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The Imperative: Women at the Centre of Human Rights, Climate & Prosperity

- Women comprise ~50% of Pakistan's population, yet their participation in the formal labour force remains very low. [*Dawn+2*](#)/[*ICAP+2*](#)
- The female labour-force participation rate hovers around 21 – 24% (2020-21) in Pakistan. [*iips.com.pk+2*](#)/[*iips.com.pk+2*](#)
- Only ~22% of women are in the official labour force; much of their work is informal/unpaid and therefore invisible. [*Dawn+2*](#)/[*Pakistan Today+2*](#)
- Women occupy **very few** senior leadership or formal enterprise roles: for example, only ~4.2% in senior & middle management according to one policy brief. [*iips.com.pk+1*](#)
- The gender gap in economic participation and opportunity is among the widest in the world for Pakistan. [*The Express Tribune+1*](#)
- **Why this matters:**
 - With only ~1 in 4 women formally engaged in the economy, Pakistan is **forgoing tremendous human capital and productivity**.
 - Empowering women economically is not just a social good — it's a **strategic imperative** for national prosperity, sustainable development and water-climate resilience.
- **Call to Action:**
 - If we shift from ~22% to closer to 45% female labour force participation (a goal referenced in the literature) the **growth potential is huge**. [*ICAP+1*](#)
 - We must create **pathways** — not only for entry into the workforce, but for leadership, decent livelihoods, enterprise and market access — especially in water-sensitive sectors, climate-resilient livelihoods and community resilience.

Why Pathways for Women Lead to Leadership, Economic Empowerment and Livelihoods

Leadership:

- Despite women's representation at ~50% of the population, their leadership in both public and private sectors is minimal (< 5% in senior/middle management). iips.com.pk+1
- Investing in leadership development of women creates role-models, builds voice and decision-making and shifts community norms.

Economic Empowerment and Livelihoods:

- Low participation in formal employment → women disproportionately in informal, unprotected, home-based work. iips.com.pk+1
- The barriers — skill deficits, mobility restrictions, lack of financial access, norms — are well documented. UN Women+1
- In water-sensitive and climate-sensitive livelihoods (agriculture, water-management, crafts, enterprise), there is enormous potential for women to lead and generate sustainable incomes.

Why Pathways for Women Lead to Leadership, Economic Empowerment and Livelihoods

Livelihood Pathways- How we convert potential into real outcomes:

- Skills training, enterprise development, market link-ups, value-chain focus, leadership mentoring.
- Women's empowerment in economic roles also enhances **water security, resilience** and community prosperity: when women earn and lead, they invest in family, community, health and water systems.

Call to Action:

- We must move from *"women as beneficiaries"* to *"women as leaders, entrepreneurs, decision-makers"*.
- Pathways must be **deliberately built** (not assumed): resources, networks, access, enabling policy + targeted programming.
- For the theme of this session — *Water for Human Rights & Prosperity* — we must emphasise that women's economic pathways are **essential linkages** between water/rights/climate & shared prosperity.

Introducing **WOMEN & CO** by Pathfinder International

A New Platform for Women's Leadership and Economic Empowerment to address some of the gender-equity challenges being faced in Pakistan

Women and Co recently launched by Pathfinder International

WOMEN & CO
BY PATHFINDER

Focus: Advancing women's leadership and entrepreneurship in health, climate action, and innovation.

Key Objectives:

- Build networks of women leaders
- Create opportunities for mentorship and access to finance
- Strengthen community-led enterprises for inclusive growth



Creating Livelihood Pathways through the SURMI Project

From Climate Resilience to Economic Independence

- Implemented in collaboration with community-based organizations and private sector partners.
- Focus on *climate-resilient livelihoods* for rural women across multiple districts.
- Empowerment through *skills, enterprise, and market linkages*.



