INTERNATIONAL SDAY

Messages



Begum Samina Arif Alvi First Lady of Pakistan

ODAY we observe International Women Day and I wish to congratulate the women of the world in general and of Pakistan in particular who have played great role in the social and economic development of the country. On this day, we reaffirm our commitment towards the protection of women's rights and encourage them to actively participate in every sphere of life. The protection of the women and their rights is enjoined in our religion and also enshrined in the Constitution of Pakistan. The Constitution supports the equal status of women. Article-18 of the Constitution provides equal rights to women while Article-29 lays down the principle of non-discrimination against women

Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah was a strong advocate for the rights of women, who said that "no nation can rise to the height of glory unless our women are side-by-side with you". The women need to be empowered by providing equal rights and opportunities enabling them to work for the development of the country. The Government of Pakistan is committed to protecting the rights of women and, in this regard, has made a number of legislations. Pakistan is also making sincere efforts to implement its International obligations with regard to protection of women's rights.

On this particular occasion, I urge all segments of society, particularly Ulema and media, to play their role in protecting the rights of women. I am confident that with the support of media and Ulema we would be able to provide enabling environment to women of our country. I once again compliment the women and assure them of full support for their betterment and protection of their rights. I would ask women to stand up, exercise their rights and use their voice to support under-privileged women.

Dr. Rehana Ahmed Chairperson, Greenstar

HIS is a day to raise awareness that society is better when women are given respect and opportunities to

reach their full potential. Creating an enabling environment for women through education, family planning, reproductive health care and economic empowerment is not only a matter of human rights; it is central to reducing poverty and achieving sustainable development.

On this day, the world unites to appreciate women's courage and achievements. Awards are given to the women who had the courage to cross hurdles and excel in social, economic, cultural, and other domains.Their recognition as the 'pride of our society' will inspire the next generation. Even those who do not get awards, are contributing to all walks of life, and deserve our appreciation. In keeping with the theme of the day '# ChooseToChallenge' we ask women to reflect on what they would like to challenge.

For my part I would like to challenge men to develop strong and vibrant alliances with women and champion their cause. ■

Ms. Tahira Raza Member BoD, Greenstar

W HILE leading the First Women Bank, I was challenged for being a woman president in the banking industry. It

was my conviction and vision to challenge that mindset that I was chosen to lead and set an example in the banking sector. If a woman can manage her household with perfection so can manage a professional space as well! It all happened because I believed in myself and I know every woman has it in her as well.

I congratulate you all on International Women's Day and pray that every woman achieves her dreams. Let's raise our hand and Choose to Challenge Inequality, Violence, and Domestic Abuse. Let's choose to fly high and make Pakistan a proud nation!. ■

Dr. Syed Azizur Rab CEO, Greenstar

THE ability to control their own fertility gives women the ability to control their own futures - to con-

tinue their education, begin and advance in careers, choose suitable partners, and decide when to have children and how large to make their families. Giving women the agency to make the choices that are best for them has wide-reaching impacts on their families and their communities. Greenstar is on a mission to ensure every woman and girl has that agency.

We do this through access to self-care, social entrepreneurial approaches and through a trained network of private sector service providers contributing in Government's goal of universal coverage. We ask our medical fraternity to join hands with us, we ask the Government to support and recognize us and we ask the women and girls to exercise their rights to choices by reaching out to our helpline and by going to a nearby trained Sabz Sitara service provider

We are committed to serve the women in Pakistan how and when she prefers and we believe in her power to make that choice.

Ms. Aliya lqbal-Naqvi Member BoD, Greenstar

OMEN'S Day is a conscious reflection of the struggles and challenges we encounter today and continue

to overcome. In this fight, I would like to emphasise the central role that education has played in our pivotal understanding of the significance of our autonomous being. It leads way to more advocacy, in striving for a secure and equitable future for not just us, but all members of society.

