



GENDER BULLETIN

UN Women Pakistan Newsletter 2025 | Vol. 1



FOR ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS

Rights. Equality. Empowerment.

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This inaugural edition captures highlights from the past 12 months; future issues will follow every six months, spotlighting continued progress and impact.





Unfinished Progress: Advancing Gender Equality in the Face of Challenges

As the world prepares to mark the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, we must reaffirm our dedication to its vision. Gender equality is not a peripheral goal—it is fundamental to Pakistan's social cohesion and economic resilience.

Jamshed M. Kazi, Country Representative UN Women Pakistan

A Sneak Peek

Women are not just participants in peacebuilding; they are its architects and sustainers. Let us honour their contributions by ensuring that no girl is denied her right to learn.

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With the tagline “No Ifs, No Buts” and hashtag #Filhaal, UN Women Pakistan called for bold, collective action to ensure **rights, equality, and empowerment for all women and girls—everywhere.**

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The inspiring video story of **Pari Gul**, a officer from Balochistan Police, and our Podcast the **Gender Talks** has been featured in the 15th Anniversary: UN Women Asia and the Pacific Highlights | UN Women - Asia-Pacific.

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As we reach the midpoint of 2025, it is an opportune moment to reflect on our collective journey—marked by significant strides and persistent barriers. With the steadfast support of our partners, we have pushed boundaries, opened doors, and ensured that women and girls remain central to Pakistan's development agenda.

Today, Pakistan stands at a pivotal crossroads. Despite measurable gains in women's economic empowerment, political participation, and access to justice, deep-rooted structural inequalities continue to limit progress. The Global Gender Gap Report 2025 ranks Pakistan 148 out of 148 countries—an alarming figure that underscores the magnitude of our challenge. We recognize the methodological and data gaps in this ranking, yet its symbolism is unambiguous: urgent, transformative change is needed.

Women's underrepresentation in decision-making remains a critical concern. As of early 2024, women hold just 20.5% of parliamentary seats. Meanwhile, labor force participation lags, leadership remains male-dominated, and access to financial resources is starkly unequal. Millions of women of working age remain excluded from the workforce—a loss not just for them, but for the nation.

Still, we are not without hope. Over the past year, renewed commitment across government, civil society, and the private sector has yielded promising developments. The passage of the ICT

Child Marriage Restraint Act stands as a landmark in protecting girls' rights and bodily autonomy. Initiatives like inclusive digital financing, workplace protections, and gender-responsive leadership measures are slowly taking root.

As the world prepares to mark the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, we must reaffirm our dedication to its vision. Gender equality is not a peripheral goal—it is fundamental to Pakistan's social cohesion and economic resilience. Achieving it requires bold policy shifts, increased investments in women's agency, and legal frameworks that dismantle gender-based violence and discrimination.

In this defining moment, we are profoundly grateful to our partners for their unwavering commitment. The road ahead will demand courage, ambition, and unity. But with women and girls at the heart of our efforts, a more equal Pakistan is not just possible—it is within reach.

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Jamshed M. Kazi,
Country Representative
UN Women Pakistan



16 Days of Activism: Rolling Resistance Theatre on Wheels Create Ripples Nationwide

The 2024 #16Days of Activism saw UN Women Pakistan lead a powerful national campaign against gender-based violence.

Through “Rolling Resistance: Theatre on Wheels,” impactful performances in Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, Kohat, Mardan & Islamabad challenged harmful gender norms and sparked dialogue.

The performance at the Embassy of Sweden and UN Women honored Pakistan’s Gender Empowerment Champions for their contributions to women’s rights.

With strong media and grassroots outreach, the campaign’s impact echoed far beyond 16 days — advancing the call for a just, equal, and violence-free society.



Glimpses from the 16 Days Campaign 2024 in Lahore, Karachi (Top) Mardan and Peshawar (Bottom)

International Women’s Day 2025: Rights, Equality & Empowerment — For All Women and Girls.

