



FINANCIAL SERVICES FOR ALL IN A POVERTY FREE &amp; GENDER EQUITABLE SOCIETY

## The Big Finale: Aakhri Station Closes with Appreciation

Kashf Foundation's first ever mini-series, Aakhri Station, came to a successful close on 27th March, 2018. The seven episode mini-series exposed the harsh reality of social taboos that continue to prevail in society and often rear their ugly head in the form of acid attacks, forced prostitution, HIV, marital rape and more. It also aimed to lift the veil and generate dialogue on topics like depression, mental health, plight of women in the rural areas, displacement due to war and women's economic disempowerment.

Throughout its course of seven weeks, the mini-series received an overwhelming response from the masses and media critics alike. Its theme and concept that women can be the heroes of their own stories was appreciated and valued for lending voice to women, inspiring them to change their lives and providing hope to those who lack agency or support.

Each episode is revolving around seven female protagonists inflicted with their own problems who coincidentally ride the same train compartment. Although unrelated and different from each other, they come to realize how similar their stories are despite the background differences. Each woman is on a journey of empowerment as a means to changing her tormenting past.

In order to carry the message forward and create debate around the patriarchal norms and practices that always put women below men, Kashf Foundation hosted a panel discussion with the cast and crew of Aakhri Station as part of its closing ceremony. Titled 'The Journey Ahead' the ceremony shed light upon the roles the actors played, plight of women and trans genders in Pakistan, explored prevalent social evils as well as highlighting solutions to address them and overall discussed the project's creative process.



*"As Pakistanis we need to realize that being a transgender is not a crime. At every step we have to fight for our rights as human beings and our voice needs to be heard. I'm really glad I got to be a part of Aakhri Station which created awareness regarding the protection and rights of trans genders."*

Lucky, a Transgender, in Aakhri Station.

## Kashf Foundation Newsletter



A COMPANY SET UP UNDER SECTION 42 OF THE COMPANIES ORDINANCE, 1984



"Kashf's media campaigns and social advocacy programs are powerful tools we harness to make a real difference in society. Ultimately, our television productions are a tribute to the diversity of Pakistan as it shows cases women from different strata's of society who come together and build a better tomorrow for themselves. Kashf also believes in raising awareness and translating key messages of its media campaigns through other multiple interventions."

Ms. Roshaneh Zafar, Managing Director  
Kashf Foundation



The purpose of Aakhri Station was to portray gender specific issues in a sensitive, realistic and relevant manner that allow audiences to question current social practices that lead to the extreme oppression of women. Most importantly, the seven stories provided a message of hope in terms of not delineating women as victims but as survivors and to become role models for women to emulate.



*"After my episode had aired, I had so many women and girls come to me and say 'your story is my story in reality.' It was then that I realized we've made an impact and instilled an empowering message."* **Malika Zafar**, a renowned Pakistani actress who played the character of Farzana, a working woman belonging to a middle-class background but is subjected to mental and physical abuse at the hands of her complexed husband. She tries to change herself, standing by him through years of emotional abuse but finally calls it quits after he hits her.

*"Mental health and depression is a global issue that needs to be addressed. It can happen to anyone and I have personally seen it up-close. Everyone is vulnerable which means we need to break the stigma attached to it. Aakhri Station helped in starting a conversation regarding mental health maintenance."* **Sanam Saeed**, the lead protagonist who suffers from depression but overcomes the problem with therapy and constant support from her husband.



*"Representing this abhorrent mindset where a male could disfigure a woman's face solely because of his ego and easily get away with it, evoked anger as well as empathy and compassion."* **Actor Salman Gohar** whose story represented the most violent form of assault in our society- acid attack.

*"It is easy to portray women as weak and vulnerable but I did not want to do that in Aakhri Station. The principal female characters show resilience, camaraderie and utmost strength in the face of adversity. It is reflecting the harsh realities of seven women in the hope that the aggressors may someday realize the damage they have caused."* **Amina Mufti**, Writer of Aakhri Station.

