

Women's Voice and Leadership-Pakistan



A Compendium of Case Studies

December 2022



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Preface



Promoting women's leadership and decision-making is a vital component of Women in Struggle for Empowerment (WISE) efforts. Championing women human rights is at the core of what we do. Supporting girls' individual agency in their own futures is prerequisite to shifting discriminatory practices. Thus, advocating for the rights of all is WISE important agenda whereby young women, through their leadership, transform power structures to create justice, gender equality and a world without fear and violence.

The Women's Voices and Leadership-Pakistan (WVL-P), a project of WISE, funded by OXFAM builds upon the existing knowledge, creativity, and capacity of young women to become leaders for positive social, economic and environmental change. Through this Program, we develop the transformative leadership and collective power of young women to achieve justice, peace, health, human dignity, freedom and care for the environment.

This program aims at strengthening WISE good practices in leadership training for transformative change and cultivating women's confidence and leadership capacity and fostering intergenerational learning and exchange. At the core of this leadership journey is a young woman's ability to know and claim her human rights at home and in her community, while contributing to strengthen the movement of young women and girls. The overall purpose is to encourage other young girls to come forward and play their role for the promotion and protection of women's rights.

This report is based on selective case studies, capturing the journey and stories of young girl's successful transformation in the background of our organizational practices in cultivating women's confidence, leadership capacity and fostering intergenerational learning and exchange. This compendium also celebrates the processes by which together young women explore their strengths, educate themselves, identify as decision makers, and have the confidence, knowledge, information, skills, and support to understand and manage power imbalances, challenge injustices, and make positive change in their lives.

Sincerely,

Bushra Khaliq

Executive Director

Dec. 2022

Introduction

Transformative Leadership for Women's Rights requires an analysis of the inequitable power structures (formal and informal) that undermine women's dignity, development, and leadership. It supports processes of transforming power, amongst individuals and communities, in both formal institutions and informal spheres.

Women Voice and Leadership Pakistan program strives for social, cultural, economic, and political transformation for equity and the realization of human rights for all, regardless of gender, sexuality, or other forms of identity. This program facilitates the space to support alternative and inclusive leaders and leadership models.

Transformative leadership has been recognized as a vital key to advance gender equality and women's empowerment. In collaboration with Oxfam, Global Affairs Canada and SPO. WISE designed a unique Women's Voice and Leadership-Pakistan (WVL-P) in 2020, promoting gender-responsive leadership and supporting women's participation in decision-making and development process. The WVL-P program aims to strengthen capacity and knowledge of current and emerging leaders to advance gender equality, women's empowerment and women's rights.

Under this project, a number of activities were carried out including training workshops on Gender and feminism, social well-being and safeguarding, community mobilization and virtual café hosted by young girls. Capacity strengthening initiatives for young female staff were also taken under the project. All these activities were aimed at strengthening leadership skills of young girls that leads to agency and empowerment.

WISE strives to address the underlying root causes of inequalities, rights violations, marginalization and exclusion of women and the gap in their access to opportunities. It believes in transforming the social, economic, cultural and political power structures, which are currently expressed in and through patriarchy, is critical.

Transformative Leadership Journey



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Gender transformation explicitly seeks to redress gender inequalities, remove structural inequality, barriers and empower disadvantaged populations. Transformative Leadership for women rights is an approach and strategy for social justice which challenges and transforms power relations and structures (in all their different manifestations) into an enabling environment in which gender justice and women's rights can be achieved. It embodies the principles and values of human rights, gender equality, participation, collaboration, and respect for the dignity of all people.

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“In the past, I was not confident to speak in front of many people. However, from the leadership training, I've learned to speak up and what I should do in front of people in high-positions if needed. Also, I hope I can motivate my friends so that we all become leaders.”



From Finance Manager to Gender Rights Trainer

Najma Aqeel, 35, working as finance manager with WISE, never thought to upgrade herself and deliver sessions on feminist principles during training workshops, but she did that after attending training workshops on Gender Leadership Program (GLP).

“Although as a finance manager I had attended several trainings regarding accounts and financial management, but that were related to my professional growth. However, the trainings I attended under WVLP program helped a lot in my personal growth. The Gender and Leadership Program based on a weeklong 3 modules hosted by Oxfam was eye opener for me, particularly the third module on Gender and Power was amazing. It helped me understand dynamics of power and gender relations. Training of Trainers (ToT) on leadership trembled my inner self and gave me confidence to speak out”, Said Najma, a mother of two school going children.

