



The Association  
of Commonwealth  
Universities



# The Financial Literacy Project



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# MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

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**Ms. Rahima Tahir** is the **Manager of Linkages and Outreach** at Ziauddin University, where she supports the institution's efforts to build connections with national and international partners. With a focus on collaboration, Ms. Tahir works to strengthen research, innovation, and community engagement across a range of initiatives.

She has contributed to projects that address gender equity, women's empowerment, and climate resilience. Her work includes supporting financial literacy programs for women in underserved urban communities and promoting inclusive approaches to development through academic and outreach activities.



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This project is driven by the belief that financial literacy is not just a skill, it is a pathway to empowerment. By equipping women in urban slums with the knowledge to manage their finances, we aim to help them build stronger, more resilient futures for themselves and their families. Together, we are taking a small but meaningful step toward closing the gender gap and fostering inclusive economic growth.

**Ms. Rahima Tahir**  
**Principal Investigator**

# MESSAGE FROM THE TRAINERS



It is a privilege to contribute as a trainer to this vital initiative aimed at strengthening women's financial literacy in our urban slums. I believe that when we equip women with the knowledge and confidence to manage their finances, we lay the foundation for stronger families, resilient communities, and a more inclusive economy. This project reflects the power of collaboration and the promise of education to drive lasting change. I look forward to working alongside our partners and participants as we take this important step toward economic empowerment and gender equity.

**Dr. Zulfiqar Ali Umrani**  
**Director ORIC, Ziauddin University**



Being part of this project as both a trainer and researcher has been a deeply rewarding experience. Working directly with women in underserved communities has reaffirmed my belief that financial literacy is not just about numbers, it is about dignity, independence, and opportunity. I am inspired by the resilience and determination of the participants, and I am confident that the knowledge they gain here will help them take meaningful steps toward shaping brighter futures for themselves and their families. I am grateful to be part of this journey of empowerment and change.

**Ms. Bushra Fahim**  
**Research Assistant**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Financial Literacy Project, led by Ziauddin University in collaboration with the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA), was conceived to address the critical gap in financial literacy among women in the underserved urban communities of Karachi, specifically Shirin Jinnah Colony. This community, home to over 500,000 residents, faces entrenched socio-economic challenges, including restricted access to formal financial systems, cultural barriers to women's economic participation, and minimal financial education.

The project's primary objective was to enhance women's understanding of budgeting, saving, credit management, and entrepreneurship. Through community-based, culturally sensitive training and mentorship, 25 women were empowered with practical financial knowledge, business skills, and connections to formal financial institutions and microfinance opportunities. Each participant received tailored guidance from trained student mentors, ensuring a personalized and supportive learning experience.

Pre- and mid-project assessments revealed that while these women possessed marketable skills (such as sewing, cooking, and beauty services), they faced significant barriers such as lack of access to capital, limited digital literacy, and societal expectations restricting their mobility. The intervention addressed these gaps through structured workshops focused on financial management, entrepreneurship, and digital tools for business growth. Initiatives included market exposure activities and hands-on mentoring to build participants' confidence and practical skills.

The project's success is exemplified by participants like Sumaira Tariq, who leveraged her training to expand her home-based beauty business through digital marketing, subsequently mentoring other young women in her community.

Despite challenges such as high dropout rates, expectations of financial incentives, and varying literacy levels, the project demonstrated a clear demand for such initiatives. It highlighted the transformative impact of financial literacy in fostering economic independence, confidence, and resilience among women.

Looking ahead, Ziauddin University plans to expand this model, integrating lessons learned to strengthen community engagement and scale its impact. Future initiatives include publishing a bilingual children's book on financial empowerment and exploring opportunities to integrate financial literacy education at the school level to instill these values from an early age.

This pilot serves as a model for replicating inclusive, sustainable economic empowerment programs across Pakistan's underserved communities, aligning with broader goals of gender equality, poverty reduction, and financial inclusion.

# PROJECT BACKGROUND

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## **The Challenge in Urban Slums: Where Financial Exclusion Runs Deepest**

In Karachi's urban slums, dense, underserved communities such as Orangi, Lyari, or Korangi, the barriers to women's financial inclusion are even more formidable. Here, poverty, low literacy, informal employment, and entrenched gender norms combine to keep women on the fringes of financial systems. Few women have bank accounts or mobile wallets, fewer still have received any form of financial education. The concept of budgeting, saving, or building credit is unfamiliar to many, not due to a lack of ability, but because they have never been given the opportunity or tools. These women, often the silent managers of household resources, are left vulnerable to exploitation and economic shocks.

