**Rural women development**

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Women comprise of approximately half of the total population of Pakistan. The majority of women live in rural areas. They are mainly engaged in farming, fisheries, livestock and management, mostly as unpaid contributing family workers or on very low wages.
Rural women earn lower wages as seasonal hands than their male counterparts. Yet they experience greater workloads that include reproductive work, fetching water and fuel, along with the care work. They own less land and have inadequate access to agricultural inputs such as seeds, fertilisers or labour saving machines and equipment. Their right to property is often challenged and even when they own property they may not control it.
Women do most of their labour as unpaid family workers in agriculture. Indeed, girls’ attendance in school drops to a low during harvest season. They contribute to care work at home, looking after the young and the ill, and stepping in for the mother if she is pregnant, nursing or sick. When there is much unpaid labour to be done, education is a luxury for a young daughter. This is not to say that social norms or parental reluctance are the reasons for low enrolment and high dropouts of girls. Equally, and more responsible is the state. The quality of education is poor, even for rural households, and may appear to rural parents as being not related to their lives. Infrastructure Investments have improved, but too many rural schools are one room institutions with several age groups and classes sitting in an overcrowded space or under the open sky. There is no source of adequate water and sanitation facilities and electricity. Above all teacher absenteeism, low motivation and competencies mar the school experience of rural girls.
Provincial Governments should initiate job oriented diplomas for rural females who do not continue in school after middle or matric. Skills training should align with the work of rural women in agriculture and livestock, as well as the needs of the non-agricultural rural economy. The government must also ensure that, as small producers, women have equal rights to access and control productive resources such as land, seed, water, and forests. Distribution of state land to women farmers would go a long way in ensuring food security for landless farmers, provided the land is cultivable and the land grant is accompanied by a resource package.
Harassment and violence against women, whether in the home, workplace and in public spaces needs to be addressed beyond passage of laws so that women and their families do not forego opportunities for social, economic and political participation and growth. Rural women have less access to technologies, to public services and little, if any, social protection and are more likely to experience gender based violence.
For the past three years I have been residing in my village, in Lodhran working towards the welfare of women promoting their different talents such as hand embroidery and pottery for their economic empowerment in a way to secure their livelihoods and rights. I have built skill training centre where women are trained in various skills such as embroidery, pottery and sewing along with basic education ethics. Also Introducing them with the idea of online stores thus giving them an opportunity to sell their products well. A platform where they can learn to have an access to the modern technology.
I found severe poverty in my district. Women are in distress and struggling to make ends meet. Their husbands are away from home most of the days to search for work, even then, however, some days they do not have enough money to put food on their tables. This stitching centre has started to benefit few already
Faiz Bibi is one of them. She joined the team few days ago; her husband has been very sick since the past few years. It was getting difficult for her to manage the household with 4 daughters and 3 sons (all under 18 years) to take care. “My situation has improved drastically. I now make a healthy profit from sewing and embroidering clothes—which is enough for me to run my household. I feel completely at peace now. I feel happier and secure” says Faiz Bibi.