

Gender Transformative Communication Strategy

Pathfinder in collaboration with UNFPA with support from Global Affairs Canada (GAC) under the '*Sihat Mand Khaandaan (SMK) project: healthy families for Pakistan through accelerated sexual and reproductive health and family planning services.*' is supporting the Government of Sindh, particularly the Home Department, Women Development Department, and Health Department to establish mechanisms to strengthen their capacities and response mechanisms for gender-based violence in Sindh and has been providing technical support to the Government of Sindh to in developing strategies, capacity building and data and reporting system.

The Gender Transformative Strategy aims to promote gender equality and empower women by implementing a comprehensive and transformative approach within an organization or community. The project recognizes that gender inequality is deeply rooted in social norms, power dynamics, and institutional structures, and seeks to challenge and transform these underlying factors to create sustainable change.

The Project aims to:

1. Challenge gender norms, stereotypes, and discriminatory practices.
2. Enhance women's participation and leadership in decision-making processes.
3. Improve access to and control over resources, opportunities, and services for women.
4. Foster gender-responsive policies, programs, and practices.
5. Strengthen institutional capacities to promote gender equality.

Gender Transformative Strategy

The Global Gender Gap Report is an index designed to measure gender equality. It does this across four key dimensions i.e. economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. Pakistan ranks 142 out of 146 countries, leaving it at the bottom of both the regional and global ranking tables. *At the current rate of progress, full parity will be achieved in 149 years.*

Gender inequality is pervasive and present worldwide. In Pakistan girls and women continue to bear the brunt of gender inequality. Due to responsibilities at home, women traditionally have been less likely than men to join the labor force and earn equal pay. When they do, they usually seek part-time roles in the informal sector – that offer lower pay. Overtime these disadvantages translate into substantial gender gaps in earnings that result in a pervasive cycle of low bargaining power and voice, making them more vulnerable to gender-based violence.

According to WB experts, '*improving women's lifetime earnings opportunities can be achieved by taking actions that redistribute and balance care responsibilities, create a pipeline of talent by closing the gender gap in employment and entrepreneurship, and tackling discriminatory laws and restrictive social norms that hold back girls and women*' (Dawn, 2020).

In the context of Pakistan, there has been an economic slowdown resulting in high inflation, weakening rupee and increasing poverty. According to a UNDP report, 64% of the population is below the age of 30 and a total of 30% are between the age of 10 and 24 years i.e. 64.5 million. This trend is expected to continue until 2050. By 2030, total estimated population is projected to be 280 million and 100 million

will be young people (Saleem, 2023). The median age of the population in 2030 is projected to be 22.3 years and by 2050 it will be 27.3 years. (ESCAP, n.d.). A large proportion of young Pakistanis (men and women) live in rural areas, where opportunities are scarce and, at best, informal. With the price hike of essential commodities, many families may have been pushed below the poverty line – impacting purchasing power and limiting women’s access to nutrition, health (sexual and reproductive health) and education.

The bulk of the population in 2030 would comprise of the youth who are tech savvy and use the internet to collect information, they are being raised in an era of recession and are cognizant of the economic pressures and poverty, they are most likely to be residing in rural areas and likely to be working in informal jobs. Women in Pakistan, lack far behind in their development as compared to men.

Based on the above, the following outcomes were developed for the Gender Transformative Communication Strategy:

- Outcome 1 - Promoting women’s voice and agency.
- Outcome 2 - Economic empowerment for women through income generation.
- Outcome 3 - Strengthening the institutional capacities to promote gender equality.

Gender-transformative Communication strategy – Outputs and Activities

According to the SBCC implementation toolkit there a blend of approaches should be used to increase an audience’s exposure to messages. It also increases repetition of the message, allowing reinforcement and likelihood of understanding and acceptance. These approaches include advocacy, mass media, support media, community-based media, community mobilization, social mobilization, counseling, interpersonal communication/peer communication, distance learning, information and communication technology. (USAID - HC3, n.d.)

For the achievement of each outcome, the following outputs and activities were developed keeping in mind the SBCC implementation approaches.

