

*Changing Lives;
Changing Futures!*

Yousuf Jalal Gill

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Umeed Partnership Pakistan (UPP)**

Book Name: Changing Lives; Changing Futures!
Edited by: Yousuf Jalal Gill
Proof Reading: Dr. John Perkins
First Edition: Dec. 2014
Quantity: 500
Price: Rs. 200/-
Publisher: Umeed Partnership Pakistan (UPP)
Printer: Zafarsons Printers
Tel: 042-37574974, 0333-4508355

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FOREWORD

The Umeed Partnership Pakistan (UPP) is an organization working at grass-roots level principally for the illiterate and suppressed women, girls and street children in rural and slum communities of Pakistan. Women in these communities face rights violations, including gender-based violence. They face difficulties in asserting their rights and obtaining justice due to a lack of education and skills. They have limited access to support systems and a system of justice which works against their best interests. In an overwhelmingly male-dominated society the participation of women in the economy of Pakistan is minimal. Women's voices are not heard and they are rarely economically independent due to prevailing discriminatory attitudes and a woeful lack of understanding of economic, social and political processes.

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We claim that UPP goes to the parts of Pakistan to work where no one else will venture; this is our strapline. UPP started its activities in 2000 in the tribal areas of Baluchistan on the Afghan border and then diversified geographically to the most disadvantaged communities of the Cholistan desert in southern Punjab. At the same time, UPP extended its activities to slum communities in Lahore and in the rural areas of Khanewal and Mian Chanu in Punjab Province.

For the last 14 years UPP has provided training in vocational skills for women and street children - in embroidery, sewing and carpentry. UPP is educating the most disadvantaged children (girls and boys) in these communities by running two middle schools in the Cholistan Desert. Hundreds of children now receive education in the two Umeed schools; they will become catalysts for change in Pakistan. In addition to education and vocational training, Umeed regularly conducts programs of awareness, advocacy and human rights training for women.

Additionally, UPP is assisting women in distress by providing free legal support through the Umeed Legal Aid Forum. In its efforts to provide opportunities for young people through capacity-building, UPP now promotes youth talent through its Street Theatre and Umeed Sports Club. UPP also promotes women's and street children's Human Rights through training workshops and women's human rights committees which organise conferences, consultations and research seminars.

During the last 14 years whilst working amongst these vulnerable women and street children, UPP has been successful in all its activities. Thousands of women, girls and street children (almost always boys) have improved their status quite remarkably. Many are now self-employed and manage their own businesses; some have secured employment in factories and NGOs as skilled workers commanding respectable salaries. They have acquired dignity & status within their communities.

Many of the successful beneficiaries have been sharing their experiences with UPP. These experiences as related in this volume by some 26 UPP participants are in many cases remarkable success stories; even where the outcome has not been successful, then they are extraordinary tales of real-life experiences. In most of these stories the names, events and pictures are original. However, in a few cases the names have been changed for reasons of sensitivity to protect the individuals concerned. However these stories demonstrate the scope, the impact and the success of the Umeed Partnership in its work with underprivileged communities.

The Umeed Partnership is demonstrably improving the quality of life for women, children, families and communities. In addition to skills training and education, UPP continues to evolve into a support network for vulnerable women who may be victims of domestic violence, illness and bereavement. The Umeed Partnership welcomes comments, reactions, suggestions and recommendations.

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Finally, I would like to thank my colleagues, field supervisors, teachers, trainers and Shamin Gulzar (the Chairperson of UPP) without whose support these stories would not have been published. My very special thanks to Dr. John Perkins (the Chairperson of Umeed Partnership UK) who did the proof reading of the draft minutely. I also would like to thank friends, donors (especially UP UK, Mensen met een missie Netherlands, Combined Services Third World Fund Ireland and Rotary International), benefactors, well-wishers and volunteers without whose support the Umeed Project would have failed. Also very special thanks to supporters of the Umeed Partnership (UK) for donating from their income to the Project regularly for the last 14 years and for the tireless efforts by members of the Umeed Committee in Wales for raising funds to support the most neglected and disadvantaged masses throughout Pakistan. Last but not the least my very special thanks goes to Mensen met een missie Netherlands for providing financial support to publish the success and real life stories of the most disadvantaged masses of Pakistan.

Yousuf Jalal Gill
Executive Director & Founder - UPP

10th Dec. 2014
International Human Rights Day

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WORKING WOMEN A reflection

I was privileged to have the opportunity to receive a university education. I graduated with degrees of BEd & MSc from Kinnaird College and Punjab University in Lahore. I had hoped to become a doctor but even though I achieved the higher grades for admission to a degree course in medicine, the corrupt system prevailing at the time meant that my father was unable to pay the bribe and my place at medical school was withdrawn. I am now a housewife but I also work as the Chairperson of Umeed Partnership Pakistan.

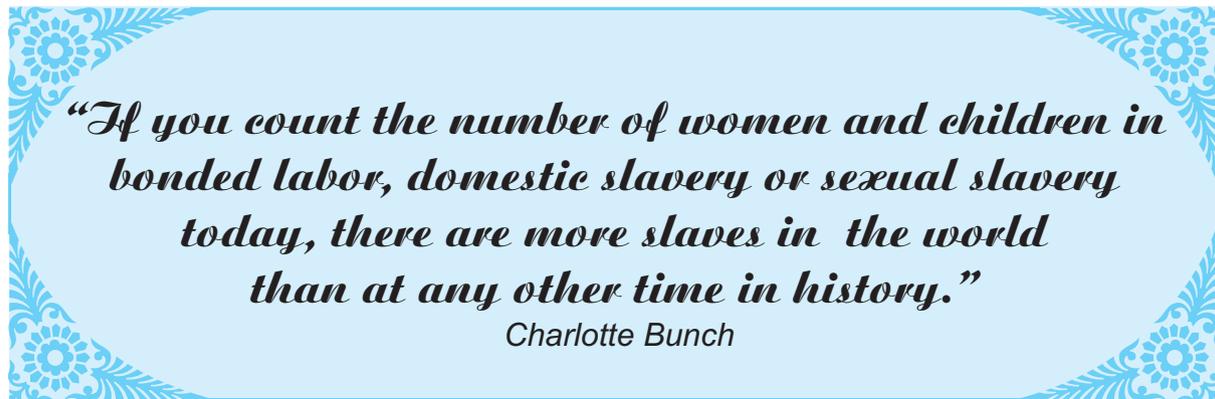
Many of my peers whose parents helped them to acquire higher degrees in different disciplines became housewives, bearing and rearing children and entertaining their husbands. Their dreams of pursuing respectable careers have been dashed; in most cases their men folk have total authority over them. In Pakistani Society the roles of men & women are strictly delineated, the women look after the home and the men become sole breadwinners for the household. For cultural and religious reasons women are discouraged from exposing themselves in public making it impossible for many to successfully pursue professional careers. The percentage of working class women is much lower when compared with the numbers of women being educated every year. Thus a majority of educated women in Pakistan remain unemployed, living their lives under the control of men. This being the case, we must ask ourselves what is happening to the overwhelming majority of women in our society who are illiterate.