On International Women’s Day 2025, UN Women Pakistan led powerful initiatives under the theme #ForAllWomenandGirls, marking 30 years of the Beijing Declaration. The InkVisible campaign with the Ministry of Human Rights and BBDO used henna art to reveal domestic violence, sparking vital conversations.

The Gender Action Plan 2025–2026 was launched with the Ministry of Planning and the Royal Norwegian Embassy, reinforcing commitment to gender-responsive development.

At the Prime Minister’s House, ten companies were recognized for family-friendly policies, while the Ring the Bell for Gender Equality event with the Pakistan Stock Exchange promoted women’s leadership in finance.



UN Women joins PSX and partners to ring the bell for gender equality and amplify women’s leadership in the corporate sector.



UN Women and partners unveil the Gender Action Plan 2025–26 on International Women’s Day. 2025





Empowering Women, Empowering Pakistan: Women's Political Leadership

UN Women, in partnership with the European Union (EU) and UNDP, launched the **Pakistan Women Leaders Project** (2024–2028)—a €4.8 million initiative to strengthen women's political participation and leadership in Pakistan. The project aims to close the gender gap in representation and empower women to shape the country's democratic future.

The launch event in Islamabad brought together government officials, civil society, development partners, and media, reinforcing a shared commitment to gender equality. The event featured keynote speeches, a project presentation, and an engaging animation outlining the initiative's goals.

Focusing on 15 districts with low female voter registration, the project prioritizes electoral participation, leadership capacity-building, gender-responsive reforms, and combating online harassment. It also seeks to connect women leaders and grassroots activists through robust leadership networks.



Launch Ceremony of EU funded Pakistan Women Leaders Project 2025



Panel Discussion at Launch of Pakistan Women Leaders Project 2025

Women's Economic Inclusion

In another milestone initiative, the Royal Norwegian Embassy and UN Women Pakistan launched “Catalyzing Growth for Women's Economic Empowerment”, a three-year project (2025–2027) with a funding commitment of USD 1.89 million. Implemented across seven districts in Punjab, Sindh, and Gilgit-Baltistan, this project aims to promote women's financial inclusion, economic resilience, and entrepreneurship—particularly among home-based women workers.

Aligned with UN Women's Strategic Note 2023–2027, the project focuses on skills development, access to decent work, formalization of informal labor, digital financial literacy, and social norm change. It also builds leadership networks and links women to services, institutions, and markets—laying the foundation for long-term, inclusive economic growth.

Together, both initiatives reaffirm UN Women's dedication to enabling women across Pakistan to lead, thrive, and shape a more inclusive future.



Home-based workers at the launch of the Catalyzing Growth for Women's Economic Empowerment Project 2025



A woman displays her products at the launch of the Catalyzing Growth for Women's Economic Empowerment Project 2025.



Bridging the Gender Digital Divide

What is Digitalization?

Digitalization refers to the integration of digital technologies into all aspects of life and work—boosting efficiency, connectivity, and innovation. It is a powerful enabler of access to information, productivity, and economic opportunities. For women, it plays a transformative role in promoting economic independence, social inclusion, and closing gender gaps.

UN Women and KOICA: Empowering Women through D4WEE

To tackle this gap, UN Women Pakistan, in partnership with KOICA, launched the Digitalization for Women’s Economic Empowerment (D4WEE) project (2024–2028). The initiative is empowering 15,000 young women in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with ICT training,

Closing the Gender Digital Divide

Despite technological advances, women remain significantly underrepresented in the digital



KOICA funded EmpowerHer: Digital Tech Summit

space. In Pakistan, only 50% of women own a mobile phone, compared to 81% of men, and less than 5% work in STEM fields—despite comprising nearly half the population. With digital skills now critical for employment, bridging this divide is not optional—it’s essential.

mentorship, and job placement support in collaboration with private sector partners.

Through the establishment of 30 digital hubs, D4WEE is providing safe

spaces for learning, innovation, and economic activity. The project also strengthens gender data systems to inform evidence-based policymaking and ensure sustainable digital inclusion.