Outcomes	Outputs	Activities
Promoting women’s voice and agency.	Dissemination of information that facilitates the ability of girls & women to ‘claim their rights’	<p>Digital campaign on social media that focuses on women’s rights, societal stereotypes, equitable social & gender norms and the resources available at their disposal should those rights be violated.</p> <p>Creation of a cadre of trained male community gender workers to engage young men and boys to become gender equality ambassadors to promote positive masculinities.</p> <p>Using technology to disseminate uniform curated information and provide response mechanisms.</p>
Economic empowerment for women through income generation.	Making girls capable and comfortable to enter the workforce or pursue entrepreneurship.	<p>Mitigating workplace discrimination by raising awareness of best practices to create an enabling environment for women and girls in the workplace</p> <p>Increasing girls and women’s enrollment in high impact trainings by identifying and simplifying pathways.</p> <p>Encourage women’s empowerment by promoting opportunities for entrepreneurship and networking.</p>
Strengthening the institutional capacities to promote gender equality	Collaborating with the stakeholders to co-create solutions, build coalitions, and leverage resources for policy change	<p>Conducting a series of roundtables with Government stakeholders and members of the Multi Sectorial Coordination Committee to co-create solutions to reduce gender inequality.</p> <p>Development and dissemination of policy briefs for proposed policy changes for promoting gender equality.</p>

Outcome 1 - Promoting women's voice and agency

Output 1 - Dissemination of information that facilitates the ability of girls & women to 'claim their rights'

Agency is the capacity of individuals to have the power and resources to fulfill their potential to make choices. Gender transformative approaches can do this by facilitating the empowerment of women and girls to claim their rights as 'rights holders' (UNFPA, 2023).

There are some direct indicators of agency; power within (belief in one's ability to achieve goals and attitudes towards gender norms), household decision-making, freedom of movement and freedom from violence. There are also indirect indicators of agency; timing of marriage and childbearing, contraceptive use, labor force participation, income generation from entrepreneurship, participation in politics and in community decision making, voting behaviors and participation in groups and ties in the community (Gopalan, 2024).

To address these indicators, there is a need for large-scale transformation of patriarchal and discriminatory structures and systems. At the mass level there should be a Social Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) campaign launched on digital media, reinforced by in-person below-the-line activation on the ground by cadre of male gender workers. All the marketing material and IEC material should contain the same call-to-action i.e. a call center phone number and a app. Having a uniform CTA will increase recall and conversions.

1. **Digital campaign on social media that focuses on women's rights, societal stereotypes, equitable social & gender norms and the resources available at their disposal should those rights be violated.**

The flagship product of the campaign will be a Digital Video Commercial (DVC) which will showcase the major stereotypes and social norms that perpetuate and legitimize gender inequalities in our socio-cultural landscape, in an entertaining way. These include son preference, job stereotyping, bride-price, dowry, watta-satta etc. The campaign will feature inspiring women who will talk about their achievements that they would *not* have accomplished should they have adhered to restrictive social norms. Primary purpose of this is to attract the audience to download the app and/or call the call center number.

Once the audience arrives at the call center / app – they will have content available about the rights of women, harmful gender norms, stereotypes, discriminatory practices and most importantly, how to record a complaint should those rights be violated.

The importance of having all the material placed on the app / call center is to ensure that information and services are available to women at their place of residence, even if their movement is restricted (due to discriminatory social norms). Some of this content will have to be created and some of this is already available i.e. easypaisa have started a campaign about audio nikahama in seven local languages which is accessible through their helpline. All of the content created in the campaign can be uploaded on the app or can be heard on the call center in the form of audio notes. The '*reach*' of this campaign can be exponentially increased if these audio

notes can be placed on the helplines of all telecom companies. All the content can be promoted and pushed through paid ads on all digital platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Google, TikTok etc.) and through influencers. If budget allows, radio should also be used.

