the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador’s Fund Program, LRBT supported the cataract surgery for more than 12,000 women from various underserved areas across Pakistan. All patients received state-of-the-art care including free laboratory tests, consultation sessions, and surgical care.

Razia was treated by competent surgeons who removed her cataract and restored her vision.



Muhammad Fareed took a sigh of relief. *“I am so glad to see Razia’s eyesight restored,”* he said. *“We did not have to pay anything at all. Her treatment was free of charge. Now she does not have to rely on others.”*

Razia and her children are so happy. *“I can see my children again,”* she said. *“Every time I see their beautiful smiles my heart is filled with gratitude for the people who supported my surgery. I can read and stitch again. I can even put thread through the needle!”* she exclaimed.





WATER BRINGS US TOGETHER

He continued, “Given our struggles for access to clean water, I convinced my neighbors and other villagers to donate land for the construction of a water storage tank. It was for the first time in our village, that the community allotted land for public use.”

People from Sar Kappa requested a local organization to provide resources and assistance to construct water tank on the donated land. The Health and Nutrition Society Balochistan (HNSB) through a grant from the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador’s Fund Program constructed 12 water tanks across six villages.

“The engineer who supervised the construction of the tank in our village told us that the tank had the capacity of storing 2,200 gallons of water. Despite easier access to clean water, we are very mindful of how we use it. We also have volunteers that ensure that the water tanks are clean and well maintained. This water crisis has brought us all closer together!” exclaimed Changez.

Gwadar may be on its way to becoming a bustling international port city, however, access to clean drinking water is a growing concern for most of its surrounding villages’ residents. Presently, people rely on rainwater stored in natural ponds, buy tanked water from government or private providers who fill mobile tankers from the Mirani Dam fed by the Kech and Nihing Rivers and supply to the villages.

“When the fortnightly government water tankers came to our village, I would fill up two jerry-cans. Our family had to make do with 12 gallons of drinking water until the tanker came again,” recalled Changez Ali, a schoolteacher from village Sar Kappa in Pasni, Gwadar. His wife would make sure they used as little water as possible since she was in charge of rationing.





THE GODSEND

It is a parent's worst nightmare to learn that their child has been diagnosed with a life-threatening disease. Nasreen Bibi, the mother of five year old Waqas thought her son had a bad stomach when he complained of abdominal pain. His constant complaints compelled Nasreen to get him proper medical attention. The doctor told her that her boy had pancreatic cancer. She and her husband were devastated.

Nasreen's husband worked as a security guard in a bank and it was very hard for the family to meet the hefty treatment costs. They heard about an organization called Naya Jeevan (Renewed Life) that was providing health assistance with support from the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program.

Naya Jeevan's assistance was actually a hybrid social enterprise program. It was dedicated to reviving the lives of low-income families by providing them with affordable access to quality healthcare through carefully designed insurance plans. An initiative that eventually benefited over 10,000 people.

"The health insurance card that Naya Jeevan issued enabled us to avail out-patient care services that we could not afford on our own," said Nasreen Bibi. "When doctors recommended carrying out a complex surgery to remove the head of the pancreas, we had already maxed out our insurance policy limit. Naya Jeevan worked with the insurance company to increase our limit, ensuring that Waqas received specialized, consultant-based care. I am so thankful that the surgery was successful," she shared.



LIFESAVERS IN A DESOLATE LAND

USAID through the Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program provided assistance to the Mahec Helping Council for Community Development and Welfare to construct a Mothers, Newborn and Child Health (MNCH) Center on a piece of land that the people of Khost donated. Training sessions were conducted for community midwives, and awareness raising sessions were held for the community.

The Center is equipped with state-of-the-art medical equipment to facilitate OPD, tests, examinations and medical procedures relating to MNCH problems and medical emergencies.



“I still remember the day when my husband, a coalminer, took me to Quetta in a great hurry because the hospital in our Harnai district could not support the caesarean section surgery,” said Bakho Bibi.

“It was raining and the long and uneven road gave me serious jolts. One of my pregnant cousins had died on the way to the hospital; and I could not stop thinking about her the whole way. I thought I would never make it to the hospital. It took us eight hours to reach and upon arrival, they carried me into the emergency room. God was kind and I gave birth to a baby boy in the early morning hours.”

Becoming pregnant with a child could be a scary experience in Khost—some 150 km away from Quetta—the provincial capital of Balochistan. The absence of basic healthcare makes the lives of expecting women and the little ones even more difficult especially if they require emergency medical care.

“The birth of my second child was much easier,” said Bibi. *“I received excellent treatment without having to travel over long distances.”*



“The biggest accomplishment was imparting practical skills to traditional birth attendants (TBAs) and linking them with the MCH Center. It has also enhanced awareness regarding mother and child health care services among the rural community,” said Dr. Sikandar.

The number of patients treated at the MCH Center doubled after its rehabilitation and strengthening in 2014. The increased awareness of timely maternal and child health care among women encouraged them to regularly visit the Center.