District Highlights

Building Local Economies through Women's Leadership

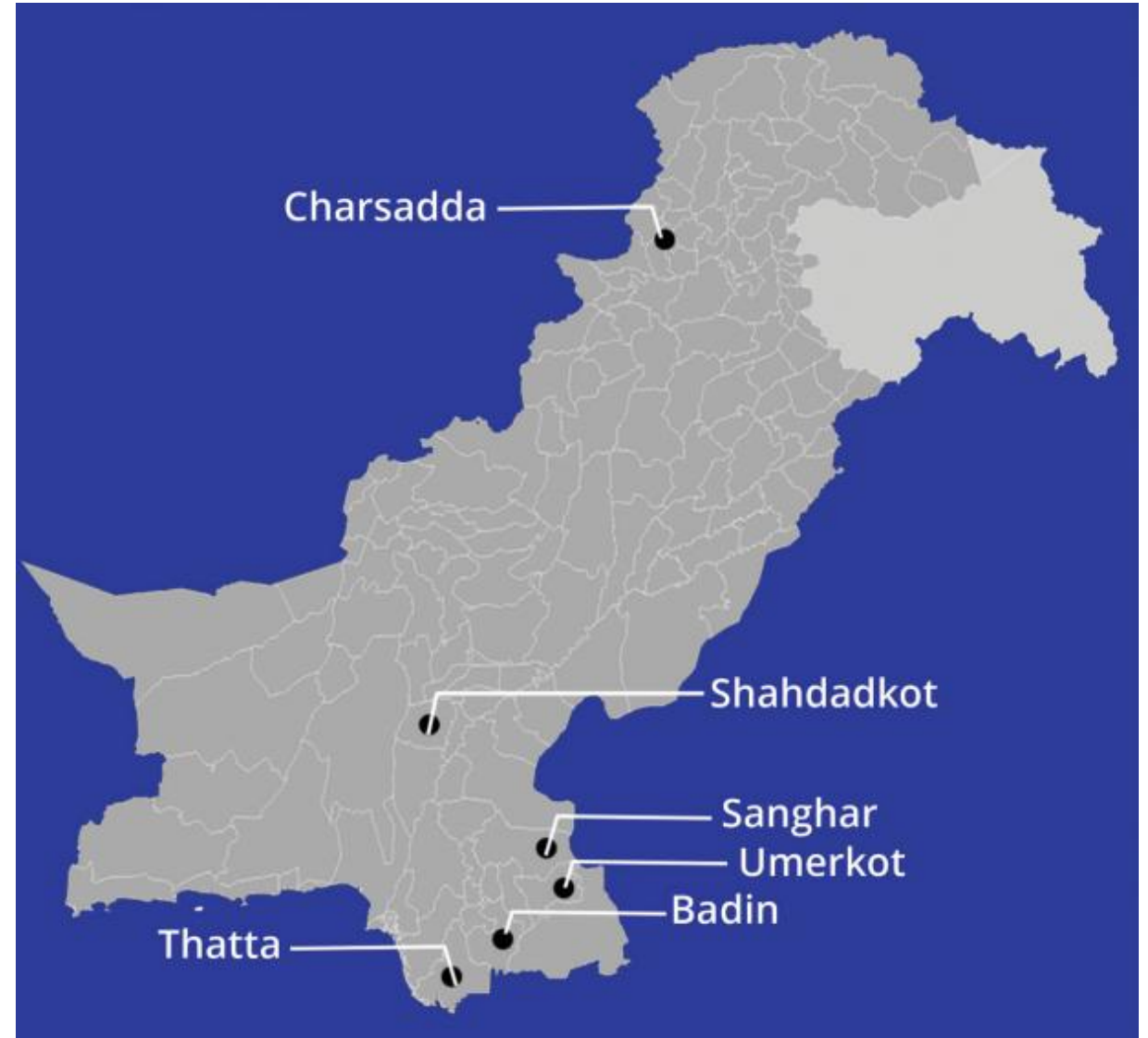
Thatta: 5 livelihood centers, Business Development School, 200 Climate Champions trained (sewing, embroidery, design, entrepreneurship).

Badin: Kitchen gardening and marketing of surplus produce.

Sanghar: Eco-friendly crafts — mat weaving, chair making.

Umerkot: Relli (patchwork) training and startup grants.

Charsadda: Beautician skills and home-based enterprises.



Strategic Partnerships and Impact

Linking Rural Women to National Platforms

Two Climate Champions from Thatta joined FPCCI Standing Committee through Karachi Women Chamber — first-time representation at national policy level.

“Bridging Expo 2025” in Badin: 20+ stalls, 6 districts, new partnerships with chambers of commerce & government departments.

Result: Tangible market access and visibility for rural artisans.



Case Study: Hamida – From Trainee to Trainer

Storyline: (video)

- 30-year-old mother from Badin trained in tailoring, embroidery, business management.
- Now manages her own training center and mentors 20 women.
- Illustrates transformation from *beneficiary* to *change agent*.



The Path Forward

Scaling Women's Economic Leadership for Climate-Resilient Futures

- Expand *Women and Co* network to rural districts.
- Deepen market linkages and digital inclusion for women entrepreneurs.
- Integrate water, health, and livelihoods interventions for sustainable prosperity.



Closing Message

Invest in Women — Secure Our Shared Future

“When women lead, communities thrive.”





THANK YOU!