A Digital Future for All

By equipping women with the tools and skills to thrive in the digital economy, D4WEE is not just closing the gap—it is laying the foundation for a future where women lead, innovate, and drive Pakistan’s inclusive digital transformation.



In today’s digital economy, women can’t be left behind. But vision alone isn’t enough — we urge all partners to invest, mentor, and amplify to truly unlock women’s potential.

Jacqui Ketunuti
Deputy Country Representative
UN Women Pakistan



Prevention is the most powerful tool we have to end violence against women and girls. In Gilgit-Baltistan, we are investing in community- based, gender-responsive solutions to stop violence before it starts.

Dilshad Bano
Minister of Social Welfare,
Gilgit-Baltistan



For the private sector, family-friendly policies have evolved beyond compliance or corporate goodwill—they are now essential for cultivating a modern, resilient, and high-performing workforce.

Ehsan Malik
Chief Executive Officer
Pakistan Business Council (PBC)



Empowering women is not just the right thing to do—it’s the smart thing to do. Through this partnership, we are committed to creating real opportunities for women to thrive in the economy and society.

Thomas Dahl
Deputy Head of Mission
Royal Norwegian Embassy



A Pakistan where women thrive is a Pakistan that leads.

Dr. Shahida Rehmani
Member National Assembly



WEPs Awards 2024

Recognizing Champions of Gender Equality

The UN Women Asia-Pacific WEPs Awards recognized businesses driving bold action for gender equality. In 2024, a wide range of companies from across the region showcased inclusive leadership, workplace equity, and innovative marketplace solutions.

Winners

Telenor Pakistan (Leadership Commitment)

CEO Khurum Ashfaque led initiatives like Naya Aghaaz, Parvaaz, and EmpowHer, increasing women's workforce participation by 2% and achieving a 95% pay parity rate.

Policies such as flexible work and daycare support improved retention and job satisfaction. He also formed key partnerships to strengthen women's leadership networks.

First Runner-Up – Cyntax Health (Marketplace)

The Fempure initiative tackled menstrual health and period poverty by distributing 50,000+ products, educating communities, and launching a mobile app for awareness. Cyntax also advocated for removing sales tax on menstrual products and supported women-led SMEs for product access.



Second Runner-Up – SEED Pakistan (Leadership Commitment)

Under Shaista Ayesha, SEED Ventures implemented flexible work, menstrual leave, and support for working mothers—raising female retention from 60% to 90%. She continues to champion gender-inclusive workplaces across Pakistan.

Legislative Milestone

ICT Child Marriage Restraint Law 2025 Enacted

UN Women Pakistan commends the National Assembly and Senate of Pakistan for the historic passage of the Islamabad Capital Territory Child Marriage Restraint Bill 2025. Introduced by MNA Dr. Sharmila Faruqi, the legislation sets the minimum legal age of marriage for girls at 18, marking a major step forward in protecting children's rights and advancing gender equality.

This landmark law underscores Pakistan's growing commitment to ending child marriage and safeguarding the health, education, and futures of girls. UN Women recognizes the leadership of Dr. Sharmila Faruqi, Senator Sherry Rehman, and all parliamentarians who championed the bill.

The Road Ahead: Implementation and Awareness

While the law's passage is a crucial achievement, effective implementation is key. UN Women urges the Government of Pakistan to:

- Establish robust enforcement mechanisms
- Launch nationwide awareness campaigns



School Girls in Sukkur, Sindh 2023

- Work toward harmonizing child marriage protections across all provinces
- These steps are essential to ensure that every girl—regardless of where she lives—is protected from early and forced marriage.

UN Women remains committed to supporting the Government and its partners in translating this legislation into real change, so that every girl can enjoy a safe childhood and a future full of opportunity—with no one left behind.



The Journey of Hajath Meena: From Farmer to Entrepreneur

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa



Hajath Bibi and her daughters work at the fields in Khyber Agency 2024

"I always knew my vegetables were worth more than what I was being paid," she said. "But I did not have the knowledge or confidence to demand a fair price. This training was a game-changer for me." At first, Hajath felt unsure. She had never attended formal training before and feared that the concepts would be too complex for her to understand. But the trainers used simple, engaging methods-visual aids, case studies, and role-playing exercises-that made the lessons accessible and enjoyable. Slowly but surely, her doubts began to fade, and she absorbed the skills that would transform her approach to business.

