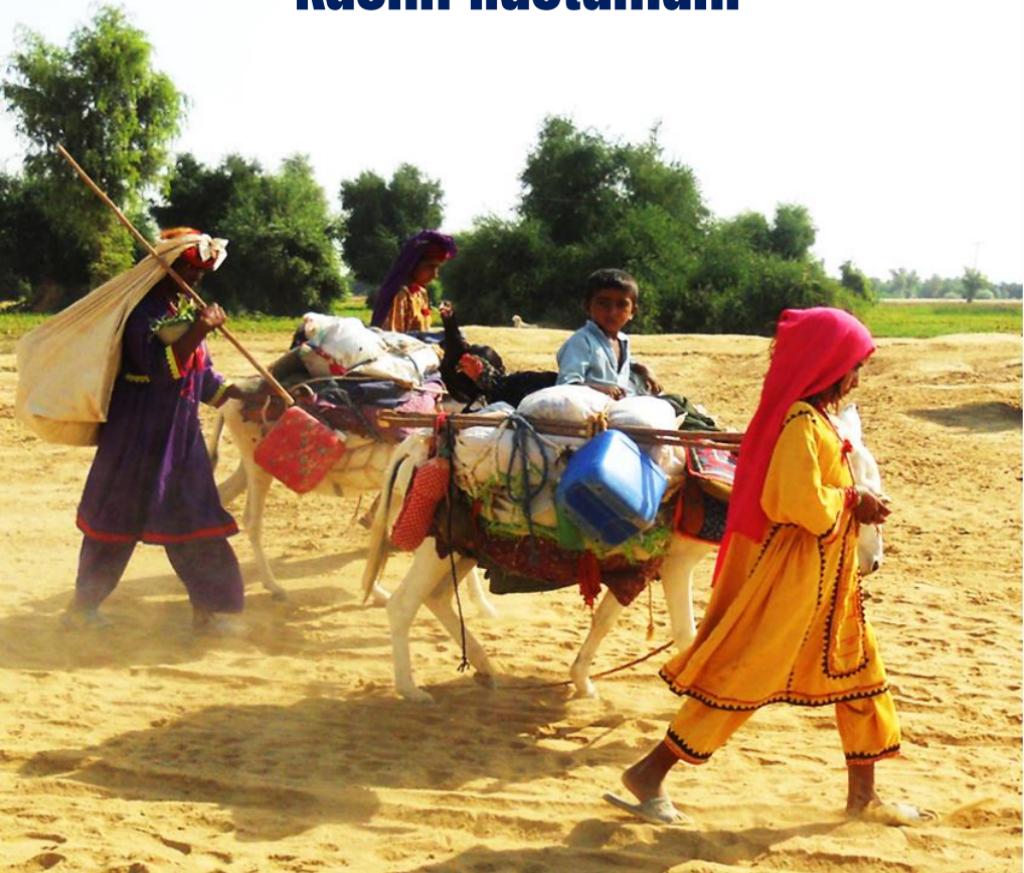


# Market Economy and Educational Marginalization of Women in Pakistan: Implications for Development

**Kashif Rustamani**



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## **Abstract**

This article proposes to find out how market economy has socially marginalized women in Pakistan. It investigates and highlights the fact that women, for the most part, in all regions of Pakistan hold a lower status in social environment. This, in turn, has impacted all the domains of their life. This phenomenon can also be observed in structures of market economy. This study stresses on inequalities and discrimination against women in economic opportunities offered by the market. Results from literature and desk review suggest that gender bias behavior and discrimination has decreased chances of women engaging in education sector. These findings present a perspective that gender segregation is found in the ethos of our society. By providing a micro-scale examination on social perspective of women life/status in Pakistan, this study implies it to educational marginalization increased by market economy. The paper uses qualitative anthropological methods to collect secondary and empirical data aligned with current theories and practices in the field. The study intends to bring some better implications for inclusive development.

**Key Words:** Gender, Educational marginalization, Market Economy, Development

\*This paper was presented at International Conference on Marginalization and Social Exclusion in the Perspective of Market Economy 16 – 18 August 2017 at Baragali Camp, Abbottabad.

