



SUCCESS STORY

TRANSFORMING PAKISTANI WOMEN’S LIVES THROUGH ENERGY EDUCATION

Women play a key role in decision-making around energy use, (especially at the household and local levels) yet are not well represented in making energy decisions at managerial and regional/national policy levels. Despite making up 48 percent of the global labor force, women only account for 22 percent of the traditional energy sector workforce. According to the International Energy Agency, this number is even lower in management-level positions. In Pakistan, the lack of women in the energy sector is starker—women make up only 10 percent of the employed workforce in engineering and technology fields (USAID, 2015). Women’s involvement as leaders and policy makers is key to ensure an inclusive and functioning energy sector.

Through a collaboration between the U.S. Pakistan Women’s Council and USAID’s Power Sector Improvement Activity (PSIA), a pilot of the *Future of Women in Energy Scholars Program* was implemented in June 2022. This program seeks to increase the number of women in Pakistan’s energy sector by promoting

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education in energy studies, and also to inspire young women to participate in and lead on imperative energy issues in Pakistan.

As part of this program, 17 qualified Pakistani female undergraduate students pursuing their bachelor’s degrees in science or engineering participated in a two-week certificate program hosted by Texas A&M University in Doha, Qatar. They attended lectures on the full spectrum of the energy economy, developed an independent research project, had the opportunity to interact

with Qatar’s energy industry and business leaders, and participated in Qatari student life in Education City.



Herman Nasir, age 21, Future of Women in Energy Scholar.

Herman Nasir, a student at Pakistan’s National University of Sciences (NUST), and a climate change activist, was selected as one of the 17 participants. She not only studies environmental engineering, but also actively leads a Pakistani-based environmental education initiative called *Ductus Exemplø* (Latin for: *Lead by Example*). The organization incorporates environmentalism at the grassroots level for Pakistan’s youth by organizing seminars, environmental awareness sessions, and workshops in local schools and colleges across Islamabad/Rawalpindi.

Herman noted, “*When I came across the post for the Future of Women in Energy*



Future of Women in Energy Scholars at Pakistan’s Central Power Purchasing Agency – Guarantee (CPPA-G).

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Scholars Program, I knew that it would be a great opportunity for me to gain more knowledge and exposure in the technical aspects of not just Pakistan's energy sector but also Qatar's—one of the leaders in the petroleum industry. As a young woman with climate action close to my heart, I felt inspired by the female presenters from the energy sector who made me realize that all women have similar struggles regardless of their age, opportunities, or geography."

Another program participant, **Aqsa Amir**, is studying chemical engineering at NUST. Aqsa always had an interest in computers and pursued undergraduate studies in pre-engineering where she discovered her love for chemical engineering. Hoping to pursue a career in the field after obtaining the required higher-education qualifications from a reputable university in Pakistan, Aqsa aspires to work as a leading chemical engineer in Pakistan's energy sectors. She stated, "Growing up



Aqsa Amir, age 21, Future of Women in Energy Scholar.

with continuous load-shedding hampering our daily lives made me wonder—if more women were working in Pakistan's energy sector, then perhaps the planning and provisions of our basic needs, such as electricity, would have been better managed as we, as women, suffer the most when we do not have it."

In this regard, USAID's PSIA is supporting the Government of Pakistan's efforts to increase the financial viability, reliability, and affordability of the power system by making it more reliant on clean and renewable energy. USAID's PSIA initiatives over the next four years will help Pakistan increase its revenue and improve the financial and operational performance of distribution companies while modernizing its transmission and distribution grids for improved access to electricity and mobilizing private sector investments in clean energy projects.

Upon completion of the Qatar trainings, USAID's PSIA planned and coordinated the 17 *Future of Women in Energy* scholars' participation in a two-week program in Pakistan where they visited key public and private energy sector institutions. These sessions served as a networking platform for the program participants and provided them the opportunity to see themselves engaged in one of these institutions.

USAID's PSIA program continues to support Pakistani women play a leading role in the country's energy future. The *Future of Women in Energy Scholar Program* helps scholars like Aqsa Amir, Herman Nasir, and other promising Pakistani energy leaders gain in-depth understanding of the energy sector's economic and professional landscape. The program also highlights the importance of embracing renewable energy in addition to the current majority mix of fossil-based and nuclear energy.

Future of Women in Energy Scholars excited to reach Doha, Qatar.



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Mr. Nadeem Habib, Contracting Officer's Representative (Nhabib@usaid.gov)

Mr. Kashan Saeed, Chief of Party (Ksaeed@pk-psia.org)

Ms. Thayer Tomlinson, Communications Director (thayer@energyandsecurity.com)