I applaud the effort and determination with which we choose to reach new heights in materializMrs. Mahtab Akbar Rashdi Member BoD, Greenstar

T'S an honor for me to celebrate, collaborate, and commemorate this year's women's day as I appreciate

the women of Pakistan for their continuous efforts and contributions to the socio-economic development of the country

On this day, we take a pledge to encourage women on standing for themselves, practice their rights and use their voice to be free to make informed decisions for themselves. Women must understand their standing in society and legal rights to challenge mediocrity and shine in every walk of life. Above everything, women must choose to believe in themselves and feel stronger and challange inequality.

Ms. Ayesha Leghari Country Director, Population Services International, Pakiatan

W HEN we speak of women in leadership,

we only restrict the concept to workplaces. Whereas, I believe, every woman leads in her own capacity-be it in leading her children into becoming instrumental members of society or in leading her family to contentment and comfort, she leads even when she's not on the front.

It is, however, both a product of hardwork and fortune that I get to lead from the front in my workplace, PSI Pakistan - an organization led by a woman and working for the reproductive health of the women. And also, one that is blessed by the support of our male allies.

Our country's great founder once said "No nation can ever be worthy of its existence that cannot take its women along with the men. No struggle can ever succeed without women participating side by side with men." Today, I also want to say: reproductive rights can never be championed in Pakistan, if our men are not leading this cause side by side with us.

Message from President ICAP

Mr. Iftikhar Taj Mian President, ICAP

N the occasion of International Women's Day 2021, we should join in appreciating and highlighting the instrumental contributions of women in all spheres of work and life. It is a propitious day

to celebrate the role of women in society, whilst also an opportunity to demand greater gender equality.

At ICAP, our female members, students, employ ees, and stakeholders play a very crucial role which resonates with the impact the Institute is creating across the work it does. Its diversity is as vast and valuable as the sectors in which it works, and its commitment for the betterment of the future for women in the CA profession is second to none. On this day we must thoughtfully challenge the status quo and create avenues which promote gender equality and women participation in society on a much-needed larger scale for our world to be at its best.

Greenstar social marketing empowers Pakistani women & girls with choices in reproductive health

HE basic unit of the nation is a family. Women are at the epicenter of a family. Hence true development of society cannot be achieved until women are empowered with information and resources to freely make choices about their life.

Pakistan is the sixth most populous country in the world with an average annual growth rate of 2.40 and a current population of 207.8 million. Approximately 12,000 women die during pregnancy every year — the fourth-highest number globally.

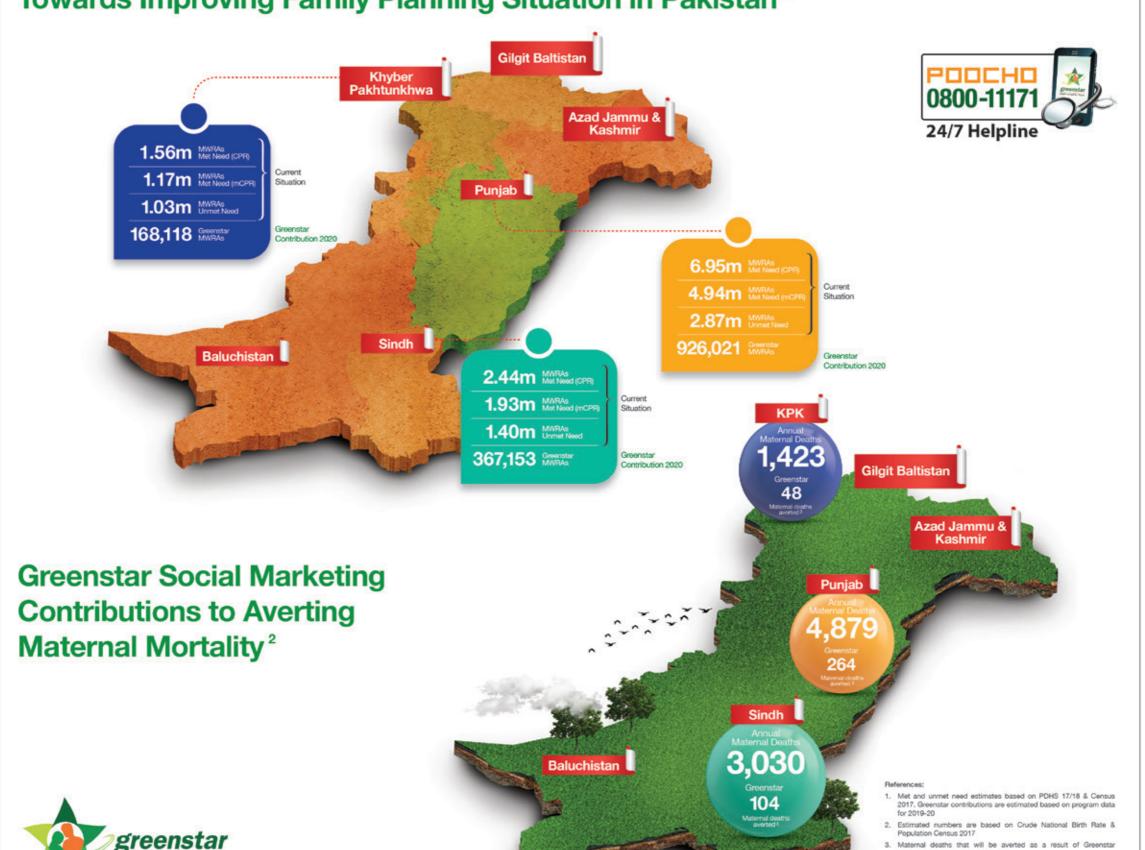
Family planning is an investment worth doing. It enables women and girls to complete their education, it ensures equality and equal opportunity, and it helps entire communities and nations thrive.