## **Introduction**

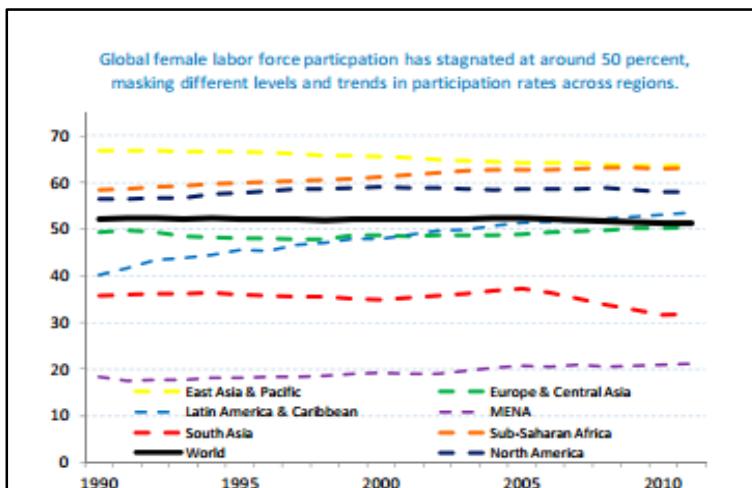
Women in developing countries generally have only few employment opportunities. Many of them hold jobs that are in the informal economy or unregulated sectors that functions parallel to more formal and protected economic sectors (Zagreb, 2000). Literature shows us that women yield more than half of the locally grown food in the Third World and as much as eighty per cent in Africa. Momsen in her book on women and development states that almost ninety per cent of sale workers in Accra, Ghana are women (Momsen, 1991). In contrast to African women, conditions of Muslim working women are absurd. Günseli Berik in her study among women carpet weavers in Turkey, states:

*...in its current form, carpet weaving is an activity based on women's subordinate position in the household and the dependence of poor and landless households on weaving income. Merchants and exporters take advantage of these features of the rural weaving labor force. The undervaluation of women's work on the grounds that work is performed during "leisure" hours, or is performed while seated, weakens demands for higher pay for the skilled labor these women perform. None of the sample weavers has access to social benefits, despite the fact that a considerable proportion have been weaving for over 20 years. Moreover, where they work in workshops, most weave in unhealthy condition. (Berik, 1987)*

South Asian women participation rate as labour is lower than African women. Female labor force participation in South

Asian is below the world average. This is because of some social connotations attached with female identity in South Asian countries via contours of religion, culture and society. It is also apparent (see figure 1), even in Europe, we find similar gender related issues. Veronika V. Eberharter, in her research study in Germany on female employment status, states that labor market adjustments are not gender neutral. They infact effect women's employment status. Due to societal patriarchal attitudes and social norms, women are

*Figure 1 Female Labor Force Participation (as a Percent of the Female Population age 15+), 1990-2011*



Source 1: World Bank, World Development Indicators, 2013; Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM), ILO

still discriminated against in the labor market and interms of their relative income positions (Eberharter, 2003). In South Asia women representation and inequality in economic opportunities are increasing even after so much work has been done in South Asian countries by UN agencies and other INGOs to improve and lessen the gender gap. Yet Sathar and Kazi opine that South Asia has been decelerating in experiencing demographic transition as well-known

because of sharp inequalities in the decision making and distribution of power in men and women. (Sathar & Kazi, 2000).

This paper proposes to find out and discuss the reasons and causes of marginalization and social exclusion of women in Pakistan with focus on inequality in market economy toward gender. Furthermore, it examines the patterns of marginalization of women found in social, cultural and religious norms and values under the heading of women in Pakistan. Present study also tries to establish a link between value systems, it shows how socio-cultural values hinder the progress and mobility of women in economic domain.

This study is concerned with marginalization and social exclusion, given that, the paper also emphasizes construction of gender in Pakistan and stereotypical images attached to women identity. These stereotype images are the major reason of women and girl's exploitation and marginalization in home, workplace, public as well as in the market sphere.

The study seeks to locate women position in modern world-system, Wallerstein refers it to as capitalist world economy. In this paper, it is argued that women educational and economical marginalization is due to market economy. In Pakistan, where the status of women is not equal to that of man, arrival of market economy has marginalized their non-market economic activities. High competition in the modern sector took over many 'subsistence economic' activities that gave women privilege of being independent in a patriarchal society. In fact, the rise of capitalist economy has doubled the work burden of women. Disappearance of women non-economic work has reduced their role in agriculture, forcing

them to join the labor force, but the domestic work of women continues to remain the same.