*"It was a privilege for me to direct Aakhri Station and help bring socially relevant issues to light that provoke thought and leave an impact in the hearts of the viewers. The drama I feel has succeeded in its primary goal of raising awareness rather than entertaining."* **Sarmad Khoosat**, Director of Aakhri Station.



Despite the struggles, the seven women of Aakhri Station have shown there is indeed light at the end of the tunnel. Every journey starts with a single step and all of them have taken the first step towards empowerment and transformation.

Kashf Foundation would like to acknowledge the support of the Australian Government in this project and the Foundation commits to projecting heinous social issues in future media campaigns until they are a matter of the past.

## The Way Forward

After the successful completion of Rehail's radio campaign which was aired on FM 101 across 5 cities, Kashf is adapting Aakhri Station for radio. This will be aired post July on national radio across Pakistan. The mini-series will be of 15 episodes on radio, each lasting 15 to 20 minutes long. Radio campaigns are a good medium to reach wider audiences which may not have access to a television, especially those in deep rural areas. It is also a way of changing mindsets in areas where these patriarchal norms and issues exist most.

Aakhri Station's message is universal and in order to tap the global audience, Kashf is subtitled the series in English language for its launch on Netflix. Currently, the series can be viewed on YouTube.

## Going Beyond Media Campaigns

Kashf Foundation has been at the forefront of advocating the rights of women and girls through its media campaigns but in order to effectively drive social change at the grass root level, Kashf reinforces these messages through its multiple social advocacy programs.



*"The interactive nature of the theatre program allows Kashf to effectively communicate the issue of child marriage to a large audience in a nuanced manner. People always remember what they see live in front of them."* Imtiaz Aslam, Senior Program Associate at Kashf.

Kashf has undertaken more than 150 performances across its network, sensitizing more than 15,000 participants on themes of child marriage and women empowerment.

### Ending this Detrimental Practice with Education

One solution for eliminating child marriage is to keep girls in school. As part of a broader, holistic effort, Kashf promotes girls' education and promotes gender equality to ensure that girls do not suffer disproportionately in impoverished communities.

For this purpose, Kashf Foundation is rigorously promoting education, advancing skills and job opportunities for adolescent girls and women in Interior Sindh (Makli, Tarayee, Rohoki and Sajawal) where this social evil is prevalent. In collaboration with Sindh Education Foundation, Kashf opened 4 literacy training centers in 2017 and has an active enrollment of 209 adults and 674 adolescents currently.

Kashf's literacy centers are providing these women and girls free of cost education, a better chance for safety, security and health, enabling them to make their own life choices and decisions.



*"Education empowers girls to change the world and I am determined to change mine. I lost my father due to no health facilities in my village. I want to become a doctor one day to help people in my community."* Shakila Mushtaq, 15, Sajawal Literacy Centre

### Rehai's Message on Child Marriage Communicated through Social Theatre Performances

Kashf's first television production, Rehai, focused primarily on the endemic problem of child marriage. According to recent statistics, 71% of early marriages in Pakistan take place in rural areas especially in Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa province with stats showing that 1 in 10 girls is already a mother or is pregnant between the ages of 15 and 19.

Progressive child marriage legislations have been enacted across the country but not implemented. Early/underage marriages are still considered a normal phenomenon in most parts of the country and limited data only presents a grim picture. Many cases go unreported and they are only increasing day by day.

Keeping this in mind, Kashf has performed theatre performances titled 'Shadi Meri Guriya Kee' to raise awareness and stimulate interactive dialogue with the audience. The performance has a hard hitting storyline- a young, 12 year old thinks she is celebrating her doll's wedding but in reality, she is the victim. Getting an old debt settled, her parents marry her to an old man. At the end of the performance, the audience is questioned regarding this misogynistic and patriarchal norm.

### Aiming for Gender Equality via Gender Trainings

Another key message of Rehai was empowering women through economic participation and capabilities. In order to ingrain these messages and facilitate a process of developing awareness and capacity on gender issues, Kashf imparts gender training to female clients' as well adult males and children in the household and community.