Being mother of two young sons and a working woman, Najma was used to feel compelled by prevailing patriarchal social norms under the given conditions to focus on household chores, serve her kids, husband and in-laws. She did not know much about power relations within family or society, but now she can moderate and take training sessions on power dynamics. She was a shy person who was reluctant to speak even among staff meetings. But now her confidence and communication skills have improved.

"I took a session on Patriarchy at a training workshop of women journalists under WISE component of Gender Just School. I moderated two zoom sessions of young girls under virtual café initiative. Took lead to form women cluster to promote friendly spaces in partner organizations of Oxfam. For the purpose I visited the offices of these organizations. Moreover, formed two groups of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in Badami Bagh and Shahdhra under GLPiers and conducted four awareness sessions for them. Also got these PWD groups registered with Social Welfare Department and helped arranged monthly stipend for them", said Najma thanking WISE and Oxfam for providing opportunity to GLP training workshops.





WISE gave me Wings to fly

Amina Afzal, 24, resident of Mustafabad, Lajpat Road, Shahdhra, before joining WISE, was very shy, hardly able to speak out in gatherings. She didn't aware of her basic rights as a woman or a worker. But after joining WISE, three years ago, she has transformed herself as a feminist and confident young Scotty rider.

Amina attended 5-day training on Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) Tools for community mobilization, organized by Oxfam in Jan 2022, Gender Leadership Program (GLPiers) and 2-day training on Gender concepts and GBV in Feb 2021, Social well-being and stress management and bike riding.

“After getting these trainings, I replicated different sessions on use of PRA tools in a training on social well-being and stress management. Under GLPiers program I formed a group of staff members and replicated the knowledge I acquired from module-based training workshops. I arranged 5 sessions with community groups and 5 with staff members group. This helped me explore myself and get rid of unfounded fears. Besides other things like concept of power and gender relations the most important thing I learnt that “I Can Do”, told Amina.

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I learnt many things here in WISE and gained lot of confidence. When I joined, I was computer illiterate. Leant computer skills, word, excel, Urdu and English typing. Now I use my email and face book also. WISE gave me wings to fly”, expressed Amina.

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I take pleasure in my transformation. I look quiet and consistent, but few know how many women there are in me.

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Amina always wanted to drive scotty, but there was hesitation. When WISE announced the Scotty program she was selected among the candidates.

“Even at that time i feared i would never be able to drive, but everything went smooth and now I come to office on scotty and often goes to market for shopping on scotty. When I first time drive scotty, I want to cry and tell everybody that I have done it”, said cheerful Amina



A motivated Amina now can't tolerate injustice to women around her. “Once I learnt that there was a wife battering case in our neighborhood. I could not remain silent and visited the family along with my mother. We talked to the husband and warned him if he did this again, we will report the matter to the police. The husband got scared and poor wife is thankful to me”, told Amina proudly.





Fizza Chaudhry was least aware of inheritance rights of women. After attending training workshop on Muslim family laws, she learnt about her property rights. She argued with her father to claim her just right to property and convinced him to transfer ownership rights to her and her sisters name.



Winning her right to inheritance



“My parents are quite traditional like other people. They always thought that sons were the sole rightful owners of parents' property. I had also similar views and did not know my right to inheritance. I had no objection to my father's decision of transferring our house in the name of my two brothers. However, last year when I attended a training organized by WISE on Muslim Family Laws & right to inheritance, under WVL program, I came to know that I have equal right to inheritance and my parents can't deprive me of this lawful right. The trainer Ms. Bushra Khaliq, explained the law vividly, which opened my eyes”, told 25-year-old Fizza.

Ms. Chaudhry works with WISE as project officer for the last two years. During the period she joined several seminars, training workshops, demos, rallies and press conferences etc. but what enabled the change to occur was the training workshop on Muslim Family laws and women rights to inheritance. Although she is educated with masters in political science from Punjab University but before joining WISE and becoming part of the WVL program, she was not much aware of several fundamental rights of women.