“Allah Wasai gave birth to her second child last month. As advised by the doctor, I gave her tips on pre and postnatal care,” said Mai Suhagan, a local TBA who regularly provides home services to several villages of Salehpat. *“Whenever I visit her home, I remind her to take good care of her diet and avoid strenuous activity.”*

“I gave birth to my son, Hasnain, in a health center two weeks ago. Afia, my daughter, was born three years ago at home. The SBDDS community meetings changed my husband’s behavior and he took me to a health centre for a safe delivery this time,” Allah Wasai said.

IMPROVING LIVES

With three basic health units in the town catering to a population of around half a million people, the need for health care in Salehpat, Sukkur, Sindh was overwhelming. The conditions were especially difficult for women that had to travel long distances for reproductive health, childcare and family planning related services.

With support from the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador’s Fund Program, the Sukkur Blood and Drugs Donating Society (SBDDS) worked to provide improved and accessible Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health Services at the MCH Center in Salehpat.



“In Salehpat, Sukkur, untrained TBAs used to perform child deliveries, risking the lives of both the mother and the child,” said Dr. Romeesa Sikandar who works at the Mother & Child Healthcare Center in the area.



HELPING PEOPLE AT RISK

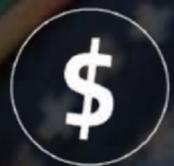
Vision

To empower vulnerable individuals by providing them with an opportunity to develop vocational skills, and extending relief and rehabilitation services to individuals in need.

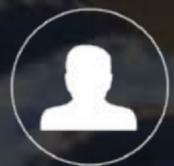
Contributions



45 grants



\$2.5 million awarded in grants



80,000 individuals benefited



3,500 flood affected families given relief items



3,000 individuals received training in vocational skills



310 persons with disabilities received skills training

Hunza Valley, Gilgit-Baltistan

BRIDGING THE NEEDS



The 2010 floods washed away roads and bridges that connected communities in the Upper Dir District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. *“The 2010 floods were sudden and severe, and they washed away everything,”* said Sher Khan, a resident of Upper Dir. *“The bridges that helped us commute across the River Swat were either destroyed or badly damaged and declared unsafe. Suddenly, we lost access to markets, schools and dispensaries. Many schools shut down since students could not reach there.”*

The situation called for quick action. The USAID Small Grants and Ambassador’s Fund Program issued a grant to the Dir Area Development Organization (DADO) for constructing eight suspension bridges that would connect 10 villages of tehsil Shringal, District Upper Dir transforming the lives of thousands of residents.

Khurshid Khan, a fourth grade student at a local school said, *“Before the construction of the new bridge, my friends, Hamza, Hasan and Abdullah and I had*

to cross a river to reach our school. My mother would always worry that I would fall into the river. She doesn’t have to worry anymore. There’s a big bridge which we use now to cross the river. My travel is now safer and faster. We have more time to play now!”

Many children had dropped out of school due to inaccessible routes. Fearing for their lives, parents stopped sending them to school to keep them safe. But the bridges solved their problem. It was not only children who benefited. Normalcy resumed as the elders also found improved access to their workplaces, healthcare facilities and markets.

“We are all happy that we can resume our daily routines with far greater ease now,” remarked Sher Khan.





STRANDED 85-YEAR-OLD FINDS A HOME

She lost her husband soon after their third child was born. Life became a nightmare for 30-year old Shakara Bibi, but she had to live through it. She was moderately educated so she chose teaching as a way to earn a living. Days turned into months and months into years. The time passed slowly but her hopes never faded. The children grew up. Both her daughters got married and the son followed his fortune to Canada. He would, however, support his mother by sending a handsome amount every month.

But plans don't always work. It was the third year of her son's departure to Canada that he met a horrible traffic accident there, which left him paralyzed. He could barely support himself and could not support his mother anymore. Shakara Bibi, now 85 and alone, had to move to one of her daughters' house.

"My daughter and son-in-law lived in a joint family at his parents' house. It was a small house that only had two rooms and a toilet," said Shakara Bibi. "I was the 16th member in the household and clearly knew that it would be very hard for them to support me. I had run out of strength and could not participate physically or financially."

Shakara Bibi, fondly known as Amma Shakara (Mother Shakara), heard of a foster old home called ABURO that was established for old people who had nowhere to turn to. It was managed by an organization called Adara-e-Behbood-e-Umar Rasida (ABURO) which loosely translates into Organization for the Welfare of Old People, and looked after by a banker-turned-social worker Ms. Naheed Kareem. One morning, when trees were preparing to shed their leaves, Shakara Bibi quietly bade farewell to her daughter's house and moved into the foster home.

"When we opened up this foster old home we faced lots of criticism. People could not accept the idea and called it a foreign culture. But then the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program provided us with a grant that helped us improve the facilities, procure new furniture and equipment, and manage the home in a much better way," recalled Naheed.

"Amma Shakara is among the first women that we enrolled here," said Naheed. "She is a special member of the home. She is fond of reading and regularly reads magazines and newspapers to her fellow residents. They have found peace in each other and are happy to live together under our care."



"Now ABURO is my home and I am very satisfied with the facilities offered here. I want to spend rest of my life here," told Amma Shakara.