Taking into consideration the cultural, social and religious barriers which restrict women's empowerment, UPP established Skills Training Centres in homesteads in 2000. After being trained by Umeed thousands of women have now become self employed in their homes; this is important because now men have no excuse to prevent their women working at home. Being protected in the safe home environment, women trainees are now able to earn respectable salaries for the sustenance of their families. Increasing numbers of women now start their own businesses, thus becoming entrepreneurs themselves.

For many years women have struggled to gain economic independence from their fathers and husbands by attending the UPP Skills Training Centres. Many have shared their success stories in this publication, some of which have been told in Chapter One. They are justifiably proud of their achievements. I have been personally part of this struggle and have advised so many vulnerable women to join the Skills Training Centres. I am so proud to have been instrumental in empowering these women.

Shamin Gulzar
Chairperson – UPP

2nd Dec. 2014
International Day for Abolition of Slavery





COMMENDATION

I have been involved with the Umeed Partnership since its inception in 2000 and have visited its schools and training centres on a number of occasions. I have observed unskilled and illiterate girls and women become literate and acquire vocational skills which equip them to contribute to the economic viability of their families. To me it is thrilling to note the increase in dignity demonstrated by the students and trainees on my successive visits to the Umeed Project as they become valued and economically active. Formerly shy & retiring, they are now blossoming, with an air of confidence.

It is certainly true that "...women are the victims; they are also the solution..." In other words, women are the first to suffer from a lack of education, but they are also the solution to a nation's well-being. If women are not educated, then the potential of 50% of the population of any nation is not realised. A nation ignores the education of its women at its peril.

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The inspiration for the Umeed Project is Yousuf Jalal Gill. A man driven by injustice with a belief that education of girls and women is the solution to poverty in the overwhelmingly male-dominated culture of his nation. In the course of fourteen years thousands of illiterate untrained girls and women (and in some cases unskilled young men) have obtained opportunities through the Umeed Partnership which have enabled them to be lifted from poverty and to contribute to the well-being of their families and communities.

I congratulate Yousuf on his application and dedication to the cause of women's education and empowerment in Pakistan and I commend the Umeed Partnership as highly worthy of support. Justification for this can be gleaned from the experiences (mostly success stories) related by twenty six Umeed beneficiaries and published in this volume. Umeed is, in itself, an undoubted success story!

(Dr) John Perkins
Chair, Umeed Partnership (UK)

17 October 2014
International Day for the Eradication of Poverty



GIVING HOPE AND COURAGE

While reading through these stories I could see that there are several recurring themes. Women have courage, they are resilient and empowerment of women is a process that starts with women who want to use their skills for the benefit of their families and communities.

Women are able to care for themselves and for their families and overcome hardship with considerable strength.

It is also women that play a role in building up the economy of Pakistan through their entrepreneurship by setting up small businesses.

We need to honour these women and make them known to others as an inspiration, demonstrating how a little money, skills development and motivation can go a long way in giving women back the hope, courage and dignity that they need.

Corien Van de Velde
Director and Founder
Bunyad Consultancy Lahore

25 November 2014
International Day for the Elimination of
Violence against Women

Chapter One

Economic Emancipation of Women

Many young girls and women of all faiths & cultures have received training in the UPP embroidery and sewing/tailoring Centres over the past fourteen years. They are now making a living for themselves and their families. Some have become trainers themselves, running their own businesses as entrepreneurs, thus making the Project self-sustaining. The impact and sustainability of the project is seen by reading the following success stories:

1. From Veil to Workshop

Gull Bibi is 15 years old. She is from a traditional Muslim Pashtun family from Duki in Baluchistan. Gull Bibi was allowed to attend school till grade 5. Sadly, in accordance with local tradition, her education was discontinued and she was required to stay at home and submit to the strict veil system. She was forbidden to socialise with, or even meet, any men, even her male cousins. As she grew up she became inquisitive, realising that her freedom to move around was severely compromised by traditional customs; she became curious about her lifestyle. Gull Bibi had female cousins in the city who visited her occasionally and she realised that they had relatively more freedom; she learned of the freedom enjoyed by girls and women across the world. She became resolved to better herself; to react against the traditional society into which she had been brought up.

One day Gull Bibi came to hear of the Umeed Partnership vocational training programme and she learned that an embroidery training centre was being run in local homesteads in nearby villages. However, despite her pleading, her parents refused to allow her to join the centre for fear of the shame of public exposure. The Trainer learned of Gull Bibi's interest and convinced her parents of the value of embroidery and training. They relented on receiving assurance that Gull Bibi would not



Students at a
Umeed Embroidery Centre

be exposed to men.

Gull Bibi applied herself diligently and became the best student in her year group. After a full year of training, Gull Bibi started producing quality dresses for sale, demonstrating her considerable competence as a master of her trade. To her parents' delight, she began earning significant money. Thankfully her father had confidence in her and saw her potential and so he helped her to establish an embroidery workshop in their house, providing training for many other girls. Now she has the full permission of her family to attend the local market to sell her products and to purchase local materials for her workshop. With time Gull Bibi grows in confidence and now feels that she is contributing in a meaningful way to the quality of life of herself, her family and her community. She has progressed from Veil to Workshop in just a few years.

2. Exodus

Mrs. Zenab is the mother of five children living in Lahore city slums. Life was just about bearable until her husband, the sole breadwinner, became addicted to drugs and gambling. He sold household items to fund his addiction and he became unable to work. His income dried up and the children suffered badly. “My children are very young and I am just a housewife” she said. “I had nowhere to go until Umeed opened an embroidery centre in our community. I joined as soon as I could in desperation and since I knew something about embroidery already I became proficient quite quickly. Within three months I began securing embroidery work at home on a commission basis from my neighbours and my community. At last I had money to buy food for my children...”



Zenab with her children

After completing her training, Mrs Zenab is delighted to say that she is now in a position to earn Rs.8,000 to Rs.10,000 monthly - enough to feed and care for her family. The husband has still not mended his ways but at least her main worries are behind her. She thanks God for directing the Umeed Partnership to her community. Some of her friends and neighbours who were living in poverty and who had reached the end of the road have similarly been trained by Umeed and are now making a decent life for their families. She says “Umeed is promoting economic justice and gender equality among women of the slum and rural areas. It has freed them from the bondage of slavery and male domination”. Using a biblical term, it has been seen as a great Exodus for these women who were formerly living in virtual slavery but who are now enjoying the fruits of emancipation.

3. Proud of her achievement

Mrs. Musarat is a UPP instructor at an embroidery training Centre in Loralai with 20 trainees – all girls & women. She is originally from Punjab Province but she moved to Loralai in the tribal area of Baluchistan after marrying a man from that town. After some time she realised that, being from a tribal community, her husband expected her to abide strictly to tribal traditions. So she was forbidden to step outside her home. Mrs Musarat said her life was totally unfulfilled since she was unable to enjoy even the smallest form of recreation or social interaction. She was confined to the four walls of a very small house.

