



**“IF A WOMAN DOES A JOB, SHE  
CAN SUPPORT HER FAMILY AS  
WELL”**

Insights from community discussions in Pakistan about changing gender roles in society through economic development

EMPOWER  
**YOUTH**  
FOR WORK



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**OXFAM**

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# SUMMARY

The Empower Youth for Work (EYW) programme in Pakistan works on young women and men's social and economic empowerment and, for this to materialize, focuses on promoting an enabling environment. The vision inspiring this project is that of a world in which fluid gender roles give equal chances for women and men, young and old, to become socially and economically empowered. However, in Pakistan's conservative society, restrictive gender roles can often act as a barrier to young women's social and economic empowerment.

To gain an insight into the current environment for young women and men, Oxfam in Pakistan and partners facilitated group discussions with participants of the EYW programme in Sindh. Workshop participants included youth and adults<sup>1</sup>, Hindus and Muslims, men and women, and the discussions explored the socially constructed rules of behaviour for men and women regarding economic empowerment. Special attention was given to the balance between unpaid and paid work for men and women, and gender-based violence (GBV) in relation to socio-economic empowerment.

The workshop findings highlight the strongly gendered division of roles and responsibilities in Pakistani families. Women typically do unpaid care work, while men are involved in paid work. This creates a power imbalance between men and women with regards to economic empowerment. However, we also found that there are some circumstances in which women are allowed more freedom to develop economic activities. Examples of women's economic activities that are gaining acceptance in society include teaching at girls' schools, home-based work, and supporting their family in the fields at harvest time.

An important realization emerging from the discussions is that the development of economic activities among young women adds another burden to their already heavy workload of household chores. There are some signs of men and boys taking over some tasks, but this is still very marginal and is often presented as a favour in particular situations, such as when a woman is overburdened, pregnant, disabled or ill.

Furthermore, if women work outside of the house, the burden of unpaid care and domestic work is often transferred only to their daughters and not their sons, limiting girls' educational opportunities as domestic work reduces their time to study. GBV is also hampering women's ability to develop socio-economic activities. Domestic violence and violence in the public sphere disempower women, destroy their self-esteem and thus undermine their ability to become economically empowered.

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<sup>1</sup> The 'adult' group consisted of parents of youth and teachers of youth.

Drawing on these findings, EYW in Pakistan will adopt the following recommendations for programme improvement:

- The double burden of paid and unpaid work for women was already on the radar of the EYW programme in Pakistan. We now want to focus more on discussing the balance between creating economic opportunities and managing the domestic burden for women. As such, we want to aim for equal participation of men and women in unpaid- and paid work. The findings from the workshops provide useful guidance on the content of facilitate future community discussions on this topic.
- Women do not have equal economic opportunities, and are limited to certain activities. This can inform our programming (e.g. creating more employment in these areas), but there is also a need to change and expand perceptions about the economic activities that women can undertake. The EYW programme wants to break taboos around 'appropriate' work for women and shed light on the importance of women taking on other types of economic activities.
- Older women play an important role in deciding what education and economic opportunities girls can enjoy. Hence the EYW team in Pakistan should involve older women in its community influencing plan.
- Boys are comparatively open to the idea of sharing unpaid care and household work, especially in urban areas. Young male community mobilizers of EYW can play an important role by setting a good example and sensitizing communities to the need to share unpaid care and domestic work.
- Women in rural areas normally don't speak about harassment and other forms of GBV. Workshop participants suggested that more collective support should be provided for victims to give them the confidence to speak out. One opportunity to do this would be to strengthen women's groups and work closely with women's rights organizations in Jamshoro. A challenge that partners foresee with this approach is that these organizations are mostly active in urban areas, whereas the programme targets rural youth. Nevertheless, this joint collaboration will strengthen EYW interventions.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

Pakistani society is slowly changing. Girls increasingly have the chance to receive an education and begin dreaming of pursuing a career. Yet the aspirations of young girls are held in check by the restrictive gender roles that society sets for them. To understand these roles and how they influence girls' ambitions and behaviour, we need to consider the following: what are the family's expectations with regards to the life choices of young women and men? What does society see as appropriate choices for women and men's social and economic development?