NO ORDINARY CHAMPIONS

"I want to tell people that I am different — I am a transgender. For the greater part of my life, I hid my identity because my conservative community would not accept me," shared Sheela Khan, a resident of Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Sheela has recently registered for a driving license in which she has marked her gender as "X" representing gender neutrality. She labels this choice as a beginning for her and many other transgenders who desire to have a separate identity for themselves in society.

The transgender community in Pakistan encounters many forms of discrimination and stigma in their daily lives, hampering their access to education and fair employment opportunities. Keeping this in view, the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program supported the Women Empowerment Organization (WEO) to conduct various training courses for transgender individuals in the city. This way they would gain financial independence despite the lack of academic qualifications.



WEO arranged a beautician's course for 25 transgenders in Peshawar, providing them with toolkits and establishing their linkages with leading beauty salons in the city.

One of the course participants, Arzu Khan, shared, *"I like this training. They taught us advanced techniques in make-up and hair styling. I wish to set up a beauty salon in my own home and this certification would be very helpful. I aspire to make a name for myself as a beauty expert. Not only would I be able to earn a livelihood for myself, but the society might respect me for that."*

Transgenders have to deal with systemic violence, and discrimination in most walks of life, often forcing them to resort to lead marginalized lives as entertainers who sing and dance. Financial independence would help the transgender community to gain a strong identity for themselves.

AVICENNA'S HEARTBEAT

Avicenna, a Persian child prodigy-turned-polymath of the 10th Century, could diagnose a patient by listening to his heartbeat. He pioneered the belief that a person's heartbeat told the story of his wellness. Sherbaz Khan, founder of Ceena Health and Welfare Services, named his orphanage after Avicenna (locally known as Ceena) to not only pay homage to one of the world's greatest healers and humanists, but also to align with his legacy of love for humankind.

With support from the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program, Ceena Health and Welfare Services upgraded their orphanage called the Ceena Early Childhood Development Center. The center caters to children who have either lost their parents or been abandoned by their mothers.

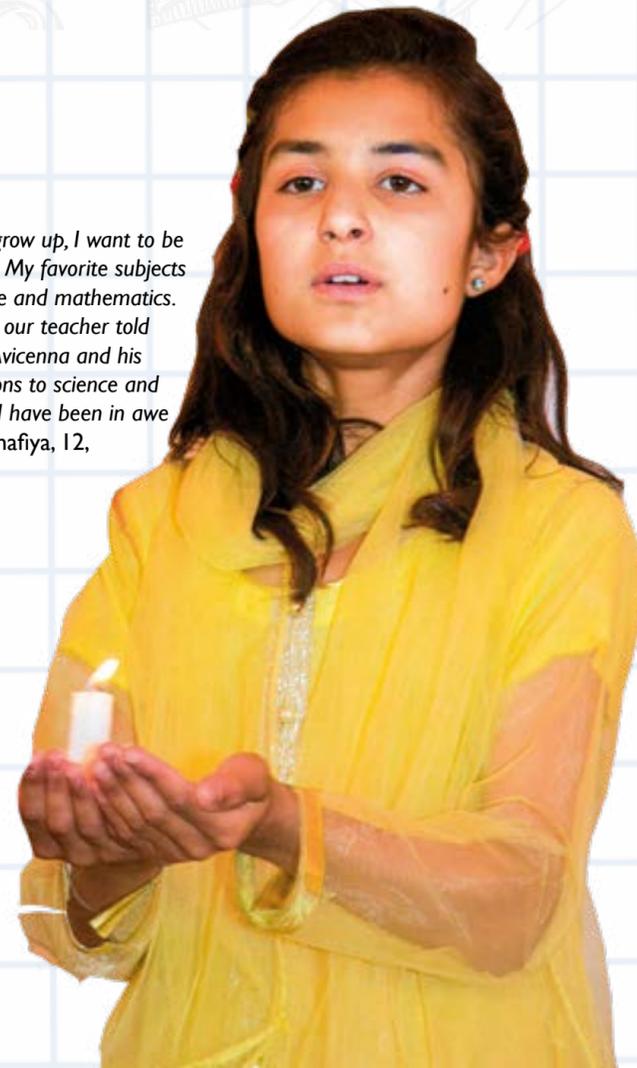
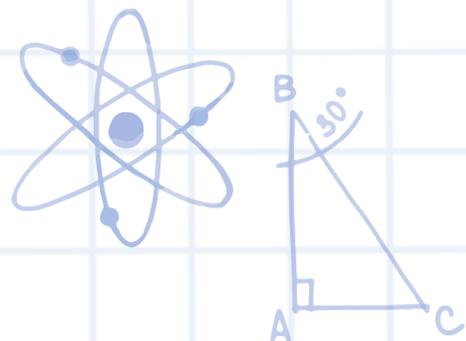
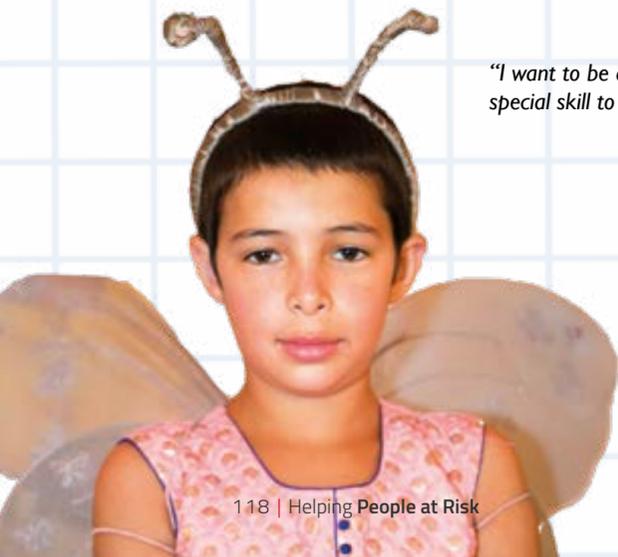
"When I grow up, I want to be a scientist. My favorite subjects are science and mathematics. Ever since our teacher told us about Avicenna and his contributions to science and medicine, I have been in awe of him." Shafiya, 12,