After four years her husband divorced her and she had no option but to move in with her parents who had also migrated to Loralai from the Punjab some years earlier. Even while living with her parents her movements continued to be restricted by the tribal customs in the very conservative community of Loralai. However, through her brother she learned of the UPP programme of embroidery training for illiterate women and she joined as a student trainee. After one year of training she offered to establish an embroidery training Centre in her own home and volunteered to act as an instructor. The Umeed Project Co-ordinator facilitated this and now she earns in excess of Rs 7000 every month having secured contracts from outside her community.

Mrs Musarat has proved competent in running the embroidery Centre and she is totally committed to the aims of UPP – that is, the empowerment of women. A few months ago she re-married. It was expected that her husband might not allow her to continue her involvement with UPP but, surprisingly, he allowed her to continue to run the Centre. However, this support was conditional upon her not taking any other form of employment. Mrs Musarat is very proud of her achievement. She says that her work has given her respect, opportunities for earning and learning and acquiring inter-cultural and inter-faith experiences. She says that she is now in a position to pass on her skills and experiences to the illiterate and unskilled women of Baluchistan where the education and skills rate among women is the lowest in the world.



Mrs Musarat running her centre

4. Immense satisfaction

Khateeja Zai is a young Pashtun woman who graduated with a BA degree from Loralai Girls College. However, she remains unemployed because she is permanently constrained to her

home. Khateeja is unusual in that she's the only girl in her family who has received an education. The explanation is that her father is a Pashtun, originally from Loralai but who has lived in the Punjab and Sindh provinces for many years and so he understands the benefits to be derived from educating women. However, at the same time, as a tribesman he refused to allow her to leave her home to seek gainful employment.

Khateeja, educated and literate but very frustrated, joined the UPP embroidery training Centre in Loralai and after following a one-year training course successfully, with the agreement of her father, offered her home as a UPP Training Centre. She is now running the Centre and in addition to training unskilled women she is earning enough money to support her elderly father who now has no source of income.

Khateeja says that this is the first time in her life that she has been free to interact with women from other faiths and cultural groups. Now her life has a new dimension and she feels fulfilled. She derives immense satisfaction by giving training to disadvantaged women of her own tribe. She says the UPP Centre has given her an opportunity to put into practice what she learned at school/college for the benefit of illiterate women.

5. Light and Life

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Two sisters, Amina and Nabeela, belong to a very poor Muslim family from Yazman in the Cholistan Desert. They completed a Umeed course of embroidery in 2009. Following their training they both secured employment by UPP as trainers to run the embroidery training centres in their own and neighbouring villages. They apply themselves to their own embroidery for three hours each evening, earning Rs 10,000 to Rs15,000 and during the day they run their own embroidery workshops in their home.

Amina & Nabeela are both unselfish. With their earnings they are helping their younger sister to study in the local university and their younger brother to follow an IT course. A computer has been purchased to facilitate their studies. The parents are frail and so Amina & Nabeela are able to look after their household financially. In the meantime they are even able to save some money to provide for their dowry with a view to marrying in the future. Their parents give thanks in prayer to God every day for Umeed for giving light and life to their family through the UPP embroidery training programme.



Amina and Nabeela at Work

6. Miraculous change

Ramesh Raja is a very poor Hindu crop weaver from a minority community near Yazman. Ramesh confessed to the UPP Project Coordinator that the Umeed Partnership had brought miraculous change to the quality of life in his household. From the time that his wife joined the UPP Embroidery Training Program her attitude changed. She became proactive. She is now house-proud, and spends more time encouraging her children. They sent their three children to school because she always had income to cover more than the basic costs of subsistence. The most amazing thing was that Ramesh's wife took over the household budget. She is now much more independent of Ramesh than ever before and he is relieved that he has tangible support from his wife to cover the family's expenditure.

He says "I am so proud of her; she has achieved so much for the family, and this is all due to the influence of the Umeed Project. It is without exaggeration when I say that Umeed has been responsible for the empowerment of so many women in this very poor part of Pakistan..."



Ramesh Raja's wife running a centre

7. Proud of being a skilled worker

Killa Saif Ullah is an overwhelmingly male dominated city in Balochistan where women are rarely seen in public. If they do venture onto the streets they must be fully covered at all times. Kousar is 16. She says that education for girls is strongly discouraged in this area. Enlightenment came in 2001 when the Umeed Partnership inaugurated adult literacy classes for women in the homesteads and her parents allowed her to join the classes.

After attending for a year she became able to read & write but realised that, as a Pashtun girl, her options were very limited. She said "... I, along with other women students, approached the Umeed Partnership and asked them to make available skills training which would enable us to obtain gainful employment and earn money by using that skill. The Umeed Partnership introduced embroidery training in our area. We all happily joined the Umeed Centre and learned embroidery to a professional level. After one year we were awarded certificates of competence. Upon completion of the training I was selected by Umeed to run the training centre as a qualified trainer. I received a modest salary from Umeed and also started working on a commission basis earning between

Rs.5000 & Rs.7000 each month - quite adequate for our sustenance...”.

Despite traditional restrictions on the exposure of women in my city, Kousar managed to convince her father to allow her to go to the shops to purchase material for her work. By becoming a skilled worker Kousar first of all built confidence in herself and then gained the confidence of her father, a Pashtun who adheres strictly to local tribal practices. Being a resourceful person she has built trust with, and has the confidence of, men, especially male members of her family. Now Kousar has freedom of movement enable her to purchase material and to obtain orders on commission and yet



Kousar at work

still respecting the trust that her family members have placed in her. “I am so grateful to the Umeed Partnership for enabling me to experience such a miraculous change in my quality of life”, she says.

8. Respect & dignity earned by hard work

Pari Gul lives in Zhob in Baluchistan and has three children. She followed Umeed adult literacy classes in 2001 and then joined the Umeed Embroidery Centre in 2002. After one year of training she, along with other students, received a certificate from UPP. Unfortunately her husband was an unemployed alcoholic. So Pari Gul was supported by her parents who were living next door. Quite clearly, Pari Gul and her family were a burden on her ageing parents. Nevertheless, regardless of her increasing financial problems, under the strict traditions in these parts, she was simply not permitted to venture outside her house to find work. She was helpless.

However, Pari Gul's story is one of success. She tells that a Hindu family was her next door neighbour with whom she became friendly. She was told that the Umeed Partnership had opened an embroidery training centre for illiterate women nearby. Pari Gul says “...As Pashtuns we are not allowed to socialise with Hindus but I decided to visit the Centre and was surprised to see that there were 25 women of the Hindu, Christian and Muslim faiths being trained together in embroidery. This was quite outside my experience and I asked the Trainer (a Hindu woman) whether I could join the Centre for training. She agreed readily, suggesting that I should register at the Centre the very next day...”.

In great excitement I asked my parents and my husband whether I could join the training. They were pleased to agree for me to do so. For twelve months I worked very hard to look after my

children & the house and at the same time followed the intensive Umeed training course in embroidery. After a year I became a professional embroiderer and accepted work on a commission basis. Now I earn enough money by embroidering to feed my family and have money left over at the end of each month by running the workshop in my own home...”.