## **A Vision for Change: The Pilot Financial Literacy Project**

It is in this challenging yet hopeful context that Ms. Rahima Tahir, in partnership with the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) and SMEDA, has launched a pilot project focused on improving financial literacy among women in an urban slum of Karachi. This initiative seeks to do more than just impart knowledge; it aims to inspire confidence, foster independence, and ignite a transformation in how women see and shape their financial futures. Through community-based sessions designed to respect cultural sensitivities and minimize mobility challenges, the program introduces practical topics such as budgeting, savings, digital wallets, and responsible credit use. With the support of SMEDA's expertise in small enterprise development and ACU's commitment to educational innovation, the project also empowers local women as peer educators, creating a sustainable model of change.

## **Empowering Women, Transforming Communities**

This pilot project represents a vital first step in addressing the systemic financial exclusion of women in urban slums. By equipping women with the skills and confidence to manage their finances, the program plants seeds of empowerment that can transform not just individual lives but entire communities. When women are financially literate and included, they invest in their children's education, improve household well-being, and contribute to local economies. Ms. Rahima Tahir's initiative envisions a future where these women, once marginalized, become active agents of economic resilience and growth, proving that real, lasting change begins when we give women the tools to shape their destinies.

# THE PROJECT

## The Project Brief

**Shireen Jinnah Colony**, a densely populated **urban slum in Karachi**, is home to over **500,000 residents**. Despite being located in the heart of a major metropolitan city, the area remains deeply underserved, particularly in terms of economic opportunities and access to financial resources for women. Many women in this community possess a wide range of skills and entrepreneurial potential, yet continue to face significant barriers to financial inclusion. These barriers include a lack of financial literacy, limited access to banking and credit facilities, and entrenched gender norms that restrict their autonomy and participation in economic activities.

In response to these challenges, Ziauddin University, in collaboration with the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA), has launched the project titled:

***"Supporting Women's Economic Empowerment by Addressing Financial Literacy and Gender-Based Disparities in Access to Finance."***

This initiative focuses exclusively on the women of Shireen Jinnah Colony and aims to provide them with the knowledge, tools, and support required to become financially independent and economically active members of their community. Through a structured program that includes financial literacy training, business mentorship, and access to microfinance opportunities, the project seeks to enable 25 selected women to launch or expand small-scale entrepreneurial ventures. These efforts are designed not only to empower individual women but to catalyze wider economic development within the community.

## Objectives of the Financial Literacy Project

The Financial Literacy Project has been designed with the following specific objectives:

- **To enhance financial literacy among women** in Shireen Jinnah Colony by providing tailored education in budgeting, saving, credit management, and personal finance.



# THE PROJECT

- **To reduce gender-based disparities in access to financial services** by connecting women with formal financial institutions and microfinance resources in collaboration with SMEDA and ACU.
- **To promote women's entrepreneurship** by equipping participants with the necessary business planning and management skills, enabling them to start or grow home-based enterprises.
- **To provide mentorship and continuous guidance** through the pairing of each participant with a trained student mentor from Ziauddin University. These mentors will offer one-on-one support throughout the entrepreneurial journey.
- **To build sustainable community impact** by fostering a culture of financial independence, encouraging peer-to-peer learning, and developing locally adaptable training materials for long-term use.
- **To track progress and outcomes** through pre- and post-program assessments, regular monitoring, and the documentation of success stories to inform future scaling of the project.

## Vision of the Financial Literacy Project

The vision of the Financial Literacy Project is to create a model of inclusive economic empowerment that uplifts women from marginalized communities and integrates them into the formal financial ecosystem. The project envisions a future where women in Shireen Jinnah Colony are not only financially literate but also economically empowered to lead and sustain their enterprises.

By promoting financial autonomy, this initiative aims to transform passive recipients of aid into active agents of change—women who can contribute meaningfully to their households, their communities, and the broader economy. In doing so, the project supports the advancement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those focused on gender equality, poverty alleviation, and inclusive economic growth.

This vision extends beyond the immediate beneficiaries. By developing scalable training materials and establishing institutional partnerships, the project aspires to replicate its model in other underserved urban communities across Pakistan, fostering a more equitable and financially inclusive society.