Content will cover the following topics;

Rights of women and girls	Success Stories / Aspirational Women (Examples)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As an employee (e.g. minimum wage, transport) - In religion - As a wife (e.g. nikahnama) - As a mother - As a woman (timing of marriage, childbearing etc.) - SRH rights (contraceptive use etc.) - Constitutional rights 	<p>Success Stories</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - News Anchor’s wife registers case for domestic abuse – he loses job. - Court jails man for three years for committing martial rape. <p>Aspirational Women</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Justice Ayesha Malik (Pakistan Supreme Court) - Naseem Hameed (Asia Cup) - Samina Baig (Mount Everest) - Namira Salim (Astronaut) - Khadija Siddiqui (lawyer) - Sana Mir (cricketer) - Other

2. Creation of a cadre of trained male community gender workers to engage young men and boys to become gender equality ambassadors to promote positive masculinities.

While the campaign will be setting the context at the macro level, a BTL campaign will be initiated at the grass-roots level. Keeping in mind that men need to be made a part of the campaign if we need sustainable transformative change, they will be the focus of this lever. Another reason is that there is also a digital divide i.e. more men have access to the smart phones and the internet than women. The BTL campaign will overcome this blind spot and will reenforce the key messages to a gatekeeper i.e. men.

The Health Department already has the lady health worker program. This cadre can be a subset of that but will involve trained male gender workers that will work solely to advance women’s rights in the context of male-dominated societies.

The male gender workers will be trained through workshops and trainings; and equipped with the tools, skills and knowledge needed to advance gender equality. They will speak to their coworkers / community members to commit to concrete actions that advance gender equality at home, in communities, and in the workplace. The concepts of ‘equality and inclusion’ and ‘positive masculinities’ as desirable norms will be reinforced. The gender workers will talk about the negative impacts of patriarchy and toxic masculinity, while identifying opportunities to identify and step out of traditional roles and patterns. The central focus is to promote a critical analysis and discussion of power and power inequalities, and how men can use their power and bring positive change at an individual and community level. They will be made aware of SRH services available and how to access them.

Key SBCC Messages for Gender Workers

- In times of recession, it is important to have a dual income.
- In times of recession, it is important to have smaller families.
- In times of recession, it is important for women to be educated so they can contribute to the household.
- Families thrive when mother and father plan the best outcomes for families together.
- Daughters can be a source of income and support (social norm of son preference)
- Daughters can do the same roles as men (social norm of stereotyping)
- Why violence against women is wrong (GBV)
- Bride price, watta- satta, vani, honor killing, marital rape are all illegal and outdated practices – men can play a valuable role in stopping these.

3. Using technology to disseminate uniform curated information and provide response mechanisms.

Under the essential services packages for women and girls subject to violence – there should be seamless provision of survivor centered care including SRH and clinical management of rape as well as social security and legal services supported by strong case management, governance and legal and policy frameworks (UNFPA, 2023).

The Punjab Commission on the Status of Women has a helpline which registers complainant’s details and then liaises with the relevant Government or private authorities for action and closure. Anyone who is facing gender-based discrimination, harassment, or violence can call in and register a complaint. They also inform the callers about their constitutional rights and the services available in their respective areas for help and support. They have all-women call agents, three legal advisors, psychosocial counselor, supervisors to address complaints and provide psycho-social counseling.¹

In Sindh, there are multiple helplines operating in silos. When someone calls one helpline, they are assessed and referred to the concerned helplines or numbers manually. There are several issues with this model. One, there is a confusion in their roles and responsibilities. There are cases where calls have been received on the WDD helpline, who then assess the caller and refer them to the police helpline, only to be told that they were referred to the WDD helpline by the police helpline to begin with!

Secondly, each of the helplines have their own working mechanism with different operating hours and specific SOPs. So, if a call is received on the 24-hour police helpline and needs to be referred to the WDD helpline, which functions 9-5, the often-distressed caller, needs to wait till the next day.