In the eyes of her husband and family, Pari Gul's respect and dignity has risen immeasurably since qualifying as a skilled worker and contributing to the family budget. Now the husband allows Pari Gul to go to other women's homes to collect orders for embroidery work. Her parents and her husband have given her freedom because they have seen that she has become a productive member of her family; she has so much more dignity. She is treated so much better than before by her husband; he respects her for applying herself so diligently to her work.

She says that she will always be so grateful to the Umeed Partnership for saving her and her family from penury.

9. On an equal footing with men

Naaz Bibi (15) is from Muslim Bagh in the tribal areas of Baluchistan. She was allowed to attend school until grade 5, but then, according to the strict conservative traditions, she was expected to sit at home out of the public gaze awaiting marriage. She had no motivation and felt trapped in a hopeless situation. Naaz Bibi felt that she was suffocating in complete darkness with no way out.

Thanks to the staff of the Umeed Partnership she was provided with skills training through which she began a meaningful life. There is such beauty in this skill which thankfully brings in sufficient money for their daily living costs. Naaz Bibi's standing has risen fast within both her family and her community. “I am now on an equal footing with men”, she says.



Pari Gul running her workshop



Naaz Bibi at her workshop

10. Proud of being part of UPP

Sonia Paris Masih from Quetta belongs to a poor family and her father, the sole breadwinner, has died. She therefore has to support her elderly mother also. She is so grateful to UPP for opening the skills training centres in the poverty-stricken areas of Pakistan and for training poor women in ways in which they can support their families.

UPP is arguably the only organization which provides women with a one year skills training course free of charge. Sonia prays for UPP to increase the work at the grass roots level to encourage the women to support their families. She is always willing to work for Umeed; she is so proud to be part of UPP. Sonia's embroidery business earns between Rs.5000 to Rs.8000 each month - enough to cover the basic food and household expenses.



Sonia with her colleague

11. Serving UPP so that others may benefit

Shahida Naz from Loralai said that she was inert, doing nothing productive at home except to help with household chores. She never attended school; her life was meaningless. Shahida undertook Umeed embroidery training for a year and now she's delighted to say that she has been certified as a skilled embroiderer. She is now respected by all members of her family; she has a new dignity which was missing before. Shahida produces beautiful items with her own hands.

She says that this change in her life is due solely to the skill and encouragement of the Umeed Partnership staff. Shahida understands the economic problems caused by inflation and so she adapts to changed economic circumstances by producing artistic products at home. Given the opportunity, Shahida will serve UPP in the future to ensure that other disadvantaged women reap the benefits of Umeed skills training.

12. Working Together

Nusrat from Kilatt in Balochistan narrated her phenomenal success story recently to the UPP staff. In 2003 she relocated from Killatt to Loralai, initially to spend a few days with a relative in whose house a UPP embroidery skills training centre was being run for 25 women. She had always been interested in fashion and the ethos of the Centre attracted her. She saw that women were making beautiful clothes by hand. She immediately arranged to stay with her relative for a year to follow the

Umeed training programme and at the same time she asked her parents whether they would agree to her staying in Loralai. The parents were forward- looking and happily they agreed to the arrangement.

Nusrat put her heart and soul into this training and at the completion she was awarded a certificate of competence. She then returned to Kilatt (about 300 km from Loralai) and established a UPP embroidery workshop in her home where she started training women students to whom she charged a reasonable fee and at the same time she worked on commissioned orders which gave her a decent income.



Nusrat's Sisters working together

She also trained her six sisters in the same skills with the result that they are now all working together, making a good living and supporting their elderly parents. They are accumulating money for a dowry in time for their weddings. Without this the parents could never provide the money for a dowry for so many young women. Nusrat explains that she and her sisters are no burden on their parents. Rather, they are caring for them exceptionally well, thanks entirely to UPP.

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13. Life has become meaningful and worth living

Salma and Rukhsana are sisters from Bahawalpur city slums. They learned embroidery skills in 2006 by attending a UPP embroidery centre. Very soon after the completion of their training their mother died. This was a disaster for the family because she was the sole breadwinner, keeping a small grocery store. Their father retired many years ago from the Pakistan military where he was a gardener.

One older brother lives with the family but does not contribute to the family budget because he has a family of his own. Another brother is studying and yet a third is unemployed – neither contributing to the family income. This means the whole burden of running the household falls on the shoulders of Salma and Rukhsana.



Salma and Rukhsana at work

Salma is paid a salary by UPP as an embroidery trainer for three hours each day in her house. During the rest of the day she runs her own embroidery centre along with Rukhsana. The quality

of the garments is high, and the sisters are gaining a sound reputation for quality amongst the wives of the military personnel. Each sister earns up to Rs 15000 per month, and this easily covers the household expenses and allows for the sisters to save a little for their wedding dowries

The sisters are illiterate and so, without the embroidery skills, they would be condemned to household chores. Their movements were restricted to the four walls of their home. Salma recalls that their lives were unfulfilling, restricted and with no opportunity for improvement. But how their lives have changed! They are now free to explore the markets for materials and to find the best prices for their products. They are free to meet the wives of military personnel to secure contracts for suits, night wear, wedding apparel and so on.

The sisters freely admit that they are happy to be free from male domination. They now enjoy new-found freedoms & independence and they put this down to the influence of UPP in their lives. They say that their lives have become meaningful and worth living due to the Umeed Partnership Pakistan. They give thanks daily for the donors who support the Umeed Project. Both sisters point out that many other vulnerable women in Bahawalpur have escaped oppression due to the skills training conducted by UPP.

14. Elevated from Working Class to Middle Class

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I am Sadaff. My family is very poor and I lived in a Lahore slum district. My work was onerous; I was a labourer at a local brick kiln earning just enough to provide my family with two meals each day. No money was left to buy other things for the household. One day Madam Shahnaz, the UPP Supervisor, visited the brick kiln where I worked and persuaded me and some of my friends to train as embroiderers. Having finished our training we would then be able to earn money with dignity. With the support of Madam Shahnaz a UPP tailoring and embroidery Centre was established and after a year of training we qualified as embroiderers and we were awarded certificates by UPP in a special ceremony.

By now, Umeed training courses had gained a good reputation and so I opened a workshop in my home and very soon local people gave me work, mostly embroidering and sewing clothes. Slowly I was receiving orders from far and wide and families came to me for suits for weddings and other ceremonial occasions. I even received orders from boutiques in the city and now I earn enough money for my family to live comfortably. I am reluctant to boast, but nowadays we are



Sadaff at a brick kiln

considered to have been elevated from Working Class to Middle Class. All this is due to the new start which the Umeed Partnership offered me. It is a truly wonderful organization!

15. I raise my hands in prayer

I am Sidra Yousuf, a woman living in Chak 39/ Yazman, because I belong to such a poor family I was unable to receive even a basic education. My parents worked hard to give us food twice daily. I wanted to help my parents, who were getting older and I heard about the Umeed Project. I registered at the embroidery center which had been opened in my neighborhood and there I learned embroidery from Miss Amana.

After becoming skillful I opened my own embroidery workshop. Now I could earn good money respectably and at the same time stay at home to look after my mother and father. I secured commissioned work from my own colony and also from the local market.