# THE PROJECT

## The Stakeholder Consultancy Session

On January 3, 2025, Ziauddin University hosted the **inaugural stakeholder consultation** for the **Financial Literacy Project** at its Main Clifton Campus boardroom. This meeting marked the formal initiation of a collaborative effort between Ziauddin University, the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), and the **Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA)**, aimed at empowering women in Shireen Jinnah Colony through targeted **financial literacy** and **entrepreneurship support**.

The session was attended by key representatives from the university, including **Dr. Zulfiqar Ali Umrani (Director ORIC)**, **Dr. Fatima Jehangir (Head of Family Medicine)**, **Ms. Rahima Tahir (Principal Investigator and Manager Linkages and Outreach)**, and **Mr. Fahad Usmani (Manager Student Affairs)**. **SMEDA** was represented by **Mr. Mukesh Kumar (Provincial Chief)** and **Mr. Feroz Ahmed (Manager, Sindh)**. Importantly, **seven women from Shireen Jinnah Colony** participated in the session, providing direct community insights and lived perspectives that will shape the implementation of the project.



The discussion opened with a situational overview of **Shireen Jinnah Colony**—a **densely populated urban slum** with an estimated population of **over 500,000**. The community is characterized by significant **socioeconomic challenges**, including **limited educational attainment**, **constrained mobility for women**, and a **lack of digital literacy**. Despite these challenges, many women possess basic skills in food preparation, sewing, and informal tutoring, and approximately **20%** are already engaged in small-scale income-generating activities. However, these efforts remain **informal** and **unsupported**, lacking integration into the broader **financial system**.

Key outcomes of the consultation included the establishment of **eligibility criteria** for participant selection, which will prioritize women with:

- A minimum education level of matric or intermediate
- CNIC possession
- A demonstrable income-generating skill
- Strong personal motivation

# THE PROJECT

A sample size of **20 to 25 women** was agreed upon for the **pilot phase** of the project. Each selected participant will be **paired with a trained student mentor** from Ziauddin University, forming a structured **mentorship component** to facilitate **practical learning, encouragement, and continuous support**.

To support effective participant profiling, it was agreed that a **Google Forms-based survey** would be developed and distributed to **150–200 women** in the community. The survey will gather data on **education, household support, existing skills, financial goals, and access to communication devices**. This will aid in selecting the most suitable candidates for the initial cohort and in **tailoring training content** to the participants' specific contexts.

Furthermore, the **training component** will leverage **existing infrastructure**, utilizing a **community training center** in Shireen Jinnah Colony that currently offers sewing courses. This decision underscores the project's commitment to **community-based implementation** and **resource optimization**.

The session concluded with a **shared sense of purpose** and a strong commitment to ensuring that the Financial Literacy Project is **grounded in the needs and aspirations** of its primary beneficiaries. All stakeholders expressed confidence in the **collaborative framework** and pledged to move forward with data collection, mentor recruitment, and curriculum development promptly.

This first consultation laid a solid foundation for the project, aligning institutional capacities with community realities and ensuring that the program is not only contextually relevant but also positioned for long-term impact and sustainability.

## Pre-Project Survey Evaluation

A total of **150 women** from **Shireen Jinnah Colony** participated in the financial literacy survey. The analysis of their responses provides valuable insights into their circumstances, financial behaviors, aspirations, and the socio-cultural dynamics affecting their economic participation.

The screenshot shows a Google Form titled "Financial Literacy Program Survey | مالیاتی خواندگی | پروگرام سروس". The form is in Urdu and includes the following text:

This survey is part of a pilot project aimed at empowering women from Shireen Jinnah Colony through financial literacy, skill development, and mentorship. The information collected will help us design a tailored training program to equip participants with essential knowledge and skills for better money management, savings, and income generation.

Your responses will remain confidential and will only be used for research and program development purposes.