The awareness I got through activities under WVL program, gave me courage to talk to my father regarding my share in property. Initially my brothers and father resisted and termed it against family tradition. However, after repeated discussions, my father agreed to give me and my sisters due share in his property, including agriculture land. He forthwith transferred another house he owned in the locality in the name of us four sisters. Now I am happy to have a feeling of ownership of something.", told Fizza, a resident of Badami Bagh, Lahore.

After engaging with WVL program, she has not only passed on that awareness among her sisters and cousins around but also led sessions on women right to inheritance during different trainings by WISE. To her, the most important benefit she got was the Awareness of women rights.



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Had I not got chance to join such training workshops, perhaps I would never have thought to challenge the existing structural inequality like the deprivation of women's right to inheritance.", expressed Fizza.

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Breaking Barriers of Mobility



Rabia Shaukat, 28-year-old young graduate once a timid girl who never thought to ride a scotty, successfully broke the social barrier to achieve the independent mobility has become inspiration for other girls in the locality. The Abbaya-wearing girl who was not permitted by her brothers to use social media, now use facebook freely.



Rabia, a resident of Mustafabad Shahdhra, Lahore joined WISE as intern two year back and gradually promoted to position of Admin & HR Assistant. Her brother used to give her pick and drop from office and sometimes she had to travel by public transport, Auto Rickshaw, Chingchi Rickshaw, which usually used to take more than one and half hour to commute.

“On occasions, I had to face harassment in public transport. Last year WISE announced the initiative “Girls on Wheels”, under which after proper driving training three Scotties were to be given to those girls who were interested to drive and ride independently. I expressed my interest and was finally selected among the three riders. I talked to my parents and brothers to allow me to ride Scotty. Initially they opposed. But I convinced them that this would not only help save my travel time and save money but also will be hassle-free and harassment-free mode of mobility. Finally, they agreed and now I have been riding Scotty for the last 8 months and enjoying my independent mobility”, expressed Rabia.



Before joining WISE, Rabia used to wear Abayya (headscarf) as on the instructions of his brothers. She was never permitted by his brothers to use social media, but after joining WISE, and attending organizational activities her confidence level was slowly improved. Now she rides Scotty and uses Facebook without any fear. To her, it was “Girls on Wheels” initiative of WISE enabled this important change to occur.

“Now I ride Scotty and daily commute independently. Once my sister-in-law was sick and nobody was at home. I rushed her to hospital on Scotty, since then my elder brother has no more objection. I have found a new confidence and no more afraid that what people think about me. Now I use Scotty to visit my friends and relatives as well. I feel proud when people on the road turn to look at me. Not only my parents and family respect my independent mobility but the neighbors as well. Many parents of young girls approached me to seek my guidance to purchase Scotties for their daughters who are either students or doing jobs”, explain Rabia.

Rabia has gained a new confidence and sense of freedom after joining WISE and becoming Scotty driver. “My brothers and even close relatives who used to ignore me, now give me importance. Now I wear trouser as I wish and use my own picture as DP on face book”. Said Rabia





The Taste of Freedom from Fear

Miss Kainat, 25, joined WISE as an intern two years ago. She has been part of several organizational activities; seminars, conferences and meetings, during the period. Later she was promoted as assistant project manager in WVLP. Despite being an educated person with exposure and student of English literature, She lacked confidence to speak out in meetings.

Before joining WISE Kainat Rana was suffering from unfounded complexes. But she successfully overcome her psychological issues after attending different training workshops on psycho social well-being, organized under WVLP Program.

“When I got the opportunity to attend training on Stress Management, last year in 2021, I realized something wrong about my social well-being. The tips I learnt from training workshop helped me to release out my chronic stress. On another occasion during the preparations of activities for 16 Days of Activism, I was searching for catchy slogans, when one gripped my attention “Freedom from Fear”. These three words guided me to a new path of trust and confidence on myself.” said Kainat.

Ms. Kainat was a shy person since childhood. Her friends and cousins used to make fun of her and she never knew how to respond them with confidence. She always used to be a reserve person during official meetings.

“Although my father has always been supportive but my elder brother, kind of strict person with patriarchal mind set never liked my friendship with male classmates in university. I spent my university life with suppressed emotions in fear. But now I feel I am a changed person. I have successfully overcome the socially imposed complexes and have confidence to respond to those who used to make fun of me. I can speak out my mind in the official meetings, join demos and rallies like 8 March and raise slogans for women rights”, expressed upbeat Kainat.