"I want to be a doctor when I grow up. I think it requires a special skill to be able to heal people," shared Adila, 9.

"I want to be able to operate a tank and fly a jet. I will be a soldier when I grow up so that I can protect my country." Ijlal, 10

"I love to make my friends laugh when I crack jokes. The teachers say I am the most mischievous of the lot! Shahid Afridi is my most favorite cricketer and I want to be like him." Muzakir, 9

"I love playing badminton and painting. Miss Shahana is my most favorite teacher and one day, I hope to become a teacher like her." Anita, 11





A HOME WITH A THOUSAND CHILDREN

Situated in the heart of Saidu Sharif, District Swat, there is a home that has a thousand children. But stop! It is not just a home, it is a school as well, and beyond that, it is a sign that humanity still has hope!

Khpal Kor (Our Own Home) is an orphanage that houses over 3,500 orphan boys and girls. It not only provides them with basic amenities but also provides them with high quality education, and lots of hope.

The catastrophic floods of 2010 not only destroyed infrastructure in Swat Valley but were also responsible for the outbreak of infectious diseases. Khpal Kor fell prey to the torrential flooding, displacing 2,509 children at the time. Alternative arrangements were quickly made for the displaced children in Peshawar while simultaneously identifying hundreds of other children that were orphaned due to floods.



The USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program supported the rehabilitation and expansion of Khpal Kor in 2012 to accommodate the increasing number of orphans. A separate residential floor was constructed for girls in the first phase while a 20 KW solar energy system was installed to provide alternate source of energy to the school and the housing facility.

When 17-year-old Sana Akram lost her father, her mother was unable to afford raising her six children. A distraught and nervous Sana came to Khpal Kor for help in 2014, leaving her home for the first time. Staying away from home at an orphanage was difficult at first, however, two years later, Sana

had transformed into an ambitious young sportswoman.

"I would never have thought my life could change so much. I pursued my passion for sports here. I am good enough to play against boys," said Sana. "But I did not compromise on academics, I scored 89% in my tenth grade exams. I did exceptionally well in Biology and Chemistry. It is my dream to become a heart surgeon. I will pursue it, and I know that I will succeed!" she added.

The home with a thousand children has a million dreams that it strives to fulfill, and USAID played a humble part in that fulfillment.





MENDING A BROKEN DREAM

Masooma, 25, is a young Hazara woman who mourns the loss of her brother Ali Raza, a policeman who was killed in a terror attack in 2013 after serving for only three years. Her parents are old and weak and she is helping them feed her two younger brothers and three sisters.

Marriabad is a small town alongside Quetta—the capital of Balochistan. This town is predominantly populated by the Hazara community whom historians regard as the descendants of Genghis Khan's armies that converted to Islam under the Shia faith. Some militant groups frequently target the Hazaras for their faith and lineage.



Masooma wanted to pay her respects to her martyred brother by taking his place as the family breadwinner, and USAID helped her by enrolling her into a three-month tailoring and sewing course at one of the two nearby vocational centers. These centers had more than 300 young women learning employable skills and receiving comprehensive toolkits at the end of successful training.

“Ali had big dreams,” recalled Masooma. “He would always play soldier in the school tableaus. I have his picture in the police uniform from the day he enrolled into the force. He wanted to restore law and bring peace to our society.”

This grant under the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program not only trained the young women but also linked them to the local markets where the shopkeepers buy their products. Establishing this demand and supply chain not only orients them with the latest trends in fashion but also provides them with a handsome amount to support their families through a dignified business.

Masooma now supports the education of her younger siblings as she helps mend her family's broken dream.



CONSERVING WILDLIFE

Vision

To protect Pakistan's rich bio-diversity and promote wildlife conservation by providing facilities for education, research, and the preservation of the habitats of threatened species, including the Himalayan brown bears, markhors and the blind dolphins of the River Indus.