These activities are described in the course of this paper. The sources of data are literature (research articles) and the primary data, collected during field work, using qualitative anthropological techniques i.e. participant observation in November 2015 in the western region of Sindh. In addition, desk review data presented here is collected from eclectic sources to strengthen the argument, it provides cross-cultural and geographical research on the topic in order to present vivid understanding of educational marginalization and women social status in Pakistan.

## **Women in the context of Pakistan**

This paper focuses on challenges faced by women in workplace in Pakistan and reasons of inequalities in work places. I also link it with women social status as reason of inequality and challenges that women face. According to Global Gender Gap Report 2016, Pakistan is ranked 143 out of 144 countries leaving only Yemen behind, and ranked lowest country in South Asia in gender gap. According to this report by World Economic Forum, Pakistan has not increased overall score in the past three years since 2013 (The Global Gender Gap Report 2016). It shows that women do not have equal access to economic participation and opportunity, health, education, earning power and political representation relative to man. The report in its recent publication shows that situation in Pakistan regarding gender gap has not narrowed. Pakistan is at 148<sup>th</sup> place, second worst in gender gap if looked at from the angel of global average (The Global Gender Gap Report 2018). What constitute women lower status in Pakistan is discussed later

in this paper, additionally looking at women working condition in Pakistan we find that production (commodity or agriculture) by female worker were not recognized as part of labor force, that had been highlighted in a case study by Shaheed and Mumtaz (1981, p. 127).

The socio-cultural system of Pakistan is patriarchal and the kinship structure is male dominated, authority rests with man in Pakistani family (Rauf, 1987). This is not only the case in home or within the family but in public as well as within (patriarchal) power domains. It in-turn creates inequality in workplace. Betty Friedan, a liberal feminist, states that reasons for women subjugation and inequality are customs, laws and socialization. She argues we socialize our girls per laws and customs.

Women are subject to face greater risk of unemployment compared to men at the global level, with larger variations in the unemployment gap across regions. Women lack in workforce participation in Pakistan because of the underemployment of women in informal sector (Raza, 2007). These causes of underemployment of women in informal and formal sector are discussed below.

### **Barriers to women economic opportunities in Pakistan**

The majority of Pakistani women face socio-cultural and religious barriers when they enter into mainstream economic activities. Purdah is believed to be one of the religious, and socio-cultural barriers to Muslim women's mobility and progress in Pakistan and, generally, in the Muslim world. Minault suggests that purdah not only slowed progress of women in education, but also created opportunity for women to identify their problems to share common sympathy among

other women (Minault, 1982). Purdah (veil) is interpreted differently in different contexts, however, the underlying meaning attached to purdah is that man must protect women, keep her inside four walls, which indirectly and directly constrains women from going into public domain because it threatens the purdah of women and it is articulated with *Izaat* (honor) to keep women in homes. Woodsmall (1983) states that women in Muslim societies and communities face gender-based inequalities associated with the so-called “patriarchal gender system.”.

Perception regarding women earning outside of home is stereotyped and constrained by the common cultural, religious and social rationale of *Izaat* (family honor). This question is raised by many middle-class families in Pakistan when women join labour force in market. Purdah also restrict women mobility physically and socially, therefore, it is difficult for Pakistani women to seek employment (Shah, 1970). Anita M. Weiss define purdah as ‘the formalized separation of women from the world of men. She stresses that purdah is one of the main reasons for the lowest female illiteracy levels of Pakistan in the world (1985, p. 867). At the same time purdah is supposed to be an important factor contributing to women exploitation at work place (Shaheed & Mumtaz, 1981). Abid S, in her research states that, Patriarchy gives men authority to control power, in contrast women ontologically are emotional, therefore, they cannot be decisive, underlying assumption is that women cannot take pressure. The laws that were imposed by Zia in his military regime had impacted women status in Pakistan, therefore, the women movement emerged to counter the patriarchy rule which subjugated women (Alavi, 1988). One of the major women movement organization, which emerged during this period was Women Action Forum. It aims to

equal the legal status of women that was cut to half of men during Zia Islamization project.