It is wonderful that a woman of my background can command respect for running a sound business whilst working from home. I raise my hands in prayer that UPP may extend its influence across Pakistan.



Sidra running her own workshop

*“We have to free half of the human race (the women)
so that they can help to free the other half,”*

Emmeline Pankhurst.

Chapter Two

Gender Exploitation

Umeed Partnership is demonstrably improving the quality of life for women and their families. Over the years, in addition to working towards women's economic emancipation, Umeed has evolved into a support network for vulnerable women who are victims of gender exploitation and domestic violence, illness and bereavement. Through free legal aid, Umeed has helped women victims of abduction and forced conversion whose real life stories are mentioned here. In these stories Umeed has intervened to the benefit of the victims.

1. Smiling again

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I am Rahdha Devi from a Hindu Bheel family. I was born in a dilapidated mud house with a straw roof built for animals on a landlord's land in minority community Yazman in Southern Punjab. I am the fourth of six children in my family. My whole family works for the landlord as slaves – not unusual in this region.

As I grew up my mother started taking me for cotton picking, collecting firewood, fetching water, and cutting fodder for landlords' animals, and so on. Soon I understood why she wanted me to accompany her. There were two reasons. Firstly she needed extra help and companionship and secondly, more sinister, she did not want to leave me alone in the house fearing that someone might abuse or abduct me.

When I reached the age of 14 a man from the landlord's family started visiting my house. I felt uneasy; he was looking at me in a strange way. Although my family is poor I realised that I was attractive to men. One day my mother became ill and my father took her to a nearby township for medication. My brothers were summoned to be in the fields and we three girls were left alone in the house. Suddenly I noticed that the man had entered the house and he then forced me to accompany him. I refused initially but then he said that if I did not do as he asked he would shoot all members of my family. My sisters were crying but no one heard or came to our aid because our house is far from other homesteads.

The man dragged me from the house and he took me to an unknown place and hid me there for several days during which time he abused me. I was shocked. My parents were horrified. They contacted Umeed Partnership Pakistan asking for legal aid. UPP advised my parents to register the case in the police station by saying that the girl who is a minor had been abducted by the relative of the landlord. The case was filed in the civil court and on the day of the first hearing I was called, under threat of death, to say that I have become Muslim and that I have married this man of my own free will. Perhaps not surprisingly, the judge dismissed the case.

The man I had apparently married had two wives already. I lived with him for three years but had no children. After three years he divorced me by saying that since I did not bear children I had no right to stay with him. He freed me and allowed me to go to my parent's house. I have now been with them for three years. During all this time the man refused to pay anything towards my living costs. My parents suggested that I approach UPP, which I did. With the help of Umeed I filed case against him with the result that the man paid a lump sum which lasted just a few months. Helpful for a while, but totally inadequate.

My life was ruined; I was at the precipice. I had become a burden on my parents; I could not re-marry any Hindu man since I had declared that I am Muslim. No Muslim man could marry me since I was declared as barren, being unable to have a baby. Frequently I considered suicide to end my pain. My parents were understandably worried about me. One day my father suggested that I should contact UPP again, which I did. The Chairperson offered valuable guidance and so I joined the nearest Umeed sewing centre and made friends with women of different faiths and cultures. From this time onwards I began to see light at the end of the tunnel; I became hopeful.

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Within a year I had successfully completed the training and UPP gave me a sewing machine, a cutting table, an iron and other material necessary to set up a workshop in my house. I'm now a professional tailor, contracting myself to a number of boutiques, and having employed a number of students in the workshop. I am resolved to remain single and not to be snared again by feckless cruel men such as the one who almost ruined my life some years ago. I am extremely happy now, earning enough money to look after myself and caring for my frail parents. Thank God I am smiling again!

2. Left helpless

An abduction took place in the district of Bahawalpur of 22 year old Amreti, a low caste Hindu girl. She was collecting fodder for her family's livestock in a field but she didn't return to her home because she was abducted by the landlord's son. Amreti's father had spent a lifetime serving this landlord but when he asked for the return of his daughter his response was bizarre. He said firstly

that Amreti was now a convert to Islam and secondly that he owed a large debt which he demanded was discharged immediately.

Instead of returning Amreti to her family, the landlord instigated a regime of violent harassment to her family. Amreti's father was unsuccessful in his plea for the return of his daughter because of the power of the feudal landlord. The life for Amreti's family became so difficult that they had to run away under cover of darkness, leaving their possessions behind. The family's whereabouts is unknown to this day.

This is a recent case where the Umeed Legal Aid Forum was unsuccessful. It gave advice to the victim taking the case to the Civil Court and supported the family financially but on the day of the hearing when Amreti was produced before the judge, the father failed to appear before the court since he and his family fled in fear of the Landlord. The case was dismissed and the Umeed Legal Aid Forum was left helpless.

3. Never returned to her family

A 15 year old Hindu girl named Ashki was abducted by Bilal Husain, a man living in her neighborhood. He forced her to accept Islam and unbelievably married her without her consent. How could this possibly happen? Well, Ashki belongs to a very poor low caste Hindu family in Bahawalpur and for the last 60 years her father had been working on the landlord's farm.

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On the day of this incident he, his wife and his other children were not at home. In their absence Bilal Husain and his friends entered Ashki's house where she was molested by Husain. He also stole gold jewelry and cash. He took Ashki by force leaving a message for her family that she has converted to Islam. Husain told them that he had accepted her as his legal Muslim wife and warned them of the severe consequences of attempted re-capture.

Ashki's father tried to trace her through influential people and the police. However, all refused to help with the excuse that since Ashki had converted to Islam, there was nothing that could be done.

In this incident the role of Umeed Partnership was to help the victim to lodge an FIR at the police station and register the case in the civil court. In this case a plea was taken that Ashki is a minor and she was abducted, forced to embrace Islam and marry a Muslim without her consent. On the day of hearing Ashki was produced before the judge where the culprit produced a bogus certificate confirming that she was not a minor and that she had confessed (under a threat of death) before the judge that she had consented freely to conversion to Islam and had married a Muslim. The case was dismissed and parents returned home without Ashki.

Umeed Legal Aid Forum provided the necessary moral & financial support to Ashki and her family but she never return to her family.

4. Appreciated the assistance

In 2010 Gori Mai, the wife of Jamna Ram, a very poor low caste Hindu from Yazman, was abducted. Gori Mai was taken by force and made to convert to Islam. She was then forced to marry a Muslim. Gori Mai and Jamna Ram had been married for 14 years and have a daughter.

Jamna Ram was a free-lance labourer who found it difficult to cope with the family finances and so both decided to move to a city where they managed to secure employment in a factory. While working in the factory a Muslim man took a shine to Gori Mai, a good looking Hindu woman. Both Jamna and Gori Mai tried their level best to explain to the man that Gori Mai was married with a grown up daughter but the man did not get the message and leave her in peace. Due to continuing difficulties with this man the family decided to relocate to Yazman. To no avail; the man followed Gori Mai and ultimately the man abducted her by force.

Jamna Ram was left on his own with his daughter. He did everything he could to bring back Gori Mai but all in vain. Even the Police refused to lodge a case against the culprit. Given the difficulties noted above, the Umeed Legal Aid Forum helped Jamna Ram to lodge an FIR at the police station by pressurising the police.