One of the most valuable lessons for Hajath was how to price and market her produce effectively. "After the training, I understood my French beans' true value," she explained with a smile. "Instead of selling them to middlemen for PKR 150 per kg, I now sell directly to customers for PKR400 per kg. That's a 35% increase in profits for just one transaction!" This success was a turning point for Hajath. The confidence she gained through the training filled her with a renewed sense of purpose, and just a week later, she attended another workshop-this time, hosted by the State Bank of Pakistan. There, she learned about microcredit opportunities for women entrepreneurs. Inspired by what she had learned, Hajath now plans to take out a loan from First Women Bank Limited to start a small dairy farming business on the side. Her dream had evolved: no longer was she simply

trying to make ends meet. She envisioned creating multiple streams of income to secure her family's future and, perhaps more importantly, to become a role model for other women in her community. Throughout this journey, Hajath's husband had been a steadfast supporter. Even now, her eldest son helps her with the marketing of her vegetables, a testament to how the whole family has become involved in her entrepreneurial journey.

Today, Hajath not only feels empowered but is also passing on her newfound knowledge to her younger sister. She encourages her sister to pursue her own dreams, believing that every woman should have the opportunity to succeed.

"One day," Hajath says, "I hope that women like me will no longer be just unpaid laborers on family farms. I want to see women become true entrepreneurs, leading their families and communities toward a brighter, more prosperous future."



Saima: Every Woman has Right to Stand Tall

Balochistan

“For the first time, I understood the full scope of my rights,” Saima recalls. The training opened a window into constitutional protections, family and inheritance laws, and the mechanisms to report gender-based violence (GBV). It was a revelation—and a call to action.

Until then, Saima had advocated for her community based on lived experience. Now, she had the legal tools to effect change.

Equipped with this new knowledge, Saima took immediate steps. She held community awareness sessions in Nawakilli, Neighborhood in Quetta Balochistan and her own neighbourhood. The response was overwhelming. Women shared their stories—many for the first time. One woman, burdened by years of domestic violence, believed enduring abuse was her fate. Saima gently but firmly corrected that notion.

“GBV is not tradition—it’s a crime,” she explained, guiding the woman through the process of seeking support. Saima referred her to the Women Development Department helpline and connected her with legal aid services. It was a moment of profound transformation, both for the survivor and for Saima herself.

Since then, Saima has helped connect numerous women with essential services. As her legal literacy grew, so did her community’s trust. She now advises on matters ranging from property rights to protection orders. Women—especially those with disabilities—know they have an ally.

Her work is not confined to legal aid. At her skills centre, vocational training is now integrated with sessions on legal rights. “Empowerment isn’t just about income,” she says. “It’s also about knowing that your voice matters.”



Saima Bibi at Women Development Department Balochistan 2024

Saima’s journey—from a determined advocate to a paralegal equipped with legal fluency—illustrates the transformative power of knowledge. More than that, it exemplifies what happens when one woman rises, and brings others with her.

“I will not stop,” she says. “Every woman deserves to know she is not alone—and that she has the right to stand tall.”



Yasmin Gul: Beacon of Hope

Mohmand



Yasmin Gul and her daughters working in their kitchen 2024

In the rugged mountains of Mohmand, in the heart of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, Yasmin Gul's* life was shaped by unyielding traditions. Her three daughters - Meena*, Fatima*, and Ayesha* helped her all day with chores to keep the household running. In these remote villages, girls are not encouraged to dream big, but Gul's daughters dreamed of going to school, learning to read and write, and some day, teach other girls. Meena and Fatima's dreams were cut short when they reached the age of 14 and 15. Their marriage was fixed, as tradition demanded.