Embracing Empowerment

Hijab Fayyaz, 24, BSc honors in Physics from Punjab University, a kind of withdrawn person before joining WISE as intern two years back, now confident enough to claim her right to be part of decision-making process at home and in office.

“Initially I was a shy person and avoid to take part in discussions during office meetings. I was taken for granted by my family members, friends and cousins. My parents used to think that I was not qualified enough to be part of any decision-making process at home. Even my younger brother never took me seriously. I never used my picture as DP on face book because of possible reaction from family and relatives”.

Hijab has been part of different activities under WVLP, but it was training workshop on gender inclusiveness, which gave her new confidence and help improve her communication skills.

“In the beginning, although my writing skills were good but my verbal communication was very weak. I always afraid to speak in meetings. Similarly, I never thought of traveling alone, but after attending Training Workshop on gender equity, organized by Oxfam in Islamabad in June 2022, I traveled alone to Multan to represent WISE in a meeting”. Said Hijab resident of Nishtar Block, Iqbal Town Lahore is working as Social mobilizer.

Recently when Hijab’s parents decided to change house, she asked them to take her on board and when final decision was made her point of view was prevailed. Similarly, when it came to decide about color of paint or home decor, she asserted her choice. Her parents now give due importance to her opinion in all household matters.

“Now I can express my point of view in office meetings, travel alone, take part in Cyclothon and 8 March. Last year, when I posted pictures of participation in 8 March, some of my friends appreciated and made comment as “proud of this girl”. On an occasion at a family gathering, I confronted one of my cousins who was against 8 March and defended the concept of “Mera Jism, Mery Marzi”. Said Hijab transformed an empowered girl.





Feel Safe, Be Safe

Aynish Ijaz, 21, a student of BSc Psychology, is resident of Ichra, Lahore, did not know how girls can safeguard themselves from harassment. After attending three trainings on safeguarding, she is aware enough now not only to replicate this awareness but confident to report such incidents if happen.



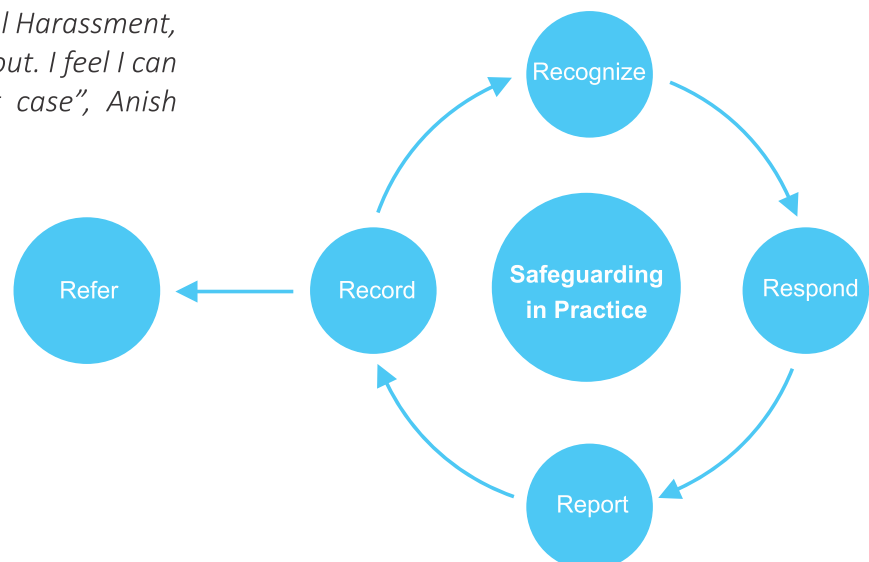
It was three years ago when I joined a training on Safeguarding, organized by WISE. It was first time I came to know that there were laws against sexual harassment at workplace and public place. The way trainer explained different angles of Safeguarding through animated cartoons and various exercises opened a new window of understanding and learning for me.



After getting training Aynish arranged two zoom sessions with her classmates and friends. 27 young girls joined these sessions. She replicated the knowledge she learnt from the trainings. She asked girls not to be silent if harassment occurs.



"I facilitated a harassment victim, happened to be one of my friends, who faced online sexual harassment and I referred her case to WISE, which took it up officially. Awareness about Safeguarding and sexual Harassment, gave me confidence to speak out. I feel I can now handle any harassment case", Anish claimed.



No more Silence against Harassment!