Gender roles set by society are based on two types of collectively held beliefs: 1) beliefs about what most others in the group actually do (typical behaviour) and 2) beliefs about what others in the group expect one to do (appropriate behaviour). Gender roles determine whether or not a woman has any opportunity to forge her own pathway to empowerment and to contribute to the empowerment of her community.<sup>1</sup> Research on gender roles shows how social rules of behaviour curtail young women's ability to break the cycle of poverty and access the resources they need to become empowered. Such discriminatory rules set by society are a barrier to women's social and economic empowerment – confining women's abilities and restricting their opportunities.

Pakistan's population of 203 million<sup>2</sup> is 64% young people, of whom 29% are aged between 15 and 29 years.<sup>3</sup> While Pakistan's young people in general face restrictions to socio-economic participation, young women face the biggest obstacles due to their responsibilities in the household, the narrow range of jobs that are deemed acceptable for women, and mobility issues, including the threat of gender-based violence (GBV). This has contributed to pushing Pakistan to second-to-last place on UNESCO's Gender Parity Index.<sup>4</sup> There is an urgent need to explore and address gender roles that prevent young people, and in particular young women, from becoming economically empowered.

The Empower Youth for Work programme (EYW) in Pakistan focuses on promoting an enabling environment for young women's and men's social<sup>5</sup> and economic empowerment. To gain insights into the current gender roles for young men and women and how these influence their opportunities to become socially and economically empowered, the programme held five workshops with different groups of young people and adults<sup>2</sup> in Jamshoro district, Sindh province (see Box 1).

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<sup>2</sup> The 'adult' group consisted of parents of youth and teachers of youth.

*Box 1: Characteristics of workshop participants*

Workshop 1	Workshop 2	Workshop 3	Workshop 4	Workshop 5
Rural Hindu youth	Rural Hindu older adults	Rural Muslim older adults	Rural Muslim older adults	Semi-urban RELIGION? youth
Gender mixed (50% men and 50% women)				
Literate	Illiterate	Literate	Illiterate	Literate
Men mainly self-employed, women mainly housewives and engaged in farming activities				University students

Different age groups were included in the workshops in order to understand intergenerational influences in sustaining gender roles. The 'adult' group existed of parents of youth and teachers of youth. Participants were separated by age and religion but mixed by gender, to ensure a complete picture was captured of the Jamshoro communities. As there is only one group per religious background per generation, we cannot infer differences based on religious background from the results.

Each workshop took place over two days, using interactive exercises of the 'social norms diagnostic tool' as developed by Oxfam's Knowledge Hub on Women's Economic Empowerment. The exercises include activities such as brainstorming, completing matrices, prioritization and ratings, and roleplays. The groups were mixed by gender according to a 50/50 ratio, though during the workshop exercises the participants were separated by gender so men and women could formulate their viewpoints before sharing these and interacting in the plenary discussions.

The workshops were facilitated by Oxfam in Pakistan staff supported by locally trained youth mobilizers. This adhered to the principle of meaningful youth participation that is practised in all MEAL activities of the EYW programme.

This report consolidates the results of the five workshops. The results were validated and further discussed and analysed in a reflection workshop with youth mobilizers, partner staff and Oxfam staff. The report focuses on identifying Pakistani societal rules of behaviour in general, as well as assessing how gender roles, tasks and responsibilities have changed over recent decades. Special attention is given to the balance between unpaid and paid work for men and women, and to GBV in relation to socio-economic empowerment. In the conclusion, we link the findings to the EYW programme's influencing and activity plan in order to use the results to design better campaigns and activities, and to target the right audiences.