"I tried to comfort them," said Gul, who was married early as well. "I told them this was the way things had always been, that they would adapt, that they would be fine. But deep in my heart, I knew they were not ready. No daughter, no mother, is ever ready for such a life." Seeing the fear and sadness in her daughters' eyes, Gul hesitated.

Child marriage robs girls of education, freedom and opportunities. With one in six young girls married in childhood, Pakistan is home to nearly 19 million child brides. Empowering change through education and awareness among mothers.

In Mohmand, change came slowly. In September 2024, Gul attended an awareness session about the adverse effects of child marriage, organized by UN Women and FAO. That day, Gul returned home with the full realization of the burden she had placed on her daughters by marrying them off early. With her husband's support, who also attended an awareness session organized for men, Gul decided that her youngest daughter, Ayesha, would not be married before the age of 18. The decision defied the traditions that had shaped her own life and sent ripples through their small community.

With that decision, Gul set

"I couldn't change the past," said Gul. "But I could change the future. Ayesha would be allowed to grow, learn, be free of the burdens I had placed on Meena and Fatima."

change in motion and became a beacon of hope and strength for others who wanted better futures for their daughters. The series of awareness-raising sessions and dialogues on women's rights and inclusion in agriculture and decision-making have reached 1,732 villagers through the programme. More girls who were once kept at home are now attending the village school.

The year 2025 marks the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action—a visionary women's rights agreement endorsed in 1995 by 189 governments. It provided a blueprint of actions to end discrimination and violence against women and girls that hold them back from education and opportunities. It was also the first global policy document on women that included a specific focus on girls' rights. These actions remain relevant and urgent today, as women like Gul and her daughters continue to fight for basic rights.



Yasmin Gul's daughter in a school uniform 2024



Kainat Kamal: Catalyst for Change

NUST - Islamabad

For Kainat Kamal, the journey toward advocating for women's leadership in peace and security has been both academic and deeply personal. A doctoral candidate in Peace and Conflict Studies at National University of Sciences and Technology - Centre for International Peace and Stability (NUST-CIPS), Kainat has carved out a unique role for herself as a youth champion and advocate for the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda. Her commitment has earned her recognition as a youth champion for UN Women Pakistan, allowing her to bring regional insights to international platforms in Bangkok, Thailand, and Geneva, Switzerland, where she has powerfully underscored the urgency of achieving gender parity in decision-making spaces.

In September 2024, Kainat participated in the Asia Pacific Regional Consultation on the Elaboration of CEDAW General Recommendation No. 40 on the Equal and Inclusive Representation of Women in Decision-Making Systems in Bangkok. Reflecting on the experience, she said, "What really struck me was how universal this struggle is, yet how uniquely it plays out in each region. In my own region—the tribal Pashtun belt—women have immense potential, but societal barriers often hold them back.



Kainat Kamal was featured in UN Women 2025 desk calendar

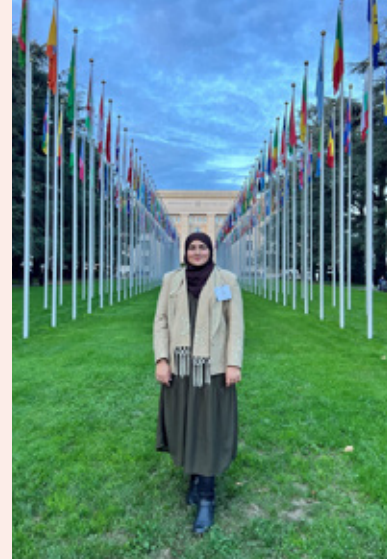
Parity requires not just advocacy but targeted efforts to equip women with tools to thrive."

Kainat carried this conviction to Geneva in October 2024, where she attended the Women's Leadership 4 Peace Emerging Leaders Course organized by UNITAR. Sponsored by UN Women Asia and the Pacific, the course became a transformative chapter in her leadership journey. "Meeting women leaders from across the globe was inspiring. It wasn't just about learning; it was about meaningful networking and understanding that leadership starts with personal growth," she shared. Kainat also brought a unique perspective to the table, blending her academic insights with lived realities from Pakistan, a country grappling with significant gender parity challenges.