Kiran Jameel, 24, student of M.Phil, Bio-Chemistry, was not aware about the safeguarding mechanism. After attending three training workshops on Safeguarding, she confidently reported an incident of harassment to police.

“Six months back an incident of harassment happened with me. A man was following me in the street, when I was on the way back home from university. Using the Mobile safety App, I called the police who arrested the harasser. Perhaps would not dare to do that had I not attended such workshops and learnt about the safety app”. Said Kiran, resident of Larak Society, Shahdhra.

Despite being university student, Kiran was never told about the safeguarding and harassment laws in her class. She always used to take this phenomenon for granted as it happens with many women on daily basis and they never share with anybody. She did not know anything about safeguarding and Mobile Safety App till two and half years ago she attended sessions on safeguarding, organized by WISE. Kiran feels empowered as her friends and cousins noticed a new confidence in her personality and they appreciate her. Many of them have showed interest to join such training on safeguarding as well.



“These training workshops on safeguarding were really useful and gave me confidence to report the incident to police. I arranged two replica session involving 21 young school going girls of my area and share with them what I had learnt from the training workshops. I told them about difference between good touch and bad touch and how can they respond to any such incident”, told Kiran.

Don't be Afraid, Speaks it out!



Aiman Zameer, 20, student of BSc Criminology, Punjab University lacked confidence to speak out during office meetings. Before joining WISE as intern two years back she never used to share things with her family members and avoid to use Her own pic as DP on social media. After attending several organizational activities, she is confident enough to speak in meetings and dare to use her own DP on face book.

“Before joining WISE two years back, my confidence level was very low. I could not introduce myself properly, used face book but never dare to use my own DP. I never share things with my family members. However, I have learnt a lot in the last two years. From training workshops on Safeguarding, I learnt how to protect myself from harassment and how to report if any such thing happens to me online or offline. When I talk to my class fellows on these concepts of power, inclusivity and diversity, they ask me from where did I learnt these things? This gives me a sense of achievement”. Said Aiman, a resident of Nazir Garden Jallo Park, Lahore.

After attending the training workshops on Safeguarding and seminars during 16 days of activism, Aiman acquired a new confidence and learnt to speak during office meetings. Now she shares everything with her father and also active on social media with her own DP without any fear.

“A few months back, one of my friends who is working as teacher in an academy told me that one of her male colleagues used to harass her. She was worried and thinking to resign from job. I advised her not to resign rather report this matter to the principal of the Academy. She was initially skeptical but when I mustered her support, she did the same and complaint to the principal, who gave stern warning to the person. After that things have been settled and she is now comfortable with job”. Told Aiman proudly.





Bakhtawar learns how to say NO!

Bakhtawar, 18, a 2nd year, F.Sc. student was not aware of laws and rules about sexual harassment till she attended three training workshops on Safeguarding, organized by WISE.



“From Safeguarding training workshops, I learnt how to speak out and share if harassment happens. Girls must know how to say NO. Most important thing for me was that there was a law against sexual harassment at public place also. Under PPC section 509 we can report to police. These training workshops were a real change maker for me”, Told Bakhtawar, a resident of Hanif Park, Badami Bagh, Lahore

For Bakhtawar most important benefit she got from training workshop was a feeling of confidence and empowerment, besides awareness.

“I knew nothing about safeguarding. We girls often face incidents of harassment, but we just afraid of sharing with family members and parents. Me was also like that. But now I talk to my classmates about safeguarding tips. I will not remain silent if I have ever to confront with any such incident”. Said confident Bakhtawar



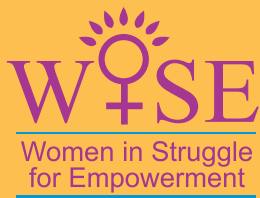


Girls on Wheels

Although females make up more than half of the population of the country, they are constantly subjected to gender discrimination and harassment when they are out on the roads. They cannot always travel independently even in the urban areas of Pakistan. They are dependent on their guardians, local transport in order to commute. WISE encourage women to travel safely and fearlessly on the roads and be agents of change in our society.

In order to empower women, WISE is providing a reliable and affordable travel option for females staff members by introducing scotties! As pilot project four (4) young girls have been provided with driving training and Scotties. This myth-breaking initiative has been widely acclaimed any dozens of women has showed interest to become bike riders.





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