The call centers are also understaffed and under equipped; the WDD helpline is managed by one woman on a mobile phone. There is no automated data-recording and online-tracking of callers, so you can’t track cases to see where they are stuck and push for closure. Additionally, there is no auto-forwarding mechanism. WDD is referring women manually to 29 district offices, safe houses, dar-ul-amans, Sindh police, medico-legal examinations, psycho-social counselling, legal aid etc. Every time the caller is referred, they have to explain the case again from scratch. This causes

¹ [Helpline 1043 | PCSW \(punjab.gov.pk\)](https://punjab.gov.pk)

anxiety and ambiguity for caller as to what are the next steps, and also requires resources to reach all these referral sites independently. Women with limited mobility and financial resources find this daunting and often drop out.

Helpline of Sindh	Numbers
Madadgar 15	15
Women Development Department	1094
Sindh Child Protection Authority	1121
Zainab Alert	1099
Women Protection Unit-Madadgar:	1098
Legal Aid Society:	0800-70806
Cyber Harassment:	0800-39393
Peoples Primary Healthcare Initiative (PPHI) Sindh:	0800-77755
Legal Rights Forum	0800-58888
Panah Shelter Home	021-36360025
CPLC	1102
Roshni Helpline	1138
Ambulances	115, 1021 / 1020
Edhi / Aman Foundation Ambulance / Chippa Helpline etc.	

As depicted in the table above, there are multiple helplines present in Sindh. Due to budgetary constraints, there is no system of case-officers, however there are talks of a one-stop-center for women to be started soon by Sindh Police which will fulfill this purpose to some extent. No where in all of these helplines, was there any mention of providing women information on family planning and reproductive health services. There is also no anonymous whistle blowing number to address complaints i.e. women getting paid below minimum wage at factory.

For the gender transformative communication strategy to be successful, there needs to be one distinct call-to-action that takes cases from beginning to closure. Without accountability and authority, SBCC messaging will have no weight.

Best case scenario is a single helpline number resulting from a merger of all these independent helplines. However, it's difficult as the jurisdiction of different departments comes under different departments. A solution in this scenario is a single helpline that is auto connected to other helplines. There needs to be (1) defined roles and responsibilities for each department (2) uniform operating hours across the board and (3) development of a system of triage.

The helpline will also provide information i.e. audio notes covering key topics (women's rights, FP/RH information, harmful gender norms & stereotypes, discriminatory practices, why must women participate in politics and voting, what can men do to help gender parity), locations of nearest SRH center or contraceptive availability, data on sex disaggregated metrics, training details and job openings. These 'soft services' make it more acceptable for women to have this app on their phones.

Helpline & App	<p>Triage and referral</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - First point to be WDD, who then registers complaints in the system and refers them to other departments (Sindh Police, Department of Health, Legal, Counselling, FP/RH services queries and counselling etc.) <p>Grievance and Whistleblowing services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure functioning of a publicly available and accessible grievance mechanism for women with gender responsive standards. <p>Information - Audio Notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How to report rape and steps - Women’s rights topics. - Harmful gender norms stereotypes. - Discriminatory practices. - Why must women participate in politics and voting etc. <p>Information - SRH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Services for SRH by location in Sindh (HIV & STI prevention and treatment, counselling on contraceptives and provision of services, detecting reproductive cancer, infertility counselling, ANC, PNC, detection and preventing GBV.) - Shops with availability of contraceptives <p>Information - Sex disaggregated metrics</p> <p>Information - Trainings and job openings</p> <p>Information - Minimum standards for corporates to reduce workplace discrimination.</p>
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Outcome 2 – Economic empowerment for women through income generation.

Output 2 – Making girls capable and comfortable to enter the workforce or pursue entrepreneurship.

At the national level there is a strong linkage between the Country’s economic development and women’s participation in the workforce. At an individual level, women’s empowerment can be achieved by their economic empowerment which in turn can be achieved by increasing female labor force participation (Chaudhary, 2012).

1. Mitigating workplace discrimination by raising awareness of best practices to create an enabling environment for women and girls in the workplace.

To begin with we must ensure that workplaces are safe and conducive for women and girls. Ideally there should be a law in place that allows all workplaces to have these minimum standards in place. As the laws are not in place, we can raise awareness about inclusivity and diversity at the workplace, mitigating workplace discrimination and highlight role-model organizations who meet the criterion and are best places to work for women.