# 1. FROM TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES TO SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

## 2.1 RESPECT IS EARNED BY COMPLYING WITH GENDER ROLES

In patriarchal societies like Pakistan, complying with gender roles is essential to earn respect; according to workshop participants, it shows that a person is a good man or woman, son or daughter. People who comply with gender roles will generally have a good reputation in society, which is very important at all stages of life (e.g. it affects who a person can marry, what opportunities they enjoy, whether people support them in times of trouble). Respect is something that is earned, but it is also something given naturally according to your role and position in the family. For example, participants stated that everyone should respect elderly people (men and women) and religious leaders in their society.

Women earn respect first and foremost by accepting all decisions made by their husband and in-laws. Secondly, their skills in household chores (housekeeping, cooking, caring for children) make them respectable wives or daughters; good cooking skills and raising children well are seen as particularly important. Thirdly, women earn respect by showing good faith and practising religion seriously. This comes with a strict dress code (preferably a full gown in Islamic communities) and a duty to stay within the house or family compound. In summary, women earn respect by being obedient and focusing on improving the situation of people around them, particularly their husband and children (see Box 2 for quotes illustrating this point).

Women's roles, such as doing household chores and caring for children, are valued as

### Box 2. Important sayings in Pakistan about women's roles

*"Women have natural abilities in caring for children, especially for infants."*

*"It is a woman's work to prepare a meal for her family and children."*

*"When women work in the home, they earn more respect."*

difficult and important to family life. In the workshops, it became clear that a woman's role as a wife or a mother always takes priority over her individual achievements. She is in a supportive role for the people around her, e.g. her husband, children and in-laws. She earns respect by creating the conditions for her family to prosper and through their achievements of her male family members, e.g. sons who get good grades in school or husbands who are successful in business.

Girls are expected to live up to the expectations of their parents and 'behave decently'. Decent behaviour for girls is seen as being obedient, calm, caring, hard-working and quiet. Furthermore, girls

need to support their mother in household chores in order to be well prepared for their purpose of being a good wife. A woman may also pursue some education in order to become an interesting conversation partner to her husband and to help future sons with their homework.

A (young) woman may get involved in paid work, but this would not necessarily improve her status or exempt her from chores and/or care tasks. **“Women may do paid work if they are allowed and if they wish to.”** For men, women doing paid work is seen as an emergency solution when a family is short of resources, rather than a desirable state. However, for a woman, contributing to her family’s income grants her a say in financial decision making. Heads of household may downplay the contribution of women’s income, by suggesting that women can spend their earnings as they please. Hence, working women have greater flexibility to invest in their children’s education and healthcare, or to visit their family more often.

Men earn respect through providing financial stability and safety for the family. **“Men have the responsibility to take care of the family.”** Men should take financial responsibility for their family and give moral guidance. Hence for men, the pressure to get a paid job is much higher than it is for women. This may lead to negative consequences for a man, e.g. stigmatization, if he does not manage to provide for his family. Furthermore, men do all tasks outside the house and/or village, and they must accompany women when travelling to family gatherings or work. As such, they have a protective function. They also need to ensure the house is well built and maintained. Participants made references to men’s caring qualities; in one workshop, it was stated that a man should be caring and loving towards his wife and children, and that he should respect his wife’s ambitions and support her in realizing them. There were many examples of men who take their children out into the village or playground, showing that men also take on caring tasks to relieve their wife. However, men’s caring qualities were seen as secondary to their responsibilities as the head of the household.

**Table 1: How women and men earn respect**

Women earn respect by	Men earn respect by
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Respecting father/husband/in-laws</li> <li>- Being skilled in chores</li> <li>- Practising religion seriously</li> <li>- Achievements of husband and children</li> <li>- Prioritizing family over individual achievements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Providing for the family</li> <li>- Protecting the family</li> <li>- Having a responsible attitude</li> </ul>

Boys are expected to do well in school and to behave maturely and responsibly. They are also expected to help their mother with heavier tasks, such as fetching water, both as a favour and a sign of respect.