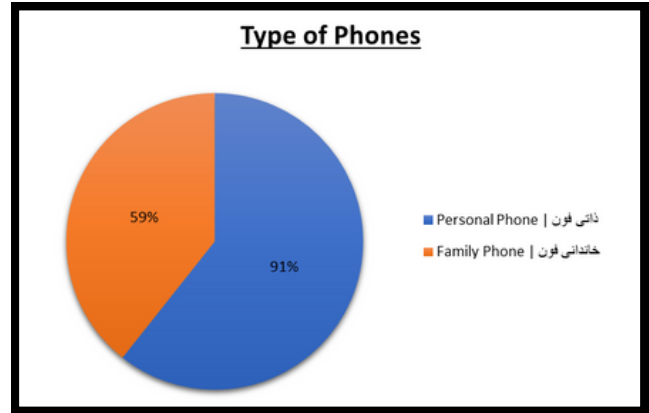
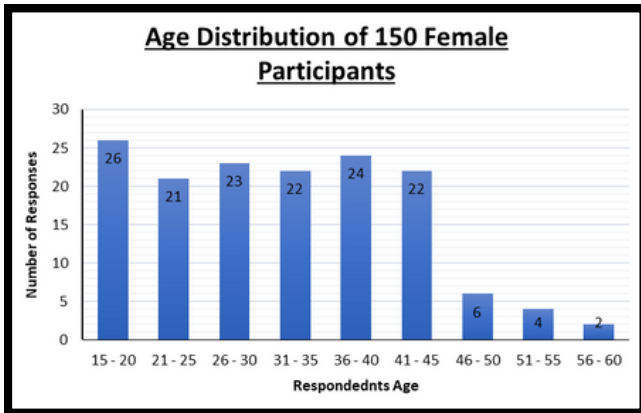
یہ سروے ایک پائلٹ منصوبے کا حصہ ہے جس کا مقصد شہریں جناح کالونی کی خواتین کو مالی خواندگی، ہنر کی ترقی اور رہنمائی کے ذریعے خود مختار بنانا ہے۔ جو معلومات جمع کی جائیں گی، وہ ہمیں ایک ایسا تربیتی پروگرام ڈیزائن کرنے میں مدد فراہم کریں گی جو شہریوں کو بہتر مالی انتظام، بچت اور آمدنی پیدا کرنے کے لیے ضروری ہنر اور مہارتوں سے آراستہ کرے۔

آپ کے جوابات مکمل طور پر خفیہ رہیں گے اور صرف تحقیق اور پروگرام کی ترقی کے مقاصد کے لیے استعمال کیے جائیں گے۔

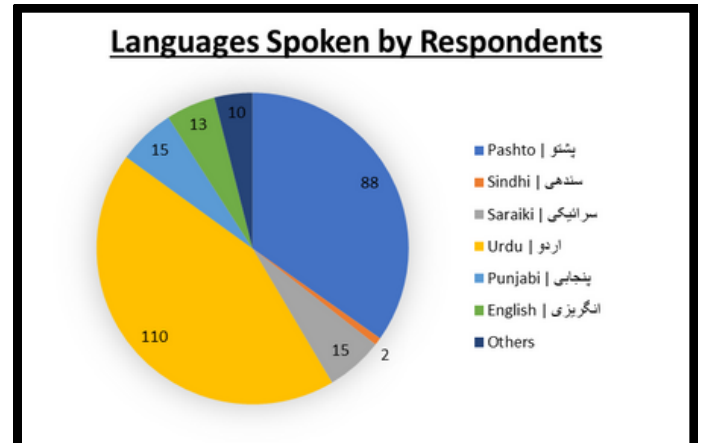
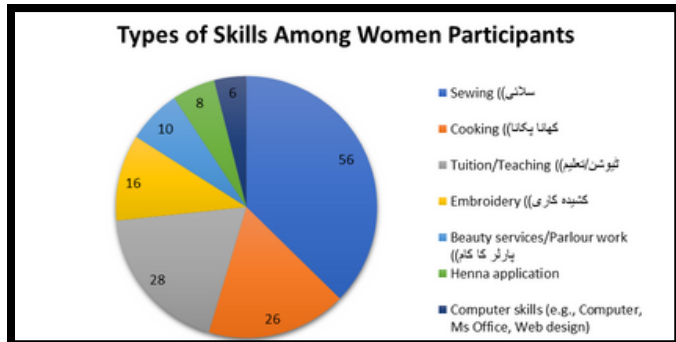
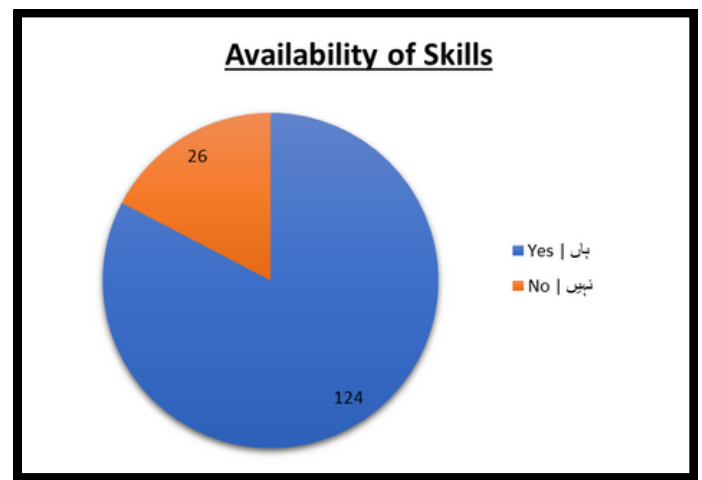
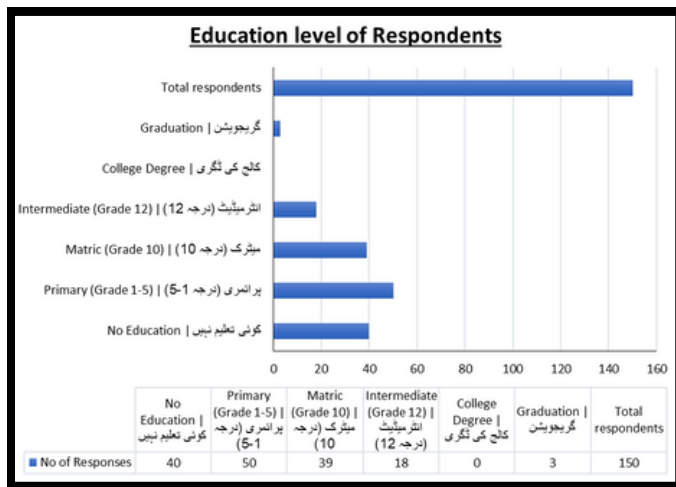
Full Name | پورا نام  
Short answer text