Contributions



15 grants



\$1.3 million
awarded
in grants



5,650
individuals
benefited



50 endangered
animals and
habitats selected
for conservation



124
awareness
sessions
conducted
on wildlife
conservation



13,000
livestock
vaccinated



Deosai Plains, Gilgit-Baltistan

THE LAST SANCTUARY

High in the western Himalayas, cradled in the Karakoram Mountains of northern Pakistan lies a plateau known as the land of the giants. The towering K2 dominates this landscape and to the southwest of it lies the Deosai plateau, the second highest plateau in the world. In this icy wilderness, there are thought to have been over 10,000 Himalayan brown bears at one time in Northern Pakistan and Kashmir.

Today, this specie is one of the most threatened in South Asia. Their numbers across the region have plummeted by half in the last 100 years and can only be found in small pocket in India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, China and Kazakhstan. Repeated glaciation in Asia has also affected a large part of the population and fragmented the rest. Over the years, the remaining bears have been hunted almost to extinction.

Walkabout Films Private Limited (WFPL), in collaboration with the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program showcased the wildlife and natural heritage of North Pakistan to the world by producing an internationally acclaimed 40-minute documentary titled 'Deosai- The Last Sanctuary' focusing on the endangered Himalayan Brown Bear and other range animals, insects, birds, and plants in the park.



The Last Sanctuary won the prize for Protection of Nature at the prestigious Film Festival held in France. It was also selected for Green Unplugged Film Festival 2015. To date, the film has been shared online with over 64 million viewers worldwide.

A LIFE OF A THOUSAND YEARS

The juniper trees in Ziarat date back to the first millennium BC. The average age of a fully-grown juniper is over 2,000 years which suggests that these ancient trees belong to the time when Buddha was alive!

The Ziarat Juniper forest in Balochistan is the second largest natural juniper forest in the world covering nearly 110,000 hectares. They are also home to the Suleiman Markhor (also known as the Screw Horn Goat) that live on the treacherous cliffs of the mountainous forest. These goats, known for their beauty, agility and magnanimously twisted horns rely on the ecosystem shaped by the presence of juniper forest for their survival.

“My grandfather told me never to kill a Juniper,” said Muhammad Gul, a native of Ziarat. *“He believed them to be God’s gift to our ancestors. But nomads and settlers started cutting them down for easy money.”*

With support from the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador’s Fund Program, the Balochistan Rural Support Programme (BRSP) conducted a robust survey with technical input from IUCN and concluded that 30 Suleiman Markhors were sighted. BRSP also conducted massive community engagement exercises in the communities of Ziarat, Choutair, and Manna to preserve the forest and protect the Suleiman Markhor. More than 200 families were provided with solar systems and fuel-efficient stoves to encourage them to avoid firewood.

“We sensitized people about their role in conserving the forest and the Suleiman Markhor. We also trained women to use fuel-efficient stoves that meet domestic energy needs with lesser consumption of wood and minimum hazards to human health and natural climate,” said Murad Gul, community representative.

“I have seen the Suleiman Markhor only a few times in my life. These sure-footed goats come down in winters, especially at the time of sunrise and sunset. As together we work to preserve the thousand years old trees, we are also helping conserve the markhors and their natural habitat,” said Muhammad Gul.



THE BLUE PEAFOWLS

EPITOME OF BEAUTY

As Thar tradition goes, peacocks dance when it rains during the monsoon season. While dancing, when a peacock looks at its feet, it bursts into tears because of its seeming lack of beauty. The female peafowl that watches the peacocks dancing are said to swallow the tears. The sensitivity of peafowls has been acknowledged in many cultures and religions, as a result of which they are considered sacred.

Historically, monarchs and conquerors in the Indian subcontinent owned these mysterious birds that were considered immortal because of the belief that the peafowls are not only invulnerable to venoms but they welcome it to make their plumage more vivacious. This pearlescent bird, an epitome of beauty and royalty, has made the Thar Desert, Asia's only subtropical desert, their home. As per a recent estimate, 50,000 peafowls live in Tharparkar, Sindh.



The Government of Sindh has declared Tharparkar a wildlife sanctuary. In recent years, hundreds of peafowls have been found dead during the summers. According to local officials, the unusually higher temperatures and lack of water have been the reason for these deaths. However, the local community has attributed these deaths to a contagious disease called Rani Khet (the Newcastle disease,) which cause severe loss of appetite, coughing and fatigue.

With assistance from the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program, the District Development Association Tharparkar (DDAT) conservation efforts for this stunning bird by building over 1,700 drinking

platforms containing vaccinated water replenished by the communities. DDAT raised community awareness and also established a special healthcare center for peafowls.

"Each summer, whenever we see a peafowl, we take it to the special healthcare center where a veterinary doctor vaccinates the bird. We all need to do our part to help protect the peafowl," said Kamal, a community representative and nature lover.

Through this initiative, over 40,000 peafowls have been vaccinated.

