



From Confinement to Leadership: An Inspiring Story of Strength

Shaheena Ali Coordinator, Women's Wing, (DWA)

CBID Network PK Sindh – Success Story of Shaheena Ali

Ms. Shaheena Ali - A Beacon of Hope for Women with Disabilities

A Dauntless Advocate for Inclusion

A dauntless initiator and passionate advocate, Shaheena Ali symbolizes courage, determination, and lasting commitment to the empowerment and inclusion of women with disabilities. Her journey is a powerful testament to how Community-Based Inclusive Development (CBID) can transform lives when opportunity, accessibility, and support come together.

Early Life and Challenges

Hailing from the scenic region of Gilgit, Ms. Shaheena Ali contracted polio in early childhood. Due to inaccessible infrastructure and lack of support services, she was deprived of formal education and was confined to crawling for 22 years. Her parents feared she would remain homebound and unable to lead a meaningful life. Like thousands of women with disabilities (WWDs) in remote and underserved areas of Pakistan, she faced dual discrimination – as a woman and as a person with a disability – leading to isolation, home confinement, and lack of opportunities.

The Turning Point: Introduction to DWA

Her story took a transformative turn during a visit to Karachi in 2018, where she was introduced to the Disabled Welfare Association (DWA). Receiving her first-ever wheelchair at DWA opened a new chapter in her life. The sense of freedom she experienced was life-changing.

Inspired by the leadership of renowned disability rights advocate Sir Jawaid Rais, she joined DWA's Independent Living (IL) training program and pursued various skill-development courses. In 2019, she became part of DWA's administrative team. With DWA's support, including transport and professional grooming, she not only rebuilt her own life but also decided to dedicate it to others facing similar isolation and stigma.

Resuming Education and Becoming a Role Model

With newfound mobility and confidence, Shaheena resumed her long-desired education and is now preparing to enroll in a graduation program. She began offering peer and general counselling to WWDs, becoming a role model for those facing similar challenges. Her own lived experience became her greatest strength in connecting with and motivating other women.

Leading Change Across Sindh

Today, Ms. Shaheena Ali spearheads mobilization efforts across Karachi's urban slums and Sindh's rural regions, advocating for gender balance and inclusion. As a disability rights consultant and motivational speaker, she conducts sensitization sessions for public and private institutions. She coordinates all women-centric initiatives at DWA and has represented the organization at national and international forums.

A leader with the National Forum of Women with Disabilities (NFWWD), Shaheena Ali has influenced over 5,000 women, helping them reclaim their freedom, access services, and raise their voices for their rights. She has become the beacon of hope for other WWDs, who have been facing the same issues of home confinement and lack of support or opportunities.

Key Achievements

- Honored with the 2022 US Henry Viscardi Achievement Award for outstanding contributions to the empowerment of WWDs.
- Recipient of Pakistan's highest honor for WWDs, the Khatija-tul-Kubra Award (2021), recognizing exceptional leadership among WWDs.
- Represented Pakistan in the 2024 Asia-Pacific Disabled Peoples' Organization Assembly on UNCRPD in South Korea.
- Represented Pakistan at the 10th International Abilympics held in Metz, France (2023).

Vision for an Inclusive Pakistan

As she continues to challenge barriers and redefine possibilities, Shaheena envisions building a more inclusive Pakistan where women with disabilities are not only seen and heard but lead with dignity, confidence, and equal opportunity. Her unwavering commitment to advocacy, education, and empowerment makes her a transformative leader whose impact will inspire generations to come.

Why Her Story Matters for CBID Network PK Sindh

Shaheena Ali's story embodies the core principles of Community-Based Inclusive Development: empowerment, accessibility, participation, and leadership of persons with disabilities. Her journey from crawling for 22 years to leading a movement of 5,000+ women proves that when communities are inclusive, no one is left behind. CBID Network PK Sindh proudly celebrates her as a champion of inclusive development and a true leader of change.

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