



REACH OUT TO ASIA TEAMS UP WITH CARE INTERNATIONAL PAKISTAN TO EMPOWER WOMEN THROUGH EDUCATION

Doha, Qatar, 31 August 2016 – Reach Out To Asia's (ROTA) work with CARE International Pakistan is helping children and young women gain better access to quality primary and secondary school education as, while literacy rates among girls in Pakistan are improving, a large gender gap in literacy persists. Indeed, according to the *Gender Equality Report on Pakistan*, even though there have been substantial improvements in both boys' and girls' primary school net enrolment since 2003, the net enrolment of girls at primary level remains low at 67% compared to 81% for boys.

Girls in Pakistan are often not permitted to attend school unless they have a female teacher, but there are fewer female teachers than male teachers, particularly in rural areas. In addition, absenteeism among female teachers is higher than among male teachers. As a result, in a government school system where schools for boys and girls are segregated, and where only women teach girls and men teach boys, higher absentee rates among female teachers can lead to limited access to schooling for girls more so than for boys. This occurrence can exacerbate existing gender inequalities in primary school access.

According to *USAID*, the percentage of female primary teachers who are trained to teach in Pakistan is 76% compared to 91% of male primary teachers; while female teachers in private schools are paid 30% less than their male counterparts. Without access to relevant quality education and with poor literacy rates persisting, the ambitions of many women to learn and build a better life for themselves and their families is a constant struggle. Twenty-eight year-old Seema, who comes from an impoverished family in the Swat District, is one such woman whose dreams of pursuing a higher education were all but stifled, not only by traditional expectations, but also by a lack of financial means.

ROTA, in collaboration with CARE's local partner, the Initiative for Development & Empowerment Axis (IDEA), has helped to establish an education project designed to enable young women faced with cultural barriers and financial constraints to further their studies. Launched in January 2015, the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) is helping young women, like Seema, to complete higher education and pursue a career.

Before Seema was presented with the opportunity to further her studies, she was a volunteer teacher tutoring young girls in Pakistan's Swat Valley who were severely limited by a lack of educational means. When Seema began her volunteer teacher role, a primary school is all that existed.



Seema had always aspired to receive an education which she knew would enable her to secure a better future for herself and her family. With her father being a low income worker, and her brother suffering a disability, Seema was determined to fight against the odds to ease the burdens on her family.

The Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) launched in Government Girls Primary Schools (GGPS), and began hiring teachers for the project. It was at this time that Seema applied for the ALP head teacher position; a role she successfully secured. Seema subsequently underwent 18 days of training to build her capacity as a teacher.

“I am very grateful to ROTA, CARE Pakistan and IDEA for helping me realize my dreams and seeing the potential in me. Although I faced many barriers which prevented me from furthering my education for a long time, I remained hopeful that I would one day be able to realize my goals.”

For Seema, being able to make a valuable contribution to her local community and having the ability to inspire young women in her village to follow in her footsteps is the most rewarding part of her role as a teacher. Where she had once just about lost all hope of being able to pursue her dreams, Seema is now a beacon of hope for young women in her village, encouraging them to never lose sight of their aspirations.

“My job as a teacher has been empowering to both me and the young women I teach. It is an honor to be able to inspire these young people, who are faced with many obstacles, to pursue their dreams.”

ROTA is a member of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF). Through this program, ROTA, CARE Pakistan and IDEA are providing better education and training facilities, access to information and support services, while empowering young women in remote regions to become active leaders in their community and overcome the many limiting factors they are faced with.

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About ROTA

Reach Out To Asia is a non-profit organization launched in December 2005 in Doha, Qatar, by Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani. Operating under the auspices of the Qatar Foundation, ROTA is committed to providing high quality and relevant primary and secondary education, encouraging relationships among communities, creating safe learning environments and restoring education in crisis affected areas across Asia and



around the world. ROTA envisions a world where all young people have access to the education they need in order for them to realise their full potential and shape the development of their communities.

For more information about Reach Out To Asia, please visit: www.reachouttoasia.org

About Qatar Foundation

Qatar Foundation – Unlocking Human Potential

Qatar Foundation for Education, Science, and Community Development (QF) is a private, non-profit organization that is supporting Qatar on its journey from carbon economy to knowledge economy by unlocking human potential for the benefit of not only Qatar but the world. Qatar Foundation was co-founded in 1995 by His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Father Amir, and Chairperson Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser.

QF's work encompasses education, research and community development. World-class universities are brought to Qatar to help create an education sector in which young people can develop the attitudes and skills required for a knowledge economy. At the same time, QF builds Qatar's innovation and technology capacity by developing and commercializing solutions through key sciences. The Foundation also works to foster a progressive society while enhancing cultural life, protecting Qatar's heritage and addressing immediate social needs in the community.

For a complete list of QF's initiatives and projects, visit <http://www.qf.org.qa>