Women and men are never freed from their gender roles. When women become elderly, they do lighter tasks and coordinate the running of the household with their daughters-in-law and sons. Persons with disabilities and those with chronic illness do tasks within their ability. According to workshop participants, rich people, religious and village leaders, and female business owners are more likely to be able to pay for a maid to do their household chores, to relieve women’s workload



and/or enable them to pursue education or economic activities. However, there are certain routine tasks for women, such as cooking and raising children, that can never be delegated to other people.

## 2.2 ROUTINE TASKS AS THE FOUNDATION OF GENDER ROLES

In all the workshops, participants made clear distinctions between the routine tasks that are assigned to men and those assigned to women. These routine tasks form the foundation of gender roles, are learned from a young age and are kept in place by family members, village elders and societal influencers (e.g. religious leaders, local politicians, celebrities). Routine tasks for girls and women include household chores, such as fetching water, collecting firewood, cooking, cleaning, taking care of children and the sick, etc. Men and boys are more involved in activities outside of the house, such as working in the fields, taking care of livestock, earning an income through a profession or shop keeping, purchasing groceries and taking children to school. The table shows the most common tasks performed by women and men. Shared tasks are highlighted in bold.

**Table 2: Routine tasks for women and men**

Women do chores	Men do work outside
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Taking care of sick people</li> <li>2. Making flour</li> <li>3. Cooking</li> <li>4. Sewing</li> <li>5. Cleaning</li> <li><b>6. Taking care of guests</b></li> <li><b>7. Fetching water, if close to the house</b></li> <li><b>8. Livestock rearing</b></li> <li><b>9. Picking up/dropping kids off at school</b></li> <li>10. Taking care of children</li> <li>11. Washing clothes</li> <li>12. Washing dishes</li> <li>13. Ironing clothes</li> <li><b>14. Working in the field</b></li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Bringing home groceries</li> <li><b>2. Dropping off/picking up kids from school</b></li> <li><b>3. Working in field</b></li> <li>4. Repairing/constructing the house</li> <li><b>5. Taking care of guests</b></li> <li><b>6. Livestock rearing</b></li> <li>7. Taking care of sick family members</li> <li><b>8. Fetching water, if farther away or when a tanker brings the water</b></li> <li>9. Looking after kids</li> </ol>
<p>NB. Chores in bold were deemed appropriate for both women and men.</p>	

In general, women have a higher number of routine tasks (14) than men (9), some of which are shared with their male counterparts (as highlighted in bold) and some of which are designated as ‘women’s tasks’. Participants in all the discussions were very clear about which chores are women’s tasks, while there was much more variation in terms of what are considered men’s tasks. As one of the female participants highlighted, *“We can do the jobs men do, but men cannot do our jobs.”* While this makes it seem that women have more options than men in terms of the roles available to them, in practice it means that women have to spend much more time than men on chores before even having the option of pursuing other activities. In general, the workshop participants acknowledged that the tasks women do are more physically demanding than those done by men, and often require more working hours.

The workshop participants were open to the idea of shifting some tasks to boys and men to give women some rest. Sons in particular were identified as potential helpers to reduce their mothers’ and sisters’ workload. However, mothers tend to avoid asking them for support, out fear that their sons will be ridiculed by their peers and grandmothers. Husbands may take a role in cooking to support their

wives, learning certain signature dishes. In addition, if his wife is ill or disabled, it is acceptable for a man to take the initiative to cook. A male participant in one of the workshops explained: *“My wife is often unwell, so I am used to cooking for my family.”* The concept of men using their initiative to help, as expressed above, is very important; it is not that men *should* take over chores around meal preparation, rather that they *may* do so if they choose, whereas for women it is a moral obligation to perform these tasks. Hence, women are dependent on their husband’s willingness to help out – it is not a moral obligation for him. As women earn respect on the basis of supporting others, for many women giving away these tasks for personal ‘gain’ does not feel right. Thus, the clear gendered division of labour is sometimes not seen as disempowering, but rather as empowering for both women and men. Boys and men supporting women is presented as a favour in particular situations, e.g. when a woman is overburdened, pregnant, disabled or ill.