A campaign will be launched that will inform corporates the minimum standards that they need to achieve. Organizations that meet the criterion (after assessment) will receive a certification which they can display as an icon / emblem signifying that the organization meets the ‘gender equitable workplace’ criterion. Organizations can proudly display this on their website to show that they are great places to work for women. Organizations will also be highlighted on social media for PR and a list will be put up on the WDD website.



Engro Pakistan is a great example and has been leading this space. In 2022 they launched the inclusivity initiative that included some groundbreaking work (from a local point of view). They started initiatives for increasing women representation at senior level positions, developing women-centered policies and procedures, starting a networking and a capability development program for women, encouraging the participation of women in non-traditional roles i.e. engineering, a *returnship* program for women to restart their careers, a technical training program that inducted women from surrounding areas of Port Qasim etc. Engro won 37 awards at the 2021 Global Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Benchmark (GDEIB) (Engro PR, 2022).

<p>Minimum Standards for making workplaces for equitable</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More women in leadership positions - Mentorship programs by senior female members - Reducing the wage gap - Addressing workplace harassment. - Training and mentorship programs. - Transportation to work. - Non segregation of occupations by sex. - Posters for positive affirmations (men's visuals in the day care etc.). - Link to the co-ops (promoting their products, providing mentorship / training etc.) - Whistleblowing / Speak up Number
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With leading industry organizations committing to building gender equitable workplaces, it will have a cascading effect on the other organizations in the sector as it will seem as a *'more acceptable way of doing business.'* This is a great way for organizations to generate brand equity and attract talent. It also paves the way for more women to feel safe enough to enter the workplace. From our point of view, it's a great way to involve the private sector for sustainability.

2. Increasing girls and women's enrollment in high impact trainings by identifying and simplifying pathways.

STEM (Science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education is becoming more and more important to any economy. Employment in STEM occupations is projected to grow at higher rates than traditional roles. The Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MoFEPT) has also signed an MoU with NED University to improve STEM learning outcomes of students enrolled in Government schools (MOFEPT, n.d.).

Computer science (a subset of STEM) careers are growing at faster rates than the national average in the US and open several career paths. As a plain computer science degree is broad in nature, some schools are providing opportunities for students for specialization in software development, web development, digital design, artificial intelligence, game design etc.² These skills can be taught easily and allow women to earn income in a foreign currency by working remotely (barriers in movement). A great partner for younger girl's computer science training is Code School³ which offers coding literacy for children online.

² [What careers are available studying computer science? | Fortune Education](#)

³ [Code School](#)

Financial literacy and running a business (as a Co-Op – explained below) is a basic course that teaches women of all ages how to manage their business. Shell Pakistan had a program called Shell Tameer, where they not only taught how to create balance sheets and calculate profit and loss, but also provided avenues for seeking funding for small businesses in Pakistan.⁴

There is a need to raise awareness and acceptance of these programs and made available to them remotely or in person. They can be implemented by a third party (NED or Code School for example) in Government schools and universities. They will be promoted on our app and on social media.

The app will contain information about all the trainings being offered and will connect potential recruiters with talent. The key is to form linkages with recruiters as in the case of Engro.

3. Encourage women's empowerment by promoting opportunities for entrepreneurship and networking.

There are a lot of business ideas that could be solutions for the community that bring in revenue. There is an article about three women from *Rohri* that started making reusable pads as an affordable and sustainable menstrual-hygiene-solution⁵. If ideas like this can be implemented at the micro-level, it can bring in revenue for the women entrepreneurs and solve issues for the community i.e., shortage of menstrual hygiene products.

Block printing, jute bags, embroidery, bakery goods, *papar*, artificial jewelry etc. all have a huge market in Pakistan.

In the entrepreneurship trainings mentioned above, the idea of formation of small community co-operatives or 'co-ops' will be introduced. A co-op is an entity owned by all the individual members of the group, who then get a chance to have a say in how its run and share the profits. This way the co-op can support its local community and put less burden on one person to run the affairs. The co-ops will function as little hubs for women and allow for networking. The Co-Ops will be connected to Behbud, SAARC etc. that will allow women the opportunity to sell at scale.