### **Gender (stereotype) construction and sex differentials in Pakistan: Causes of social and economic inequalities**

In our society, there exist certain binaries which shape our behavior toward those binaries. Binary opposition is two parts of an entity opposed to each-other. These binaries are not natural, most of them are constructed in society by human interaction. Sex is natural and biological (male and female) it is very different from gender in which we find construction of masculine (superior) and feminine (subordinate). Lévi-Strauss, French anthropologist, views culture as a sign system in which human creates binaries that express profound cognitive sensitivities to make sense of the world in terms of binary oppositions (Duranti, 1997). For anthropologist culture is communicated and through communication, we make sense of our world by objectifying reality through education, socialization, music, media, language, proverbs, poetry, folk stories, theories, performances, artistic products and myths etc. Through these things human being with the best of their ability establish certain symbolic relationships. In this regard we construct gender, in which, we depict that women are not rational rather they are emotional, fragile and passive (Honigmann, 1957). The depiction of women's lower social status in society effect their work, making it less important.

Gender construction highly impacts women social status. In Urdu literature, for instance, argues Aafreen, that strong depiction of women cruelty, to which women are subjected, are enhanced by use of traditional metaphors (1984, p. 224). Siddiqui, a prominent Pakistani writer, give details about

gender binaries attributes assigned to male and female, some of them are: male as strong, brave, independent, composed and innovative, in contrast, women as weak, cowardly, dependent, nervous and conservative so forth (Siddiqui, 2014, p. 33).

Women subjugation is the outcome of all these gender stereotypes that emphasize that women cannot be as responsible as men are, therefore, they cannot reach higher official ranks; also, that women are not intellectually and physically fit, so they cannot attain posts/positions in judiciary or police. This hinders the progress of women joining such services.

### **Framework for educational marginalization**

In a background paper of UNESCO named 'Marginalization of Young People in Education and Work: Findings from the School-to-Work Transition Surveys', educational marginalization is defined as:

*Educational marginalization denotes the status of an individual that has an educational level sufficiently lower than average to feel like marginalized in the society in general and in the labor market in particular because of her/his educational gap. Marginalization is clearly a relative concept, and clearly it is also country and age-specific, in as much as the threshold level of education that lead to marginalization may change from one country, age and gender to another. Marginalization might also assume a different*

*meaning according to other factors, such as gender and so on<sup>1</sup>.*

In this context, during field work in Wahi Pandhi, it was found, that girl/s access to education was only to the level of primary. Girls in village of Wahi Pandhi attains only primary education, when they pass the primary level, they are confined to their homes. Some will only be enrolled in secondary education and their exams were given by their brothers or cousins. Due to gender segregation in schools limited number of girls used to appear in exams.

Educating women not only helps in the short term, but it benefits the family and the community, at large, it has broader results that result in educating generations, therefore, women economic empowerment is necessary. Education also plays a significant role in women's participation in economic decision making, and that leads to higher participation of women within households and at work place. Education qualifications enhance job prospects of all individuals including women. Generally, for women as the education level increases the economic participation increases as well. (Naqvi, Shahnaz, & Arif, 2003)

Education has a deep link with language. Language is powerful tool which gives access to public domain and power corridors. The access to dominant language bring more opportunities for women but if, because of lack of mobility, women are restricted to same language speakers,

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<sup>1</sup> Pastore, F. (2012). Marginalization of Young People in Education and Work: Findings from the School-to-Work Transition Surveys. *Background paper prepared for the Education for All Global Monitoring Report*, 3-4.

they cannot comprehend and communicate in language that is used in media, market and public places.

One of the respondents from Baloch tribe in Wahi Pandhi, when asked who is excluded from market and how language plays an important role, answered: Sindhi is official language of province and every type of knowledge is produced in Sindhi. The one who interacts with Sindhi speakers, they do know Sindhi, but those who live in their villages, and could not get out from there often, have problems in speaking with the Sindhis. Those are children and women, deprived of language which is access to world and window to interact and participate in labor force. He further added that, women are mostly Balochi speakers, half of the village women don't know about the Sindhi language. This is because they remain in their home, contribute in domestic work, are less social and, always, have their own daily work which cannot be skipped.

### **Women marginalization and exclusion by 'capitalist' market economy**

In developing nations over sixty percent of women workers are in informal employment outside agriculture—far more if agriculture is also included. If we admit that women workers are found in informal economy, Michele Companion (Companion, 2010) study shows that even in informal sector women are economically marginalized. She argues that unemployment and the increasing entry of younger men into non-formal segment of market have increased women's economic and social marginalization. In here study she states:

Women exclusion from information networks which is strong source in market to earn more have sidelined women from major earning. “man's monopolization of prime selling routes, coupled with their mobility, provides them with greater access to all types of information”. Thus, women have lesser social capital than man, which also benefits man therefore women are less likely to have access to information regarding local trade conditions, opportunities, and constraints. (Companion, 2010)

When we relate her study with Pakistan, we even find a worse situation. In Wahi Pandhi market in totality is dominated by man and women wandering in *shahr* market is a taboo. My argument is that before market expansion and internalization, women were economically independent; their products were purchased by many and they had direct access to their money, even in exchange economy women enjoyed exchange of their labor product.