## 2.3 GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

Gender roles are learned from a young age; girls practise household chores and care work under the watchful eye of their mothers, while mothers are steered by their mother-in-law. Girls are supposed to take care of younger siblings and support their mother in doing household chores. This does not change when socio-economic status rises, since the value of a woman is seen to lie in her capabilities as a good housewife. Hence, women’s tasks are passed on from generation to generation, through women who mutually support each other. This is considered an important value in Sindh.

However, the discussions also made clear that things are slowly changing among the younger generations, at least within the areas covered by the project. *“Nowadays, boys have started to do the jobs of girls or women; this was not done in the past. In the same way, girls have started to do the jobs of boys and men.”* Participants felt that technical advancements could underlie this shifting of responsibility for tasks, but also the prevalence of conservative views which restrict women’s mobility. For example, fetching water is traditionally one of the main tasks for women, but if water is now delivered by a tank lorry rather than being fetched from a well as before, it is deemed more appropriate for men to handle this. At the same time, conservative views mean that in some families, women are no longer allowed to leave their compound to fetch water or take their children to school, so men take on these tasks.

Another change is that girls’ education is gaining more recognition in society. *“Through education, men have realized that educated girls are beneficial for their family.”* The majority of people involved in the discussions felt that it is now seen as a moral obligation of the father to ensure his daughters are educated. Technical advancements and improved education were generally valued by participants, and young women in urban areas are asking for more freedom as their education level rises, potentially leading to more sharing of unpaid caring and domestic work. One participant from the semi-urban youth workshop explained that women now drive cars and earn money for their families with a job outside the house. They say that semi-urban girls are *“finished with the boring environment of living continuously within their compound; they want to go out and about”*. In rural youth workshops, participants feel it is an important privilege for a woman to be able to open a tuck shop at her home, but said that this is not generally accepted.

**Table 3: Reasons given for shifts in the sharing of care and domestic tasks**

Technical advancement	Girls' education	Conservative views
Water supply by tank lorry makes fetching water more 'technical', hence men/boys get involved	Young women are demanding more freedom (in urban areas girls want to go out, drive a car; in rural areas girls want to open a tuck shop in their compound)	Women are no longer allowed to leave the compound to fetch water or bring children to school

The findings from the workshops show how changes tend to start in urban areas. A more conservative trend is visible in some villages that try to resist the urban trend towards more freedom and independence for women, and participants of the rural workshop for older adults were wary about the younger generation's demands for more freedom. Although they see the value of education, they also see girls' independence as "dangerous" for their safety and respectability in society. As girls are expected to be obedient and innocent, they are not expected to know about the risks in their environment. As one participant pointed out: *"When girls go out of the house, they need to know the difference between good and bad. Normally, girls don't know these differences."*

It was felt that independence could entail going out alone; most participants of the workshops viewed this as a very bad habit for girls. As women earn respect on the basis of their obedience towards elderly people and men, independence is seen as showing a lack of respect. Rural adult participants feel that the morality of urban areas is declining, and want to prevent their villages from suffering the same fate. Problems like addiction and gambling among young men in urban areas are seen as signifiers of this unwanted change. However, in the validation workshop, Oxfam's partners stated that change is also visible in rural areas. Despite the conservative views expressed in the rural discussion groups, there are also families who support young women to pursue an education and get a job. The EYW programme tries to dissociate independence from its negative connotations. EYW team members see that there is growing awareness of women's rights in Pakistan and related government policies that are in the process of implementation.

## 2.4 EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES FOR WOMEN: AN ADDITIONAL BURDEN?

As noted above, girls' education has become more important in recent decades in Pakistan. Previously, people thought that women did not need formal education to fulfil their gender roles. Today it is more accepted that girls should receive an education since in future it will help them in taking care of their children and the sick/elderly, and will increase their ability to support their children's education. *"If girls are educated, they can read the expiry date of medicines."* Education is thus seen as helping women to fulfil traditional gender roles. Some participants said this change is informed by higher levels of education of parents. However, expectations about academic performance increases the burden for young girls. They are expected to perform well in school in addition to helping their mothers with household chores. If their mothers have a paid job, this domestic burden often increases for daughters, as mothers avoid asking their sons to help with household chores. This suggests that mothers who have experienced higher levels of education do

not necessarily treat their children in a more gender-equitable way. This results in a situation where girls have less time for homework and leisure compared to boys.