THE BLIND DOLPHINS OF RIVER INDUS

River Indus is one of the longest rivers in Asia, running along the entire length of Pakistan. The river is home to one of the rarest and oldest living mammals on earth - the Indus Blind Dolphin. The Indus dolphins are one of only four river dolphin species in the world that spend all of their lives in freshwater. The dolphins have adapted to live in the muddy river and are functionally blind, relying on highly sophisticated echo-location to navigate, communicate and hunt a variety of fish. Once inhabiting the Indus estuary up into the foothills of Himalayas, today the Indus blind dolphin is only found in one fifth of its previous range in the central and lower part of River Indus.



As part of conservation efforts, the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program supported the Sustainable Tourism Foundation Pakistan (STFP) on a 20 km stretch of the Indus River, beginning at Taunsa Barrage and ending at Ghazi Ghat. The initiative included awareness raising among the 600 locals through a series of workshops to inculcate a deep sense of responsibility towards protection of the unique dolphins.

The establishments of two rescue committees, and linking the reporting of rescue operations with the Wildlife Department and World Wildlife Fund significantly reduced the killing of dolphins as well as baby dolphins getting entangled in fishing nets. Moreover, the promotion of eco-tourism simultaneously created alternative livelihood opportunities for these entrepreneurs. The economic benefits generated from this project are helping the preservation of biological and cultural diversity of the River Indus while strengthening the local community's identity.

"We didn't know that the Bhulan, (blind dolphin) is so rare until the start of this ecotourism project. Our fishermen community had no regard for it. Not only are they important for a healthy ecosystem, they attract a lot of tourists. Through the boat safari, our fishermen have not only increased their incomes, the community is more motivated to protect and care for these friendly mammals," shared Javed Iqbal, a community activist.



EMPOWERING WOMEN

Vision

To improve the status of women through training, creating job opportunities, addressing domestic violence issues, and enhancing access to justice.

Contributions



37 grants



\$2.2 million
awarded in
grants



160,000
individual
benefited



10,800
individuals
received
psycho-social
and legal
assistance



6,000 women
supported in
vocational
and business
development



53,250
individuals
sensitized on
gender issues

In Azad Jammu and Kashmir's town of Siana Daman, families mostly rely on agriculture and livestock for their livelihoods. The Aiming Change for Tomorrow (ACT) is a local organization that established 20 vocational centers to enable women to become kitchen gardeners. With support from the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program, ACT provided essential tools to 300 women to provide for their families.



"I loved gardening. I never knew that I could make a living from it. From leveling the land to plow and prepare a seedbed, I learned everything. First, we practiced on demo plots, and then we planted our own gardens," explained Khalida Kazmi, a kitchen gardener from Siana Daman.

"I am proud to be able to feed my children with healthy, organic food. Keeping in mind what I learned during the training, I cultivated seasonal vegetables in my backyard. In three months, I had begun harvesting organic vegetables. Not only have I been feeding my family from the garden, I have been making money selling the surplus produce!" said Khalida.



"Fresh vegetables, eggs and chicken are a luxury for us, given our limited income. I used to think that if I could start growing food in my own garden and raised my own chickens, I would be able to bring nutritious food to the table for my family," recalled Saima Bibi.

While sharing her experience of poultry rearing Saima Bibi explained, "Keeping the chickens healthy is the key to successfully rearing poultry. During the course, we learned how to build a chicken shed and maintain a controlled environment within. In addition to providing us with chickens, ACT gave us toolkits that included supplies for the shed. I reared these hens in my own farm and today I have a lot of poultry ready to dispatch to the market."

Saima, Khalida and the other women who attended the course have begun sharing their learning within the community. Their advice has helped others in the area to improve their farms. Seeing these hardworking women beam with pride is one of the greatest markers of success!



KITCHEN GARDENING A HEALTHY WAY TO EARN

DIGNITY AND RESPECT FOR ALL

“Every human being, even a criminal defendant deserves to be treated with basic respect. In our courts, there is barely any place where women litigants can respectfully sit and wait for their hearings, let alone discuss their legal problems with lawyers in private,” asserted Farzana.

Farzana Javed is a lawyer and member of the District Bar Association in Mardan. She shared, *“Every day I meet women who have been sexual harassed or denied their share in inheritance. Our legal system is too complex for women from rural areas to comprehend. I try my best to help them.”*



Social and cultural reasons have prevented women from seeking help to get their due legal rights. Under a grant from the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador’s Fund Program, an organization called The Humanitarians (TH) provided free legal aid to hundreds of women litigants in addition to constructing waiting rooms with washrooms in three court buildings in Mardan. Farzana is one of the lawyers who provided pro-bono legal aid to women.

She continued, “As a result of this initiative, women litigants are given more respect and care. They sit in ventilated waiting rooms with private cubicles for legal consultation with lawyers. Women visiting the courts now feel comfortable and are able to freely speak up about the issues they are facing.”

The Bar Association of District Mardan took the responsibility of maintaining these facilities in their efforts to support women who are fighting for justice. Nearly 100 women come to the courts in Mardan daily to seek legal assistance.



A TASTE OF **BALTISTAN**

“We are fortunate to have a variety of fruits and vegetables because of the suitable climate,” said Marziya, a farmer from Skardu in Gilgit-Baltistan. “My village in particular is blessed with some of the world’s best apricots.”