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The case was filed in the Civil Court taking the plea that Gori Mai is a married woman and thus cannot marry another man. However, on the day of the hearing Jamna Ram was unable to produce any proof that Gori is his legal wife since Hindu marriages in Pakistan are not registered anywhere and there are no marriage certificates. Under the threat of her life Gori Mai, before the Judge, confessed that she had converted to Islam and that she is willing to continue living with a man. So, the case was lost and the family was divided. One can only imagine that Gori Mai and Jamna Ram are heartbroken at this forced breakdown of their relationship and the violation of their human rights.

Nevertheless, Jamna Ram appreciated the assistance the Umeed Legal Aid Forum provided at their time of distress.

Chapter Three

A Brighter Future

Umeed is educating girls and women to enable them to face the discriminatory practices prevailing in Pakistan. Umeed educates dalit girls and women in the most disadvantaged communities. The success of the project is demonstrated in the following success stories:

1. Not once have I felt discriminated

I am Lakshmi Devi aged 13 from a very poor Hindu family and I'm now studying in class 7 at the Emma Marchant Umeed Middle School at Village 18/BC Bahawalpur. I joined the school in 2007 when it opened.

In 2006 my parents sent me to the Government school in the main village where the landlords lived; this was 3 km from my home. I have painful memories of the year I spent in that school. My father, a poor seasonal crop weaver, transported me on his old bicycle. I admired my father due to his vision of the importance of educating his only daughter (in addition to my three brothers). It is quite extraordinary for a Hindu family in this region to send their girls to school. I was the only Hindu girl in the school.

The majority of students were from the landlords' families. I was looked down on by the majority of students - firstly due to my Hindu name and secondly because I was a Hindu girl from an untouchable family. I was also vilified because I was the daughter of a kami (slave) who is condemned to work only for landlords. In fact, most of the students and also the administrative and teaching staff of the school, thought that we Hindu children have no right to study alongside the children of landlords since we are kami (slaves) ourselves, born to serve the rich. Therefore Hindu children face discrimination while studying in Government schools. There is no possibility of joining a private school since they are in the cities and charge extortionate fees – way beyond my father's means.

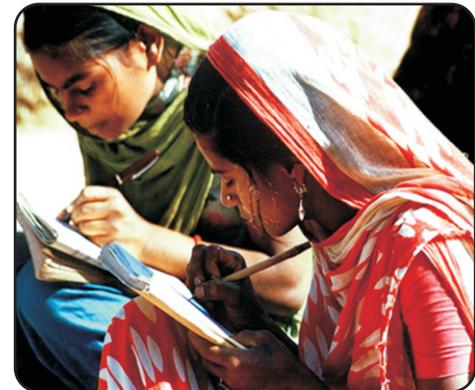
Being Hindu we were not allowed to mix with the children from the majority community; we were forbidden to take water from the tap or water cooler used by the majority; we had few Hindu friends

and colleagues in the school. We were treated as untouchable in every sense. We could not take part in any extra curricula activities since the students from landlords families believe that Hindus are their traditional enemies, as taught in the national government syllabus.

In 2007, at community's request, the Umeed Partnership opened an Emma Marchant Umeed Middle School In our Ghareebabad (poor people's dwelling place) colony. This was very good news for all young people of all faiths. I immediately joined EMUMS in grade one. There were 160 pupils (boys & girls) and 50% were Muslim and 50% were Hindu – but all were from poor families. We were taught by Muslim teachers and there was a Hindu regional supervisor who dealt with all the official matters of the School. At the inception of the School the Executive Director of UPP explained that there should be no discriminatory attitude regarding caste, creed or gender in the School. He made it clear that anyone (staff or student) who displays any form of discrimination will be immediately excluded from the School.

It is my 7th year in the School now. I'm so proud of it because it has such committed teachers. Not once have I felt discriminated against because of my faith or that I'm from a poor family. We Muslims and Hindu students are studying together; we understand one another and have developed friendship amongst ourselves.

We are thankful to UPP for having the foresight to open the School and so give children such as me from poor families the opportunity of advancing themselves for their benefit and also for the benefit of their families and community.



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Lakshami Devi with her colleague

2. A brighter future

A year ago Seema Bibi, a cleaner, was given a job in the Umeed Head Office in Lahore on part time basis. From the outset she brought her daughter (11) to help her. The girl started cleaning the office with her mother but this was felt by the UPP Director to be inappropriate. He asked Seema not to bring her because UPP does not approve of child labour. Seema was disappointed with this ruling because she could not allow her daughter to remain at home alone; her husband and sons were out all day at work and anyway, the girl was a great help to her mother. Besides, the girl had never been to school; she was uneducated and so she was destined for a life as a professional cleaner.

The Director was in a dilemma; should he allow the girl to continue working in the office (which is against UPP policy of discouraging child labor in Pakistan)? Or should he relent and so enable

Seema to keep her job. However, Shamin Gulzar, the Chairperson of UPP, heard the story and found a solution. She told Seema that her daughter could continue working in the office on condition that she should be freed for an hour for study daily under the guidance of Shamin. Seema and her daughter were delighted with this solution.

Shamin has been taking the classes for the girl for over a year now and Seema has been persuaded to allow her daughter to join a school nearby with UPP paying the modest fee. The family is overjoyed with the outcome; the girl is happy and is enjoying her new status as school pupil. She says "... I have a brighter future and it is all due to the Umeed Partnership..."

3. An artiste is born

Saba Naz from a Lahore slum region joined the Umeed skills training centre in 2006. She attended school up to grade 5 and learned to read and write. She is an extraordinarily talented young woman. She spent one year in the Umeed Centre as a student and then she secured employment with UPP.

Umeed not only provides skills training but stresses the importance for women of different cultures and faiths to enjoy recreation outside of their homes in the safe environment of a Umeed Centre. Apart from the training sessions, women have a period of recreation every day. They play music, share jokes, sing songs, dance and perform small dramatic acts. Visiting guests are invariably welcomed with programmes of entertainment.

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Saba Naz is exceptionally talented in performance and drama. Her Centre always leads the way with productions of dramatic art. A few years ago Umeed staff noted Saba's talent. She was given full responsibility to write, produce and present a full stage show with the input of other Umeed Centres during the Annual Certificate Awarding Ceremony, a principal event in the Umeed calendar attended by international guests from NGOs and other institutions.

During the 2011 Ceremony Saba Naz presented a full stage programme. Many guests remarked on the sheer professionalism of the artistes. It was a truly memorable event, so much more because all girls participating in the staged production had been illiterate, and were Umeed trainees.

During the years while working with Umeed, Saba has proved herself to be a real professional so much so that we can say with confidence – "...an artiste is born...". Saba now heads the Umeed Street Theatre.

Chapter Four

Overcoming Gender Exploitation

Umeed helps girls and women in distress. They are given hope and opportunities to see the light when their lives are in total darkness. They return a shameful existence to begin life again through education and training. From the following success stories we see that with a little help from Umeed they have become able to support their families, and with that come dignity.