With increased levels of education, women also start to develop economic activities. Workshop participants stated that in some cases, economic activities for women are becoming more accepted.

***“If a woman does a job, she can support her family as well.”*** Income-generating activities for women are considered promising, since this can lift families out of poverty and make a real change in their livelihood. Especially in semi-urban areas, where the cost of living has increased, women's financial contributions to the household are highly appreciated. The circumstances under which economic activities for women are seen as acceptable are explored below.

In the conservative society of Sindh, only a few paid activities are open to women. In the workshops, the most frequently mentioned employment types suitable for women were teaching, having a home-based job (e.g. tuck shop or handicrafts), or helping out with the harvest in family fields. A teaching job is seen as acceptable for a woman due to the emphasis on girls' education. ***“A teaching job in the village or nearby village is acceptable for a woman. Other jobs are restricted to men only.”*** The workshop participants described it as a moral obligation to educate girls. In Pakistani culture, girls and boys should be separated at school; hence there is a need for female teachers. Women only need to teach half days, which leaves enough time for household chores. Regarding women's mobility, the family of the female teacher is supposed to accompany her to her work.

Tuck shops or other home-based economic activities are also regarded as appropriate for women because the work is easily combined with household chores and caring responsibilities, and there are none of the risks associated with working outside of the home. Husbands need to ensure that the shop supplies are available. With the opening of home-based tuck shops, women also get more freedom to do their own shopping, since they can buy from other women. This is especially the case for purchasing basic groceries in the neighbourhood. Last but not least, it was seen as acceptable for women to support their husbands in the fields during harvest time. This increases the productivity of families in terms of agricultural produce that can be sold at the market. However, participants of the validation workshop stated that women do not get the benefit of paid employment when working in the fields, as payment for produce is always made to a male family member.

In all of the cases described above, it was acknowledged that the economic activity would come on top of women's household responsibilities (see Box 3 on balancing unpaid care and paid work). Increased economic opportunities for women is thus far resulting in a double burden of paid and unpaid work. *"In our culture, women are playing a twofold role in domestic and professional life, and have heavier tasks than men. [...] Women have to be capable of managing roles to prevent negligence."* Women's domestic burden can be relieved by daughters, sons and husbands taking over some of the chores. However, this is difficult for women to accept, as they see it as their moral obligation to take care of household members and satisfy their needs. As such, a woman may appreciate it if someone helps her out, but she will probably see this as a 'gift' and not as a 'given'.

### Box 3. Balancing unpaid care work and paid work

- Most work is gender specific; according to workshop participants, there are only a few tasks that both men and women can do.
- Women are involved in more unpaid work than men.
- 'Good' women are expected to do more household work than men, and some women believe that this is their responsibility.
- Work that is considered most important are income-related activities, cooking and bringing up children.
- Most income-generating activities are considered highly skilled, and are male-dominated. Cooking and taking care of children are unpaid 'female' tasks that are also considered highly skilled.

Furthermore, women do not always like to be supported with their care tasks and chores, as they see the ability to do these tasks as an essential quality of a good woman. Women thus sometimes see the gendered division of labour as empowering. Well-intentioned interventions by NGOs that disrupt these roles could therefore potentially have the unintended negative consequence of disempowering women.

## 2.5 GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

GBV was discussed in relation to the family sphere and the public sphere. All workshop participants had a negative view of domestic violence, although they stated that it happened in their community. Men who hit their wives are seen as less respectable and are talked about disapprovingly. In the reflection workshop, partners also raised the problem of child abuse; this happens often in their experience, especially when young girls and boys break prescribed gender roles. For example, some participants talked about cases of girls being hit for being too vocal in a conversation. The community will not intervene very quickly in cases of GBV, since domestic violence is seen as a family affair. Furthermore, some groups stated that although the community sometimes intervenes by addressing the problem with the husband, he often falls back into old habits after a short period. Hence, some participants think the victim should speak up, believing she will then get support from village elders. However, this rarely happens, since it is not common in this culture for a wife to speak against her husband. At the validation workshop, partner staff also stated that they have rarely seen victims of

domestic violence speak up – and if they do, the victims are often blamed. Some stated that many women see domestic violence as an act of love.