Primarily, market economy socially marginalized women – and their economic marginalization is at its peak. Women are not allowed to wander in the market. Those women who are head of households are dependent on their near relatives, husband or on children if they are young enough to earn. Secondly, if women work from home making ropes, *tada*, *pheesh*, *ralli* and when they prepare crafts and finishes them, then it is de-facto responsibility of some male member of the household to sell items in *shahr* (bazaar). More often than not, the amount of money received by selling items remains with man and he considers it his duty to buy things for women that they need i.e. cloths, footwear, medicine or anything which is needed and is available in *shahr* market.

Capitalism and modernization as it transforms structures of traditional economies, it often increases the inequality and disadvantage faced by women because modern sectors domination has overtaken economic activities that women used to do in their traditional economies i.e. craft work, stitching *rali*, making of *tada* (rug), clothes and etc. Through these means women supported their families and themselves. Now these activities are replaced with technologies and industries which in turn marginalized women in rural areas and increased their subjugation. In sum women are segregated from bazaar, however, this segregation clearly causes economic and social marginalization. Already perpetuating market norms which excluded women from public sphere are found in many places in rural Sindh, other than some of urban cities, where the exploitation, marginalization and inequality is also found at the micro level.

In Wahi Pandhi, an oasis settlement where mode of production is pastoral and agricultural, despite the emergence of market economy, strict work schedule of women is as follows:

Women start work early morning, untie livestock, prepare food for house and fetch water from nearby well. Additionally, they bring herd into shelter while men only sit at home or wander in bazaar. Those women who take care of livestock other than her own, they are paid pathetic wages, for instance, ten rupees are paid to women for one goat per month. On an average a woman has 30 to 40 goats including sheep for pasturing, for which she gets around 300 rupees per month. This money goes to investment in health, cloths and rearing children. Farming, for household is the unpaid work that is also performed by women in Wahi Pandhi. They

have little time for themselves, even watching television is restricted for women in Wahi Pandhi. Only few numbers of girls attain school, eventually they end up being married early in their village.

It is also a male strategy to dominate women or, at least, keep them in "their place." For example, by not recognizing the economic value of women's household production services, the value of nonmarket (unpaid) household labor is excluded from both sides of national income and product accounts. This standard holds for both developed and developing nations and with important consequences.

Women are allowed to work in farms, but not in shops? If we look at this phenomenon that markets are established at large, but the work that women do is spontaneous and have zero upward mobility. There is no direct wage offer when working in the farm, women get no money on the spot or not even latter. The labor that women put is paid in the form of other things such as providing food by male member, some pieces of cloth and footwears.

When a female work in the field as a farmer, not her own land, she is not even offered a cup of tea while her significant other enjoys some break time and drinks with other farmers and land owner in noon time.

When feminist anthropologists asked why women's contributions to economic activities in both non-capitalist and capitalist societies had often been rendered invisible, they soon found they needed a complex rethinking of concepts and paradigms: the core concepts used to theorize the links between gender and economy – 'household', the 'domestic', 'public', 'private' – were all deeply problematic.

A special concern was “the neglect of relations of power and exploitation within households”

Research on women doing paid work in Pakistan show that they work out of economic need, face a hostile environment of limited employment opportunities, bad work conditions, unequal wages, and a double burden of labour due to unremitting domestic responsibilities at home. This is true for all women, whether they are in rural areas or working in urban areas. Even those in the formal sector are not free from inequality, discrimination in the workplace and sexual harassment. Nonetheless, they persist but their economic contribution needs to be accounted fully and correctly. (Khan, 2007).

### **Conclusion and way forward**

In this paper, we have thoroughly but not extensively emphasized that importance is not given to the role and contribution of women in economy and development because of common and biased perspectives regarding women which, in turn, hinder their mobility and progress. Practical and theoretical issues related to women exclusion and marginalization are still not explored fully because of one-sided nature of literature available and, on the other side, is orthodoxy which claims that policies toward women are of inclusion – this does not hold true. For that, and for reader’s clarity, this paper give a brief history of approaches which emerge to include women in all spheres of work, generally, and specifically in market sphere.