1. Suicide was an option

Rubina worked in a readymade garment factory Lahore. The Manager persuaded her to start a relationship with him which lasted for one year. Unfortunately, a newly-appointed woman caught his eye and he ended the relationship with Rubina, dismissing her unjustly. Rubina suffered emotional turmoil and was determined to teach the Manager a lesson but when she visited the factory some of her former colleagues warned her to be very careful; the Manager could make her life very dangerous. Too late, Rubina realised that the Manager is a serial abuser of young women with a serious reputation.

Rubina said “...My life was ruined; I was so frustrated that I considered suicide as an option. However, with the intervention of UPP I can smile again. I have become involved in Umeed activities. It is a great organisation for women's empowerment. I have acquired embroidery and sewing skills and I am now earning enough money for my parents by running my own embroidery workshop. Now that I am running my own business I am able to be pro-active and have increased so much in confidence.....”



Rubina at work

2. Established confidence

Surya, a mother of two, started working at the age of 16 as a house maid in a landlord's house in

Lahore Cantonment. Before long she unwittingly attracted his son who started to abuse her but promised that he would marry her and that all would be well. Not surprisingly she soon became pregnant and his parents dismissed her from their home and the offer of marriage was withdrawn although he gave Surya money to have an abortion. Her parents learned of the situation and they restricted Surya to the house while they looked for a suitable man to marry her. In the end, they married her off to a relation.

However, he soon suspected that she had already had a full relationship with another man so he forbade her from leaving the home and he ill-treated her on a regular basis. Surya claims that the best day of her life was when she became a Umeed trainee and was provided with skills training.

Now her husband has appreciated her potential and has established confidence in her abilities. He has released her from the constraints of her home to sell her products in the local markets and so provide life necessities for her two children.



Sewing Centre

*“When women thrive, all of society benefits,
and succeeding generations are given a
better start in life,”*

Kofi Annan.

Chapter Five

An Honorable Life

Umeed works among the most disadvantaged communities of Pakistan. In these communities boys and men are also vulnerable. Umeed provides skills training to boys and men that they may be elevated in their communities and be freed from virtual slavery by the landlords. The following success stories are examples of Umeed's meaningful work in these communities:

1. A community without a future

I am Harry Chand and I belong to the Hindu community of Chak No. 138/D.B, Yazman. Our community is considered to be of the lowest order by the majority community since they consider us to be untouchable and therefore unclean. Doors remain closed to us; we cannot send our children to public or private schools since the children of the majority community will not mix with them. Our children are not even allowed to take water from the same source as the children of the majority community. There is discrimination against our children by the administration of the Government Schools, and this includes the teaching and serving staff. In this atmosphere of distrust and discrimination our children leave the schools at very early stages. Thus 100% illiteracy rate prevails in many of our communities. The only work left for us is as seasonal crop weavers or serving the landlords on wages lower than subsistence – just enough to survive.

We are basically a community without a future. We are denied any type of development or education facilities. We all work on the farms of the landlords as slaves and earn enough (literally) for our daily bread. Our women are taken in herds like sheep and goats by the landlords to gather the seasonal crops.

I heard about Umeed Partnership Pakistan and that it is a high-quality multi-faith organization teaching the skills to earn good money. I'm pleased to say that a few years ago UPP started helping our women by training them as embroiderers.



Harry Chand with his group

Within a few years many of our women became skilled workers and began to earn enough money to support their families. They were freed from the slavery of the landlords.

Being the leader of my community, I approached UPP and asked for some help for men also. At my request UPP inaugurated a wood workshop in my colony. Many boys joined for training in wood turning. In one year 25 carpenters learned the skills to make furniture. Now I feel that it has changed my life. I am a skilled worker now and I earn enough money for my family to live in comfort for the first time in their lives. Most of those who learned carpentry are now trainers themselves. We all are so thankful for the intervention of UPP into our lives, which has taken us from slavery to freedom.

2. Respected by all the communities alike

I am Ado Raam and I live in Chak 49/D.B, Yazman in the Cholistan Desert. I belong to a very poor Hindu family. I have two brothers and two sisters. I finished my basic education from a village of the area and then received the Diploma of Homeopathic Doctor from a college in Bahawalpur. My parents sacrificed a great deal to get me educated. After finishing in college I tried to secure employment in government and private institutions in the District but I was unsuccessful simply because I am from a minority community.

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After qualifying for my Diploma I tried my best to establish a clinic in my own village but again I was unsuccessful because the majority community of the area (which includes the landlords) does not allow people from the minorities to work independently. The fact is that I tried my best in thirteen villages and towns to establish a clinic but I was unsuccessful due to discrimination by customers from the majority community. However, I gained experience by serving in many national and local NGOs on a voluntary basis – all very well, but no-one gave me permanent paid employment.

In 2005 I met the Director of Umeed Partnership Pakistan (Yousuf Gill) who explained the vision of UPP and explained the slogan which states that Umeed goes to the parts to work where no one else goes. I liked the ethos of UPP very much and I was asked to join UPP as the Project Supervisor for the Yazman/Bahawalpur region. I begin to supervise many embroidery centres for illiterate Hindu, Muslim and Christian women and carpentry centres for street children in the region. I was also given administrative responsibilities to run the two mixed faith Emma Marchant Umeed Middle Schools for the children of the most disadvantaged communities in the Cholistan desert.

I applied myself enthusiastically and put my soul into the activities of UPP. I started supporting my family financially as well as I started enjoying life while working with UPP. Being a member of the Hindu faith I was considered to be untouchable; a dalit on the margins of society. However, joining

UPP has meant that I can work and socialize freely among women belonging to the Muslim, Hindu and Christian communities. As a Project Supervisor I am respected by all the communities alike. On this platform my life has changed for the better. I am able to support my family and among my own community I have earned respect.

CONCLUSION

The door of the Holy Scriptures (written under a patriarchal system) opens with the creation story in which man was created who was lonely in spite of numerous creatures around him, given under his command. To provide him a helper, companion, subordinate, assistant and above all entertainer a woman was created from his rib. According to the scriptures “woman” means who is taken out of man. Due to this background in Pakistani society where religious, patriarchal and tribal sentiments are very high a woman in spite of her untiring efforts to gain equality with man is defeated badly. In Pakistan the only way forward for women is to get education, skills training, own the business, a reasonable job and become a successful entrepreneur.

For the last 14 years Umeed has been involved in women's empowerment through skills training, education and entrepreneurial development. The success of the project is seen in the first chapter with success stories of Umeed trainees. It is our experience that women could only be empowered by equipping them with some skills tools and education. Umeed has planned for the future to stretch its activities mostly among the women of rural areas who are most deserving.

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The biggest challenges for Umeed are to provide assistance to the women victims of abduction and forced conversion. Very often teenage girls from the dalit communities (Hindu and Christian) are abducted by the powerful and influential feudal landlords who legalise their crime by attaching religious sentiments to it, converting the abductees to their own religion. Once they are converted to Islam the whole machinery of State (police, courts, affected parties and siding organisations) become inactive. The criminals' victory becomes sure. This could be seen in Chapter Two the extraordinary tales of real-life experiences where the outcome has not been successful. In spite of Umeed's assistance to the aggrieved party the outcome remains failure. In future Umeed is adopting a strategy to make women strong by providing them with education, technical skills training and by promoting women in leadership roles in their communities to face up to bullying tactics by the landlords. Once women are strong then there will be a very few cases of abduction and forced conversion.