“Each family in our village has 30-40 apricot trees and each produces nearly 60 kg of apricots. Unfortunately, a lot of produce is wasted before we are able to sell it since it has such a short shelf life,” she lamented.

In order to address this challenge, an organization called the Serman Local Support Organization (SLSO) teaches women farmers improved harvesting, processing, drying and marketing techniques.

With support from the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador’s Fund Program, the SLSO worked with 80 women farmers in Skardu and its surrounding areas through 10 training events, distributing 80 portable solar dehydration machines (for drying apricots) and 21 nut cracker units.

“Now that my work is streamlined and so much more efficient, I get to spend that extra time with my family,” said Marziya with a smile.



Marziya participated in this training. Sharing her experience she said, *“When I completed my training, I experimented with a kilo of apricot. I dried it and sent it to the market. To my surprise, the machine dried apricots fetched me three times the price I could earn for one kilo of traditionally dried apricots. The latter would accumulate a lot of dust because they were dried on rooftops in the open air. The modern drying technique not only improved profitability, but also reduced my work load. What would take up to two weeks is now done in only a couple of days.”*



SPOTLIGHTING BALOCHI HANDICRAFTS

Under a grant from the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program, Aik Hunar Aik Nagar (AHAN), arranged a training course for 120 women artisans in Pishin, Balochistan to enhance their embroidery skills. AHAN also provided tools to make marketable products.

"A year ago, I was a home-based artisan working on a very small scale. I had no idea about bulk production and marketing my handmade products. Things changed after this training. I recently exhibited my products at an exhibition in Islamabad. My work is now being seen and appreciated across the nation. People are beginning to recognize Baloch handicraft!" exclaimed Roghida Bibi, an artisan from Pishin.

"My husband would be out of work very often, and I thought setting up a small business using my handicraft skill would be a good way to contribute. I made different products, but could not sell them at profitable prices," said Roghida.



"Since childhood, our mothers teach us about handicrafts, handiwork, embroidery and apparel designing. The textile embroidery and other handicrafts are embodiments of our rich cultural heritage," said Roghida Bibi. *"But despite the beauty and richness of these products, we were never able to earn a good living making them,"* she added.

The traditional embroidery of "Galabatoon" and "Khamak" are being practiced by women in Pishin but they were unable to take their products to larger markets.

Most women artisan trained under this grant receive continuous support from AHAN in terms of advice on designing, color scheming, product development, quality assurance and marketing. The trained artisans utilize AHAN's outlet in Quetta for display and sales of their handicrafts. AHAN also arranges for their work to be displayed in outlets across Pakistan, including Karachi, Lahore and Peshawar.



YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS' PATH TO LITERACY

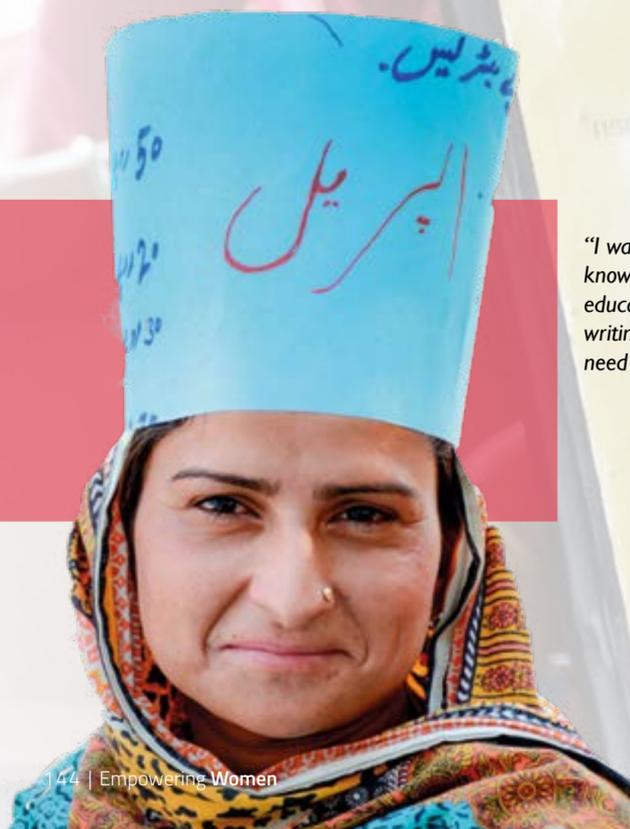
Muzaffargarh, Punjab is characterized by feudalism, poverty and small land holdings. The typical rural life in the district highlights a number of issues primarily due to limited economic opportunities for all and reluctance to involve women in the workforce.

Recognizing the genuine need to mainstream women into the economic process through skill development, the Bunyad Literacy and Community Council (BLCC) provided basic financial management and enterprise development skills to 600 women. With support from the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program, BLCC empowered these women to establish their own small businesses ranging from tailoring to poultry farming.

"I was familiar with basics of the Urdu language but I did not know how to write. I never had the opportunity to get formal education. In a four-month long literacy course, I developed writing skills. I no longer need to rely on other people when I need to write something down," explained Mehnaz Bibi, 27.