Neo-liberal economies had fully ignored the subsistence perspective of women work that is highlighted since the 1960s, with the emergence of “Women in Development”

(WID) approach. WID approach highlighted that development is not value and gender-neutral process which did not recognize women participation in economic activities. Crucially, this approach thought to re-think development and incorporate element of gender need, because man and women have different needs. Reason for the evolution of WID, and their basic premise, was that women are subjugated because of their exclusion from market sphere and limited access to and control over resources. WID advocates pointed out that the inequalities between men and women across societies and cultures were the result of irrational prejudices in development planning driven by culturally biased sex stereotype<sup>2</sup>. This approach was also a critique to the perspective which saw women as reproductive labor but did not acknowledge their use-value. For the first time in history, women had recognition and their contribution became more visible. We are highly indebted to Ester Boserup; her seminal work and influential book, *Women's Role in Economic Development 1970*, was one of the first researches to document the contribution of women in the productive sectors of the developing countries' economies, particularly in agriculture<sup>3</sup>.

Gender and Development (GAD) approach emerged as critique to WID because it did not give opportunity to women to be connected directly in market, it only highlighted women issues within the household and failed to challenge patriarchal norms that were perpetuating in the

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2 Gita Sen, A. G. (1994). Meaning of Empowerment: New Concepts Form Actions. In S. Batliwala, *Population Policies Reconsidered: Health Empowerment and Rights* (p. 129). Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

3 Fernando, J. L. (1997). Nongovernmental Organizations, Micro-Credit, and Empowerment of Women. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 150-177.

society i.e. gender roles and stereotypes. The GAD approach recognizes that it is not enough to add girls and women into current processes of development but the problem is the need to critique why women and girls are excluded, and focus must be on the challenging the issue of unequal distribution of power because of that exclusion<sup>4</sup>.

We borrow many concepts and strategies from these approaches for implication to incorporate women in market and in development process. Additionally, the implications for development are related to review of literature and findings from Sindh. Solving and mitigating women exploitation and exclusion from mainstream economic development requires an action policy: regular educational institutions for women, major change is needed to exit the stereotypical use of language in discourses, change in curriculum text, reforming programs in media which depicts wrong social image of women, also to restructure employment policies and process to create better jobs for women and end discrimination against women in workplace.

Secondly, to create academic, educational and economic opportunities for women and specific laws that will liberate both man and women, all type of education should be open to women and must be choice for them so that they can study with passion to acquire what they want. Education is foremost important investment in women with which a nation can be benefited.

It has been observed that language courses are important for women. Lack of knowledge about market and media

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4 Bradshaw, S., Castellino, J., & Diop, B. (2013). *Women's role in economic development: Overcoming the Constraints*. The Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

language confine women within same linguistic group which became an obstacle in their upward mobility, whereas, this knowledge will help women to compete.

Finally, if we are willing to bring change and mitigate exclusion and marginalization of women from mainstream economic development, we must understand the local circumstances, i.e. cultural, social, class, race, ethnic and age of people, living in Pakistan. In this way, we will be in better position to bring enhancing policies and programs which will promote gender equality, balanced opportunities and economic growth in the country.

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## **About the Author**

Kashif Rustamani is an anthropologist and development studies graduate from PIDE. Hailing from Wahipandi, in the Kirthar Mountains of Sindh, Kashif studies the indigenous pastoral economies of Sindh and Balochistan and the effect of contemporary changes on these populations. He works on human rights for indigenous people, migration patterns and agricultural practices. His work highlights the pressures faced by marginalized groups, and the adaptive strategies they take to sustain their livelihoods. Professionally, he has been involved in designing and conducting research on diverse range of issues including social behavior change communication; education; climate; social change; gender; livelihood and public infrastructure.

Kashif currently holds a teaching position at the Sohail and Iqra Universities in Karachi. He has been working for over 3 years with national and international development sector organizations, including PHC Global, SAFWCO, Cultivating New Frontiers in Agriculture (CNFA), Center for Communication Programs Pakistan (CCPP), and All- Story. His most recent achievements were leading the social mobilization and communication activities in Typhoid Conjugate Vaccine catch-up campaign, and ADB- funded National Road Safety Survey for the Federal Ministry of Communication in the province of Sindh.