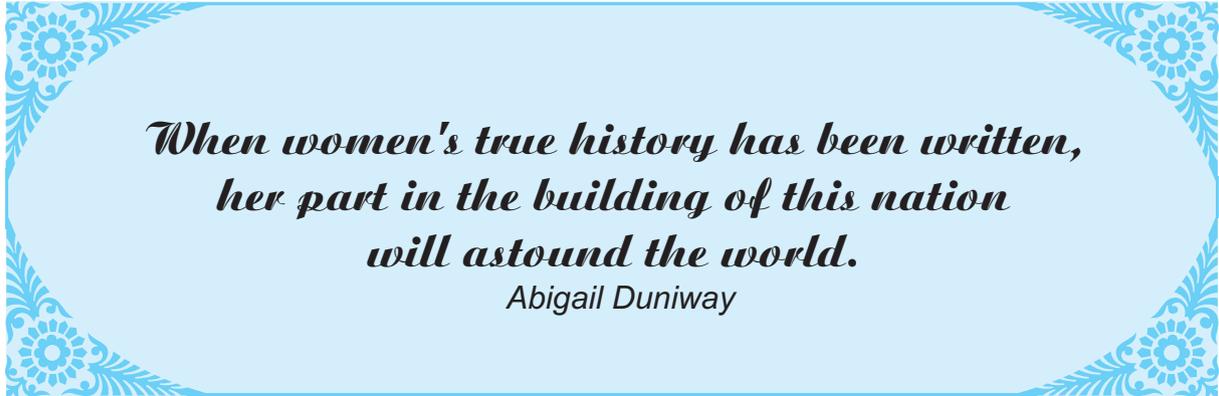
Umeed works for the education of children of dalit communities of Pakistan by running schools. In Chapter Three the success stories of girls/women who are proud of being part of the Umeed

education project are related. The future strategy would be to promote quality and integral (total development of a person) education among the children of the most disadvantaged communities. Umeed plans to establish more schools as and when finance becomes available.

In Chapter Four there are success stories in which women overcame gender exploitation with the help of Umeed. Umeed make women strong at educational, technical skills, psychological and mental level so that they may fight against the injustice done to them by male folks.

It is our claim that UPP goes to the parts of Pakistan to work where no one else would venture especially among the communities which are considered to be without dignity, respect and recognition. There is a 100% illiteracy rate in these communities. They are slaves to tyrant masters in all but name. In Chapter Five our claim is evident in the success stories related.

These stories are presented to all those who are working for the emancipation of the common people in Pakistan to evaluate their own endeavors – is the quality of life improving after billions of dollars of aid are spent every year? Due to our work do women have improved human rights and gender equality? Has child labour reduced? Has the infant mortality rate reduced and is the employment situation better? If the results of your work are encouraging then please share them with others. We welcome your suggestions, positive criticism, recommendation and contributions. Please do visit or write to us:



*When women's true history has been written,
her part in the building of this nation
will astound the world.*

Abigail Duniway



Umeed Partnership Pakistan (UPP)

(Developing communities through education and training)

Profile

Umeed Partnership Pakistan (UPP) has a non-political, non-profit ethos, registered under Societies Act 1860 with registered # 764 on April 18, 2001 and is entitled to work nationwide. Umeed is a humanitarian organization committed to work for Development and Human Rights promotion. The Organization has its Head office in Lahore along with three regional offices in Loralai Balochistan, Bahawalpur and Lahore. The Umeed Project is managed by an executive board. Umeed is Urdu word for hope. Umeed is also registered in UK as charity.

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The Umeed Partnership exists to provide opportunities through education and training to vulnerable and disadvantaged girls & women, and boys & young men, in diverse parts of Pakistan. The organization is multi-faith and is operational in the tribal communities of Baluchistan, in slum districts of Lahore and in the marginalized low-caste dalit communities of Cholistan Desert in southern Punjab and district Mian Channue. The organization has been evolved into a women's support body to support victims of widowhood, disease and domestic violence.

Umeed is committed to work for the socio-economic rights and promotion of human rights and democracy amongst the masses irrespective of caste, creed or gender. Umeed works to break the unjust structures prevailing in Pakistani society. It works at grass-roots level with all those who believe in human liberation and who have committed themselves for this worthy cause.

Vision, Mission and Goal

Vision:

The vision of Umeed Partnership is to see educated, skilled and talented youth, improved equality between men and women, liberated from oppressor's bondage, promoting Human Rights among the oppressed masses in Pakistan.

Mission:

- To reach out to those who lack basic human needs with the aim of restoring dignity and respect irrespective of caste, creed or gender.
- To promote basic Human Rights, economic freedom and democratic processes within the oppressed communities.
- To provide opportunities to youth to improve their talents, abilities and leadership qualities.

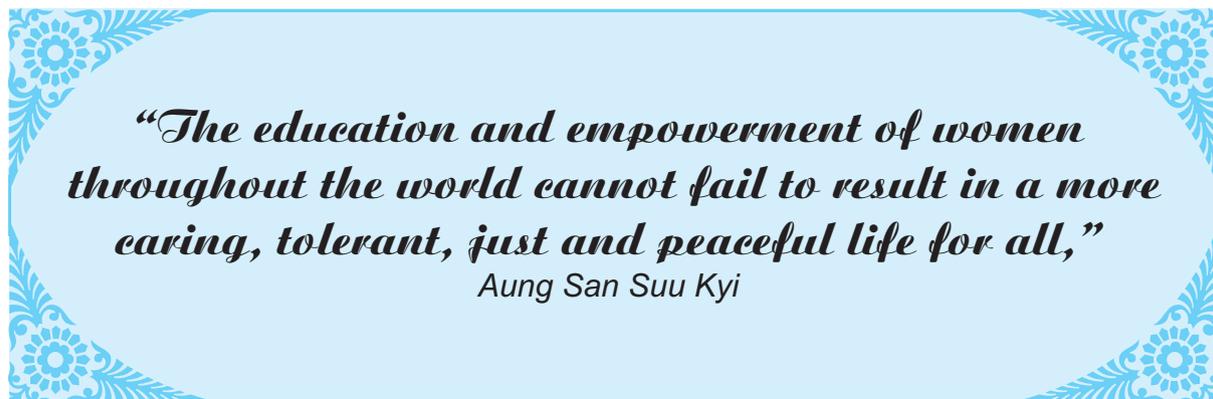
Goal: To promote and facilitate formal and informal (integral development) education at all levels.

Umeed's Focal Sectors include:**Human Rights:**

- Human Rights and democratic education
- Empowerment of women and elimination of gender disparities
- Capacity enhancement of women's' groups and civil society organizations
- Research and documentation

Development:

- Promotion of entrepreneurship skills
- Formal and non-formal education
- Socio-economic empowerment of the poor
- Assisting women in distress through free legal aid





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