Harassment (e.g. calling names, inappropriate suggestions, inappropriate physical contact) in public places is seen as an urban issue. The rural discussion groups in particular had very negative views about harassment. In a rural village, the village leader will impose moral and financial penalties on the perpetrator. Hence, rural participants believed that violence in the public sphere does not happen in their communities. However, in the validation workshop, Oxfam partners stated that while harassment is more controlled in rural areas, for example by village leaders and through peer pressure, it still happens, but in less visible ways. Traditional gender roles do not allow women to leave their homes without a male companion; this puts women who do go around the village alone or with other women at greater risk of being harassed.

Participants in the semi-urban youth discussion confirmed that women and girls regularly experience harassment in the public sphere. This is experienced mainly as men giving them “weird looks” or calling them names. This discourages women from pursuing a job outside the house. As a solution, participants said that the victim should speak up immediately. One participant in the semi-urban group said that she and her friends start shouting at men who behave inappropriately. This is difficult for them, as it goes against the obedient and calm nature that girls are taught to adopt from a young age. Furthermore, victims may be reluctant to speak up within their families, as they are afraid that opportunities (e.g. to work or move freely outside the home) will be taken away from them.

In the validation workshop, participants added that GBV is not solely aimed at women. Young boys and men also face abuse, which contributes to a cycle of violence.

## 2. CONCLUSION AND PROGRAMME RESPONSE

The Empower Youth for Work (EYW) programme in Pakistan focuses on promoting an enabling environment for young women and men's social and economic empowerment. To gain an insight into the current environment for young women and men, this report explores gender roles regarding economic empowerment, as viewed by the participants of five discussion groups. Special attention was given to the following issues: earning respect in relation to gender roles, routine tasks as carried out by women and/or men, the balance between paid and unpaid work for men and women, and GBV in relation to women's socio-economic empowerment.

Roles and responsibilities in Pakistani families are very divided by gender, particularly in rural areas. There are only a few tasks that are seen as acceptable for both women and men to do. In this division of labour, women typically do unpaid care work, while men are involved in paid work. Furthermore, there is a belief that men cannot do the tasks that women do. This creates a power imbalance between men and women with regards to economic empowerment, as women have much more work to do before they are able to pursue paid activities. Furthermore, it makes it more difficult to support young women into paid work, since this is not in line with society's expectations for their future. The EYW programme in Pakistan is aware of this challenge and therefore has developed a comprehensive community influencing plan to create positive change in the mindsets of people living in rural areas.

In some circumstances, women are allowed more freedom to pursue certain economic activities. Teaching at girls' schools, home-based economic activities, and supporting their families in the fields at harvest time are economic activities for women that are gaining approval in society. The EYW programme in Pakistan uses this insight to engage young girls in economic activities which are deemed respectable within their communities. Alongside this, the programme is working to promote an enabling environment for girls, increasing their opportunities to work in non-traditional roles. It emerged from the community discussions that there is a need to broaden perceptions around 'suitable' economic activities for women.

We also found that the development of economic activities for young women adds to their already heavy burden of unpaid care and domestic work. There are some signs of men and boys taking over some chores, but this is still very marginal and based on goodwill. Furthermore, women are not always open to accepting help with household chores, as they see domestic and care work as an essential part of their womanhood and as their moral obligation as a mother or wife. EYW in Pakistan influences young boys to share household tasks and raises awareness regarding the importance of sharing care responsibilities. On the basis of the workshop findings, we can confirm that young boys are potential positive influencers in communities, as they are increasingly supporting their mothers. At the same time, the EYW programme should be aware that the strict gendered roles in communities

are often seen as empowering. Well-intentioned interventions by NGOs that disrupt these norms could therefore potentially have the unintended negative consequence of disempowering women.