The co-ops can be based out of public schools in the evenings. These centers can also provide locations for the trainings mentioned above and can also be the base areas for the community champions to operate out of.

⁴ [Shell Tameer | Shell](#)

⁵ [Three women from Rohri are making reusable pads for an affordable and sustainable menstrual hygiene solution - Culture - Images \(dawn.com\)](#)

Outcome 3 – Strengthening institutional capacities to promote gender equality.

Output 3 – Collaborating with the stakeholders to co-create solutions, build coalitions, and leverage resources for policy change

1. Conducting a series of roundtables with Government stakeholders and members of the Multi Sectorial Coordination Committee to co-create solutions to reduce gender inequity.

As the Government representatives often change and the incumbents require re-sensitization on gender issues, metrics, context etc. there is a need to sensitize them and equip them with the necessary information to make changes in policies or laws.

For this it would be essential to (1) regularly update them on the metrics through a reporting mechanism preferably in a regional language and (2) to have a stakeholder meeting periodically to inform them of the initiatives launched in the past, for what purpose and support needed for the future.

There is a need to compile, analyze and distribute to stakeholders, selected sex-disaggregated data metrics that allows them to track performance and use this information to shape programs and policies.

Some metrics categorized in the main domains of gender equity (Wodon, et al., 2020) are as follows;

- 1. Earnings, standards of living and economic costs;**
 - 1.1. Women’s labor force participation and full-time work.
 - 1.2. Income disparities between women and men.
- 2. Educational attainment, child marriage and early childbearing;**
 - 2.1. Incidence of child marriage.
 - 2.2. Incidence of early childbearing.
 - 2.3. Ratio of girls to boys in secondary education
 - 2.4. Ratio of girls to boys in tertiary education
 - 2.5. Ratio of literate females to males
- 3. Fertility and population growth**
 - 3.1. Total fertility rate
 - 3.2. Contraceptive use
 - 3.3. Population growth rate
 - 3.4. Number of pharmacies and shops selling contraceptives.
- 4. Health, nutrition, well-being, and violence**
 - 4.1. Maternal deaths
 - 4.2. Under-five mortality rate
 - 4.3. Under-five stunting rate.
 - 4.4. Women’s knowledge of HIV/AIDS
 - 4.5. Proportion of cases of domestic violence counselled by qualified personnel.
 - 4.6. Proportion of cases of rape reported and cases registered.

- 4.7. Percentage of the population who are aware that violence against women is wrongful behavior and a criminal act.
- 5. Agency, decision-making, and social capital**
 - 5.1. Increase in women's representation in local governance structures and decision-making bodies.
 - 5.2. Awareness of basic rights
 - 5.3. Awareness of availability of SRH services
 - 5.4. Awareness of app and helpline

The Multi Sectorial Coordination Committee (MSCC) has already been created and is working within the system. It would be advantageous to conduct roundtables where all the stakeholders are informed about the work that was done in the past, and to have a detailed discussion and discourse on the status of women in Pakistan and potential solutions which will evolve into our policy briefs.

2. Development and dissemination of policy briefs for proposed policy changes for promoting gender equality.

The economic case for focusing on women's economic empowerment is backed by evidence - If women's participation was at par with men, Pakistan's GDP could increase by 60% by 2025. Globally, women form 38.8% of the labor force, but just around 20% in Pakistan, one of the lowest in South Asia. (Shaikh, 2024).

There should be the creation of a series of policy and practice briefs, published and disseminated with PR. These policy briefs should be the products of the roundtables and co-created with the stakeholders (having their buy-in).

Some suggested topics are listed below but should be pursued after stakeholder endorsement.

- Increasing school hours to redistribute care responsibilities and its effects on women's participation and more permanent attachment to the labor force.
- Potential of co-ops producing cottage-industry products for increasing entrepreneurship opportunities for rural women and reducing the gender gap.
- Understanding and addressing workplace harassment in Pakistan, the need for expansion of existing provincial laws and incentivization of corporate best practices.

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