The gender trainings program is a key development intervention that aims to raise awareness on gender norms and improve behavior towards empowerment of women.

Through these trainings, Kashf has cumulatively sensitized over 187,100 participants across its network of 292 branches. These trainings are highly essential in enhancing women's status enabling them to take an equal place with men.



*"Kashf's Gender Training made me realize the importance of providing women equal opportunities in all spheres of life. They can excel tremendously in everything they do and I am very proud of my wife for taking care of the household and kids as well as running a successful business."* Nadeem Khawar, Kamoki.



## Udaari's Message Imparted through Child Sexual Abuse Trainings



*"These trainings have made great impact in changing misconceptions around the issue. We are now encouraging students to speak up about it by assuring them that there is nothing immoral or shameful about the topic. We teach them how to say 'NO'." Samrooz Iqbal, Ahmed Public School, Kasur*

Kashf has been at the forefront on creating and spreading awareness on child sexual abuse that is a grave social evil across Pakistan. Through its popular drama serial, Udaari, Kashf has led the way in educating masses on the topic, highlighting and breaking myths around this critical issue. An independent evaluation of the Udaari campaign revealed that an overwhelming majority (95%) of respondents felt that Udaari was based on reality, while 66% said that it had become easier to talk about child sexual abuse post the drama serial being aired.

Leveraging the impact of this television production, the Foundation engages low-cost private school owners and teachers in interactive sessions that inform them on best practices that help in children staying safe. These in person sessions are conducted by specialized Kashf trainers and dedicated to discussing a range of social and psychological issues associated with child sexual abuse. It also trains school personnel on how to tackle and identify problems associated with it, teaches them on the concept of strangers, negligence on part of the family members, equip children on how to defend themselves, provide an implementation plan for a safe school environment and aims to develop a relationship of trust and comfort between the student and teacher.

These sessions have been able to raise a conversation about child sexual abuse, translating the messages of Udaari in real life situations. Moreover, the Foundation is committed to eliminating this evil cancer from society and urges strong public

and government response in going after the abuser rather than the victim.

To date, 196 schools have participated with 850 teachers and school owners in attendance.

## Kashf Entrepreneurship Awards

Kashf Foundation hosts a ceremony each year known as 'Kashf Women Entrepreneurship Awards' which recognize the efforts of leading Kashf women entrepreneurs, celebrate their success and honor these women for their hard work and perseverance. This year, a total of 12 clients from different regions were recognized and awarded according to different award themes.

This award ceremony is a way of motivating our clients as well as our field staff, who have been working hard to attain success. The event was held on 10th May, 2018 at Nishat Hotel, Emporium Mall and Kashf's senior management was in attendance to celebrate the successes of its women entrepreneurs.

Among the 12 clients, a woman beneficiary by the name of Bali Rani has the most incredible and interesting life's journey. She is one of the first female rickshaw drivers hailing from the conservative region of Chakwal. Defying all odds and fighting for her freedom from an abusive husband, she took a divorce and brought her two daughters to her parent's home. After several jobs, she received training in Rickshaw driving and this started a cycle of sustainable income for Bali Rani and her family.

Today, she has broken the stereotype, entered into a male dominant profession and found financial independence with the help of Kashf Foundation.

Bali Rani's story is akin to the female characters represented in our media campaigns. Kashf profoundly believes in lending voice to these women as their struggles need to be heard and addressed.



*"People trust me with their children to pick and drop them from school. Females also feel very comfortable in riding with me. I'm so glad Kashf's staff gave me the courage to take this step in life and has supported me throughout." - Bali Rani, Rickshaw Driver, Chakwal.*

**Get Involved With Our Program - You can contribute and support a woman entrepreneur and her family**

**Gold Member**  
PKR 50,000/year

**Silver Member**  
PKR 35,000/year

**Bronze Member**  
PKR 25,000/year

**Evergreen Member**  
PKR 5,000/month

**For Contribution:**

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