Greenstar ensures access to Family Planning information services and products through its large social franchise network "Sabz Sitara", a chain of around 35,000 partner pharmacies and chemists, thriving 140,000 kiryana stores, community health workers, the only 24/7 helpline Poocho 080011171. Additionally Greenstar works with youth advocates, hakeems, homeopaths and informal health practitioners who ensure an enabling environment at community level for women. ■

Maternal deaths that will be averted as a result of Greensta

contributions made during 2019-20







Women in leadership

HE CA Women Committee of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Pakistan (ICAP) celebrates the contributions of CA women across six decades, who have created a valuable legacy by joining the coveted CA profession. They made the Institute proud through achieving leadership positions across all industries and continents, by being at the forefront of the accounting and auditing professions, and by having the courage to start entrepreneurial ventures.

Pay disparity, lack of women-centric facilities, flexible working, limited growth opportunities and more are some

ICAP training regulations include a specific provision of one-year leave to facilitate women trainee students which has paved the way for greater women's participation in the profession.

of the main challenges women face in their professional careers in Pakistan.

Despite these challenges, our CA women have achieved success in their professional careers through their fine I the future. handling of work-life balance issues which has not only made them role models in their professional circles but has also inspired women from other professions.

Chartered Accountancy is considered a valuable qualification. However, very few women choose to enter this pro- i ning are brought up in such a way that fession owing to some general misconceptions. Easy employment opportunities, fast paced career progression, progressing to leadership roles in early 30s are some of the very few benefits of this prestigious qualification.

Moreover, the practising license provides women the opportunity to work with flexibility. ICAP training regula- i male members of society. The reason tions include a specific provision of one-year leave to facil- I is that their parents feel they don't itate women trainee students which has paved the way for greater women's participation in the profession.

In addition, ICAP encourages women to join the profession by providing scholarship programmes for academically bright and financially deserving students, along with a strong career counselling and support network.

CA Women Committee endeavours to enhance women's participation in CA profession and retention in the workforce through some of its key initiatives such as:

- CA Girls Nurturing Programme • CA Women Entrepreneurship Programme
- Women on Board Programme
- Capacity-building measures

And continues to take positive strides towards the betterment of the CA profession.

CA Women Committee is one of the committees of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Pakistan — a professional self-regulatory body established under the Chartered Accountants Ordinance, 1961. The committee's core objectives are to enhance women's participation in CA $\,$ $\,$ profession, take capacity-building initiatives for leadership development, and to undertake necessary measures for retention of CA women in the workforce.