At the launch of CEDAW's General Recommendation No. 40 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Kainat found herself simultaneously inspired and disheartened. "It was incredible to witness global solidarity for women's representation," she said. "But Pakistan's absence was a stark reminder of how far we still have to go... being ranked 145 out of 146 on the Global Gender Parity Index, we're falling behind in critical areas."

Kainat's academic work focuses on advancing the WPS agenda, bridging policy discussions with grassroots realities. As the WPS agenda marks its 25th anniversary, she is spearheading three key initiatives to bring its principles to a wider audience:

1. Arts for Peace Campaign - A four-month initiative using creative expression to highlight women's contributions to peace-building.
2. WPS Advocacy App - A digital platform simplifying the WPS agenda and amplifying advocacy



Kainat at the Asia Pacific Regional Consultation on the Elaboration of CEDAW

efforts while connecting stakeholders.

"Ultimately, it's about making the public understand the importance of WPS," Kainat explained. "When women are at the table, the outcomes are always more inclusive, sustainable, and impactful."

3. Social Media Campaign - Aimed at raising awareness and making the WPS agenda more accessible to the general public.

Her journey stands as a testament to the power of academic rigor and advocacy to drive change. With her blend of local insights and international exposure, Kainat Kamal is not just advocating for women's inclusion—she's building the framework for a future where women and youth's voices lead the charge for peace and security.



Shaping Tomorrow: Through Private Sector Financing for GEWE 2024

At 'Shaping Tomorrow,' UN Women Pakistan and corporate leaders pledged joint action for women's empowerment—proving gender equality is both a moral imperative and a market strategy.



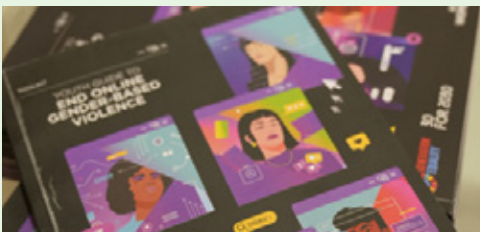
Strengthening CSOs Engagement to Promote GEWE 2024

At the CSOs Forum in Islamabad, UN Women Pakistan teamed up with civil society and rights defenders to ask the tough questions: Where does Pakistan stand on gender equality—and where do we go from here?



Launch of ESG Sustain 2025

Through technical and financial support, UN Women partnered with SECP to roll out ESG Sustain—helping companies report climate and gender data while building momentum for responsible, inclusive investment.



The Youth Guide to End Online Gender-Based Violence

UN Women Pakistan launched the Youth Guide to End Online Gender-Based Violence under its Cyber Shield initiative, equipping young changemakers with tools to build safer, inclusive digital spaces. Now available in Urdu, Pashto, and Sindhi for broader access.



Mapping Family-Friendly Workplace Policies in Pakistan 2025

The Pakistan Business Council (PBC), UNICEF Pakistan, and UN Women have jointly unveiled the landmark report: "Mapping Family-Friendly Workplace Policies in Pakistan."



Coordination Forum at KPJA 2025

UN Women Pakistan convened senior judiciary, police, and prosecution officials at KPJA to strengthen access to justice for women and marginalized groups through its Rule of Law initiative.



National Workshop on GBV Prevention 2025

UN Women Pakistan, in partnership with the Ministry of Human Rights and Prevention Collaborative, held a national workshop promoting evidence-based approaches to prevent gender-based violence and protect women and girls.



Balochistan's First Gender Parity Report 2025

BUITEMS, with support from UN Women, WDD, and the German Embassy, launched Balochistan's first Gender Parity Report, marking a milestone for gender data and policy in the province.



UN Women Pakistan Annual Team Retreat 2025

That's a wrap for this edition of Gender Bulletin!

From justice reforms to groundbreaking reports and national collaborations, we're proud to spotlight progress towards gender equality across Pakistan. Stay connected for more updates, stories, and actions that matter.

Until next time – keep amplifying change.



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