GBV is a barrier to women developing socio-economic activities. Domestic violence and violence in the public sphere disempower women and undermine their opportunities for economic empowerment. All participants in the workshops are strongly against these forms of violence, though community members seem afraid to intervene in what they see as a private matter in a relationship, or harassment in the public sphere. The EYW programme in Pakistan raises awareness on this issue and supports young women to speak up against perpetrators. Workshop participants added that GBV is not solely aimed at women; young boys and men also face abuse, which contributes to a cycle of violence. The EYW programme in Pakistan aims to explore GBV further with support from the government, for example in collaboration with Women Development Department, Punjab Commission on Status of Women, and Sindh Commission on Status of Women. A mobile app for reporting GBV, developed by the Punjab government, is currently being updated under the EYW programme. This will be followed by training for law enforcement agencies, to enable them to respond appropriately to GBV incidents.

## **LESSONS FOR EYW PROGRAMME IMPROVEMENT**

The workshops were carried out to help inform campaign design and programme activities, and to help ensure we target the right audiences in the EYW programme in Pakistan. Many aspects of the findings confirm our approach. Some areas for learning have been translated into concrete recommendations for programme improvement, and will inform our influencing and activity plan as follows:

- The double burden of paid and unpaid work for women was already on the radar of the EYW programme in Pakistan. We now want to focus more on discussing the balance between creating economic opportunities and managing the domestic burden for women. As such, we want to aim for equal participation of men and women in unpaid- and paid work. The findings from the workshops provide useful guidance on the content of facilitate future community discussions on this topic.
- Women do not have equal economic opportunities, and are limited to certain activities. This can inform our programming (e.g. creating more employment in these areas), but there is also a need to change and expand perceptions about the economic activities that women can undertake. The EYW programme wants to break taboos around 'appropriate' work for women and shed light on the importance of women taking on other types of economic activities.
- Older women play an important role in deciding what education and economic opportunities girls can enjoy. Hence the EYW team in Pakistan should involve older women in its community influencing plan.
- Boys are comparatively open to the idea of sharing unpaid care and household work, especially in urban areas. Young male community mobilizers of EYW can play an important role by setting a good example and sensitizing communities to the need to share unpaid care and domestic work.



- Women in rural areas normally don't speak about harassment and other forms of GBV. Workshop participants suggested that more collective support should be provided for victims to give them the confidence to speak out. One opportunity to do this would be to strengthen women's groups and work closely with women's rights organizations in Jamshoro. A challenge that partners foresee with this approach is that these organizations are mostly active in urban areas, whereas the programme targets rural youth. Nevertheless, this joint collaboration will strengthen EYW interventions.

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<sup>1</sup> Economic empowerment for women occurs when women enjoy their rights to control and benefit from resources, assets, income and their own time, and when they have the ability to manage risk and improve their economic status and wellbeing. Oxfam (2017). *Oxfam's Conceptual Framework on Women's Economic Empowerment*.

<https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620269/gt-framework-womens-economic-empowerment-180118-en.pdf?sequence=7>

<sup>2</sup> As estimated on 1 January 2019

<sup>3</sup> UNDP (2018). *Pakistan National Human Development Report 2017: Unleashing the potential of a Young Pakistan*. Retrieved on 3 June 2019 from

<http://www.pk.undp.org/content/pakistan/en/home/library/human-development-reports/PKNHDR.html>

<sup>4</sup> World Economic Forum (2018). *Global Gender Gap Report 2018*. Retrieved on 3 June 2019 from [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2018.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2018.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Social empowerment occurs when women have the autonomy and self-belief to make changes in their own lives, including having the agency and power to organize and influence decision making, while enjoying equal rights to men and freedom from violence. Oxfam (2017). *Oxfam's Conceptual Framework on Women's Economic Empowerment*.

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