Women's rights and needs

ANA lives in a remote area of the city. She is happy and lives a normal life with her siblings. She wakes up early and helps her brothers get ready for school. She happily helps mum pack their lunch boxes and water bottles and hands them while they go out running to their school.

This is when Sana sees Rida and Shumaila, the girls from her neighbourhood, dressed in school uniforms and going to school with their father. They seem so happy carrying their water bottles and school bags. They are almost the same age as Sana.

Sana doesn't understand the contrast because she never saw any girl in her family going to school. She asks her father, who tells her that, as a girl, she is supposed to help her mother in household chores. Education, in her family, is only the right of her brothers who will get employed one day and start supporting the family with their earnings; the neighbourhood girls are just wasting the time and money of their parents, they will be the one disrespecting their parents in

Sana becomes satisfied with the answer. The sad fact is, in the families where education is considered only for boys, girls from the very beginthey think whatever is being done with them is right and this is the way life is for women.

They don't know that they are equal to their brothers and other have to study because, after all, all they have to do is take care of the house and cook.

But there are girls who love to study and dream of going to school, having books, school bag and uniform. Their family doesn't show any signs of support to them. They have to suppress their wishes, kill their dreams and live a subdued life ever after.

Women of Third World countries are denied many of their basic rights, like education, proper healthcare, recreation, play, free will and self-esteem. Men, on the other hand, enjoy basic rights generally, and are able to make life's choices that suit them at an individual level from a very early age.

Apart from the suppression of women by denying almost of all their rights, the overall treatment of women by society in general goes against women's rights. Little effort is

made to nurture and develop the personality traits, skills, talents, etc., of a female from a young age. It is forgotten that a female is a human being first and then a female. And as humans, they deserve as much rights as men have.

This mindset is also reflected in the behaviour of boys towards girls. For instance, boys often tell their female classmates, "You are a girl, you can't do this!" Or in a family, comments like, "Your brothers need it more than you do," are often heard. And these hurt the self-esteem of girls and hamper their personality growth.

International women's day, celebrated on March 8 every year, is an occasion to understand and address all these issues and problems that women face. It is also a day celebrated to honour all the women of the world, with a resolve to find a solution to their problems.

Children have to understand these issues from an early age and play positive roles. They are the leaders of tomorrow. They have the power to change the situation for themselves and for the women around them if

women and striving to make them equal to men in all respects forms the basis of any healthy and progressive society. It is about time that women are given their due rights and all the oppression against them stops.

How we can play our part

- Help the females in your house in domestic chores. Even if it is in the form of taking care of your younger siblings, or keeping an eye on household servants or maids, any form of help would be welcomed by your mother, sister or grandmother.
- Spend more time with the females of your house. Talk and listen to them, this is where they would feel that you love and care for them. Very often, women are emotionally unsatisfied. They wish that those around them understand them better. By talking to them, you can understand the things that are left unsaid by
- Show them complete respect, because every individual is different. Be sensitive to their emotions and feelings. Show empathy to the type of personality they have and the position they are in.
- Communicate to them that you appreciate everything they do in your life. Appreciation goes a long way in making women happy. It gives them motivation and energy to keep doing all the good



they understand and address the issues. Therefore, like other forms of education, the idea of gender equality and appreciation of women's rights should take its roots in their minds from an early age.

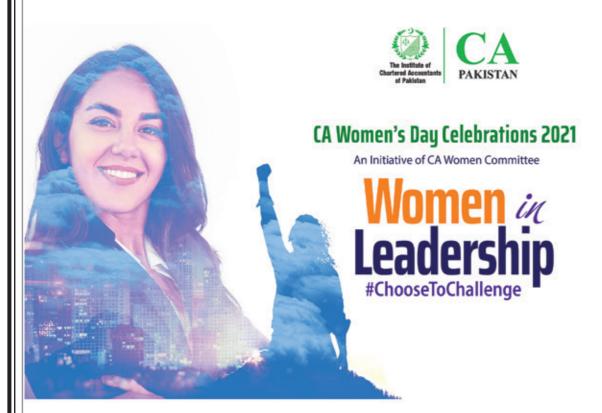
The power to make a difference lies with all of us. The bottom line (worth repeating) is the realisation that there is no difference between men and women. Therefore, there should be no social values, which could deny women their basic rights as human beings.

things they do.

