



Finding Freedom in Stitches: The Inspiring Success Story of

Ms. Saima Baloch

CBID Network PK Sindh

***Head of Vocational Training Management, Disabled Welfare Association (DWA)
Vocational Trainer, DWA Women's Vocational Training Center, Jacob Lines***

Ms. Saima Baloch – From an Underserved Village to Leading Vocational Empowerment

A Childhood Marked by Challenges

Grown up in an underserved village of Balochistan, Saima contracted polio after a quack practitioner administered an incorrect injection. The incident changed the course of her life, bringing physical mobility limitations from an early age.

Her parents, however, remained determined. With unwavering commitment, they carried her long distances for physiotherapy, refusing to let disability define her future. This parental support became the foundation of her resilience.

Education Against All Odds

Saima studied in a mainstream school until Grade 8. As mobility challenges grew, continuing in a regular school building without accessibility became impossible. She did not give up. With strong support from her mother, she completed her matriculation and intermediate education as a private candidate.

During this period, she also learned stitching and began teaching the skill to others. While she found purpose in teaching, social stigma and discrimination deeply affected her confidence. Like many women with disabilities in rural Pakistan, she faced double barriers – gender and disability.

The Turning Point: Alice in Wonderland Moment at HANDS-DWA Independent Living Center

A turning point came when Saima participated in a three-day training at the HANDS-DWA Independent Living Center (ILC). For her, the experience felt like stepping into "Alice in Wonderland."

For the first time in her life, she witnessed persons with disabilities working confidently, independently, and without shame – actively contributing to society like anyone else. She saw wheelchair users leading sessions, managing offices, and mentoring others. The environment was enabling, respectful, and full of possibility.

Inspired and transformed by this exposure, she was offered an opportunity to become part of the HANDS–DWA ILC. Saima courageously convinced her family and joined the center. She underwent a structured rehabilitation program at the Independent Living Center, which focused not just on physical rehabilitation but on confidence-building, independent living skills, and leadership.

From Trainee to Leader

Over time, Saima transitioned into the administrative team and steadily proved her capabilities. Today, she heads vocational training management at the Disabled Welfare Association (DWA). She also teaches embellishment and stitching to girls with and without disabilities at the DWA Women's Vocational Training Center located at Jacob Lines.

Her professional growth has become a source of pride for her entire family – the same family that once carried her for physiotherapy now sees her leading a center, managing trainings, and shaping the futures of other young women. She also contributes to the Human Resources Department as a regular staff member at DWA.

Saima credits her transformation, disability awareness, and opportunities for personal and professional advancement to Sir Jawaid Rais, whose leadership at DWA has created pathways for hundreds of persons with disabilities.

Barriers Still Remain – A Call for Systemic Change

Despite her success, Saima still recounts painful experiences with the Sindh Board examination system and vocational stitching centers, where authorities failed to accommodate her disability, forcing her to go to upper floors without consideration for accessibility.

Her story highlights the critical need for inclusive education, accessible examination centers, and disability-friendly vocational institutions across Sindh and Balochistan.

Major Issues Faced

- Physical mobility limitations combined with social stigma and lack of educational accessibility
- Limited opportunities and discrimination faced as a woman with a disability
- Inaccessible infrastructure in schools, examination boards, and vocational centers
- Lack of awareness about rights and potential of women with disabilities in rural communities

Contribution of HANDS – Independent Living Center (ILC)

- Structured rehabilitation and Independent Living training
- Employment and leadership opportunities – from trainee to Head of Vocational Training Management
- Provision of active wheelchair, pick-and-drop facilities, meals, and an enabling workplace
- Confidence building, peer support, and inclusion in a community of role models
- Platform to become a trainer and mentor for other girls with and without disabilities

A Message of Hope for CBID Network Sindh

Ms. Saima Baloch's journey from a remote village in Balochistan to leading vocational training in Karachi is a true reflection of Community-Based Inclusive Development (CBID) in action. Her story proves that when barriers are removed and opportunities are provided within the community, women with disabilities can become earners, leaders, and change-makers.

Through the support of HANDS and the DWA Independent Living Center, Saima did not just learn to live independently – she learned to lead. Today, she is stitching together not just clothes but dreams, confidence, and futures for dozens of other women.

CBID Network Sindh proudly celebrates Ms. Saima Baloch as a champion of inclusive vocational empowerment and a role model for girls with disabilities across Sindh and Balochistan.

For Website Publication – CBID Network Sindh

Category: Success Stories | Women with Disabilities | Vocational Empowerment | Independent Living

Keywords: CBID, Saima Baloch, HANDS-DWA ILC, DWA, Jacob Lines, Inclusive Livelihoods, Balochistan, Sindh



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