

# Shana Bashana

## Side by side for gender equality in Pakistan's infrastructure sector



### Empowering Women in Pakistan's Infrastructure Sector:

In a country where patriarchal norms loom large, Pakistan faces a profound challenge in achieving gender parity, especially in sectors like construction, where female participation remains scarce. In this context, the collaborative initiative *Shana Bashana* ("side by side" in Urdu), led by GIZ implemented Global Project Education - Build4Skills, Siemens Pakistan, and The Hunar Foundation (a vocational school), emerges as a vital force driving gender equality within the country's infrastructure sector. Focus of the commitment is to improve gender-equitable access to practice-oriented vocational training in the infrastructure sector. Jointly, the stakeholders developed a training program, specifically for girls and women - an integral part of which is an internship at Siemens in Karachi.

### Strong Partnerships for Sustainable Change:

The journey toward gender equality in the infrastructure sector necessitates collaboration. *Shana Bashana's* success owes much to the concerted efforts of Global Project Education - Build4Skills, Siemens Pakistan, The Hunar Foundation, and governmental bodies. Together, they've propelled progress through shared goals and a resolute commitment to inclusivity.

The Global Project Education - Build4Skills supports vocational education and training (TVET) worldwide. Following the German success model of dual vocational training the proximity to the companies is key. Trainees learn in a real-life setting and get prepared for the challenges of the world of work. Build4Skills uses the potential of infrastructure projects for practical learning by cooperating with Development Banks that are the main investor in large infrastructure programs. The common goal is to use these construction sites as training sites. Build4Skills essentially deploys TVET students to construction sites and trains in-company instructors on didactics, occupational safety and gender sensitivity.



Siemens has established a long-term commitment to Pakistan as a production location and is primarily active there in the areas of transmission systems and energy distribution. Following a meeting between BM Dr Gerd Müller and Joe Kaeser in 2018, then CEO of Siemens AG, the company expressed interest in cooperating with Build4Skills in Pakistan. As a result, the joint initiative *Shana Bashana* has been established in 2020.

The Hunar Foundation aims to empower and enable the marginalized youth of Pakistan with vocational and technical skills. As a fast-developing economy, Pakistan sees a growing requirement for skilled manpower. Hence, there was a compelling need to launch a skills development platform that would impart skills to the marginalized youth of Pakistan. Since its establishment in 2008 The Hunar Foundation became Pakistan's largest private-sector NPO in the TVET category, committed to its goal of training and certifying more than 100,000 students annually by 2025-2026.

### **The initiative's significance in a Male-Dominated Society:**

Pakistan's deeply entrenched male-dominated society presents formidable barriers to women's entry into industries like construction. Women make up only 20% of Pakistan's labour force, and according to the Labour Force Survey 2017-2018, only 0.2% of them work in the construction sector. Gender bias begins at the application stage and permeates the working environment. The *Shana Bashana* Initiative emerges as a beacon of hope, challenging societal norms and offering a pathway for women to venture into traditionally male-dominated professions.

### **Tangible Impact and Expansion Plans:**

Rarely do women participate in male-dominated infrastructure trades in Pakistan. *Shana Bashana's* primary objective is to defy this trend and invests in gender-responsive interventions, identifying the different needs of and circumstances for women in the infrastructure sector and takes them fully into account in the project design. Through meticulously designed specialized training programs, the initiative pioneers the entry of girls and women into professional roles within the infrastructure sector.

The initiative's achievements are tangible, marked by the successful training of 40 young women in partnership with The Hunar Foundation. Now in its fourth phase, *Shana Bashana* aims to engage an additional 40 young women in an intensive 6-month training program. This expansion, focusing on AutoCAD, Logistics & Supply Chain trades, aims to empower more women with industry-relevant skills, aiming to bridge the gender gap in these fields. Testimonials of stakeholders in the early stages of the *Shana Bashana* Initiative can be found [here](#).

### **Reshaping Norms through Feminist Principles:**

Aligned with the German federal government's feminist core principles, *Shana Bashana* addresses structural barriers hindering women's participation in male-dominated sectors. By fostering inclusive and intersectional approaches, the initiative seeks transformative outcomes, challenging the status quo in Pakistan's vocational landscape.

Overcoming societal biases and creating an environment conducive to women's participation remains a formidable challenge. However, *Shana Bashana's* success factors rest in strategic partnerships, targeted training programs, and an unwavering dedication to fostering enduring progress in the face of these obstacles.

### **Paving the Way for Change:**

*Shana Bashana's* expansion across regions and trades in Pakistan's vocational landscape holds promise. By not only aiming to bridge the gender gap but also inspiring increased female participation, the initiative sets a precedent for broader societal change, fostering a more inclusive workforce dynamic.

The *Shana Bashana* Initiative serves as a testament to the transformative power of collaborative efforts, gender-sensitive approaches, and strategic interventions. In challenging the norms of a male-dominated society, it paves the way for an inclusive and diverse workforce within Pakistan's infrastructure sector, heralding a new era of opportunities for women in traditionally male-dominated fields.