 Apologise for your past mistakes and resolve not to repeat them. By apologising, you are sending a message that you aim to make things better for them.

• Understand and promote the idea that both male and female, are equals. There is no such healthy, progressive and normal life activity that is reserved just for men or boys. ■

The article was first published in Dawn, Young World, on March 3, 2018.



CA WOMEN COMMITTEE Institute of Chartered Accountants of Pakistan endeavors to support diversity and inclusion by contributing in progression of women and economy of Pakistan











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Gender inequalities

HE coronavirus pandemic participation. Societal expectations is anti-feminist. This seems that evidence suggests that men are worse affected by Covid-19. But in terms of broader social and economic considerations, the pandemic globally is expected to set women back decades. Pakistan's deeply entrenched misogyny means we're unlikely to do enough, if anything at all, to stop this backward

The pandemic affects women at multiple levels, starting with significant health impacts. Health workers

globally means women will be likelier to give up or be fired from jobs as they take on additional caring responsibilities for out-of-school children, the elderly and sick along with mounting housework. Sadly, in patriarchal societies such as ours, this trend will not even be perceived as problematic.

It doesn't help that women's current positioning within the global economy will force them to opt out faster than men. The ILO reports that globally women represent 40pc of total employment, but make up 57pc of the cadre of part-time workers; 69pc of low earners

globally, 220 million women are in sectors vulnerable to massive job

This does not mean that women's economic contribution is expendable. Citigroup has also estimated \$1 trillion could be lost from global growth as a result of women falling out of the workforce. The cost will be palpable in places like Pakistan, where the labour underutilisation rate for women pre-pandemic was already as high as 80pc, and where the IMF has estimated GDP would increase by one-third if women's labour participation equalled that of men.

The world — especially emerging economies like Pakistan - cannot afford the inevitable gender inequalities and pay gap that will result from



- 70 per cent of whom worldwide are women - are among the most vulnerable to being infected by Covid-19. But the health toll for women extends beyond the coronavirus itself. Previous health crises, such as the Ebola epidemic, have shown that resources are typically diverted to lifesaving health measures from women's health and reproductive services.

The UN has already highlighted that Covid-19 will disrupt its programmes providing family planning support and countering female genital mutilation and child marriage, resulting in millions of unwanted pregnancies, higher maternal mortality rates for years to come, and millions more girls being cut.

The Covid-19 crisis has also put the spotlight on the frequency and intensity of domestic violence around the world — the UN Population Fund in April 2020 estimated a 20pc increase in violence during a threemonth lockdown period.

One can only imagine how much higher this figure would be if accounting for permissive societal attitudes towards domestic violence in countries like Pakistan.

The immediate effect of the virus on women will be in terms of workforce

Casual references to gender-based homicide and sexual violence indicate the low stature of women in our society.

are women. In South Asia, over 80pc of women who don't work in agriculture are in informal employment, including domestic work and piece-rate manufacturing jobs. These are the workers most likely to lose their jobs and fail to qualify for government job protection

Women in formal employment also dominate in sectors worst-hit by the pandemic: air travel, tourism, retail, hospitality, catering. Citigroup last month (May 2020) estimated that

this pandemic. That's why development agencies are urging governments to take a gender-sensitive approach to managing the pandemic and its economic consequences. This means focussing on saving jobs in the health, education and hospitality sectors (that employ women) and not only in male-intensive sectors such as construction.

Governments are also being asked to extend support to informal, part-time and seasonal workers, who are mostly women, and revisit maternity, flexible working, and sick pay policies, which could help retain women in employment. This is asking a lot in a country where the policymakers and stakeholders routinely use sexist and threatening language to address their peers.

Casual references to gender-based homicide and sexual violence seem acceptable in our public sphere, and indicate the low stature of women in our society. The socioeconomic ravages of the pandemic layered over entrenched patriarchy threaten to designate women as a permanent under-class. Will the government take action to prevent this? ■

The article was first published in Dawn on June 1, 2020.