Another participant, 20-year-old Shaista shared, "My reading and writing skills were very weak. I recently completed the basic literacy and financial management course. Now, I am not only able to make budget plans for my own enterprise but also help my neighbors in basic mathematics. My home-based tailoring business is taking off now that I am confident to manage it."

In addition to the women attending these courses to further their small scale enterprises, their increased incomes have enabled 234 out-of-school children from these families to enroll into schools. The community has now begun to see these hardworking women in a new light, elevating their status in society by recognizing their contributions.



CREATING LASTING IMPRESSIONS

From Hunza, to Jiwani, Pakistan possesses some of the world's most diverse and extreme terrains and conditions. Over the course of 8 years, the USAID Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program (SGAFP) worked to improve the lives of Pakistanis, irrespective of their remoteness.

The Program under the USAID umbrella supported communities in ensuring a better future, while protecting their environment and unique identities. The SGAFP media and communication strategy remained geared to providing recognition to the contributions of the American people to Pakistan – from welcoming civil society organizations, to providing grassroots community groups a platform to share their development concepts.



1,000,000 people visited SGAFP website during the project life cycle

Website and Social Media

The Program launched its website on September 2010. To date, nearly one million individuals have visited the website, which has been refreshed and modified periodically keeping in mind updated information and changing trends. The website provided information on application procedures, eligibility criteria and an outline of requirements for the submission of grant applications. It has facilitated hundreds of people while also providing an insight into the various initiatives funded by the Program.

The Program has also had an active presence on USAID Pakistan's social media platforms, where the hashtag SmallGrantsBigImpact helped create an index of varied initiatives.

Among the initiatives that gained popularity online are 'The Nightingales of Pamir' campaign, and videos of the enchanting songs produced through this project, Bulbulik and Dilet Diwona, which received over a million views on YouTube, in addition to being aired on national television channels.

Videos

In collaboration with its partner organizations, the Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program developed 57 video documentaries highlighting various development models and their impact on the community. Where the Shoe Pinches, A Second Chance at Hope, and Drivers of Change are among the most viewed videos of the Program.



Print and Electronic Media

Pakistan's regional, national and international newspapers, TV channels and radio stations have regularly featured SGAFP's success stories and accomplishments. Many writers and opinion makers have visited SGAFP grants and documented their experiences. The New York Times carried an inspirational story on a grant project awarded to the Family Educational Services Foundation (FESF), a Karachi based organization. Another success story about the education of adolescent girls was highlighted by the First Lady of the United States, in a press statement given to Marie Claire magazine. Furthermore, the Pakistani newspapers carried a large number of grant projects stories and special supplements to highlight the immense impact of the Program on peoples' lives.



Events

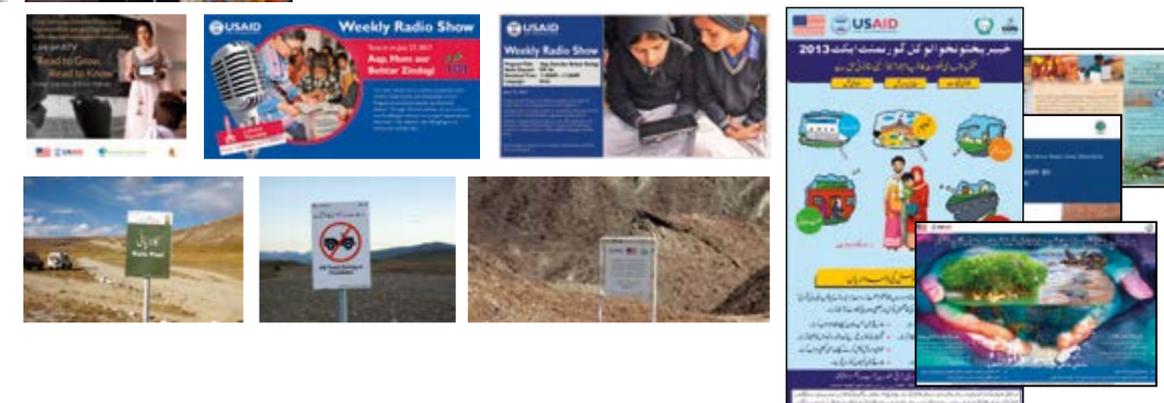
To commemorate the achievements of our partner communities and grantees, the Program organized several events across Pakistan. Representatives from the U.S. Embassy, USAID, Government of Pakistan, civil society, media attended these events, as did members of the communities where the projects were implemented.



Publications

The Program's communication strategy also helped promote positive behavior among individuals. In pursuance of this, it ensured that its grants include publications to aid direct beneficiaries and other stakeholders. There is an enormous variety of publications published under the umbrella of SGAFP including training manuals, fliers, newsletters, and research papers.

The SGAFP team has ensured that it told stories of Pakistan and Pakistanis in a way that created a better understanding of the country's diversity, as well as the scope of American assistance. The team has been passionate about promoting a narrative that not only applauds the feats of our local heroes, internally and externally, but also exudes optimism, spreads hope, and most importantly, captures the heart and soul of the people of Pakistan.



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