Husband/Father's Name | شوہر/پاپا کا نام  
Short answer text

# THE PROJECT

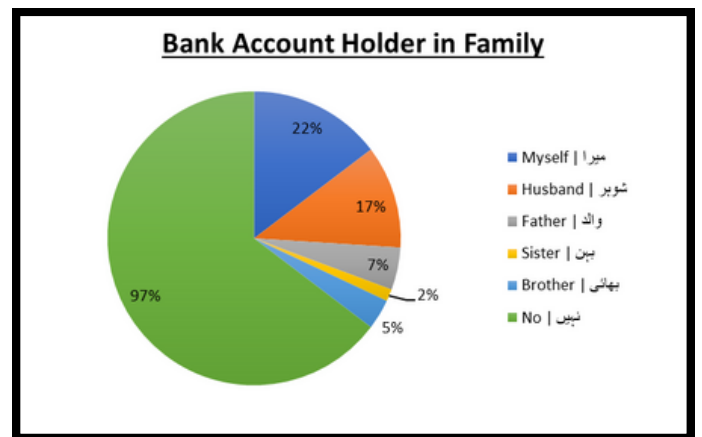
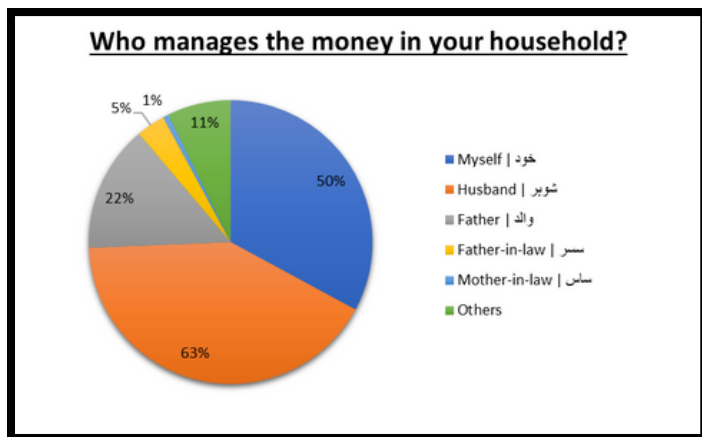


Demographically, most participants were within the 15 to 40-year age range, with a large proportion between 15–30, indicating a young and potentially productive group. While mobile phone ownership was high—91% had personal phones—many still relied on shared family devices, which may restrict access to digital financial tools or training materials.

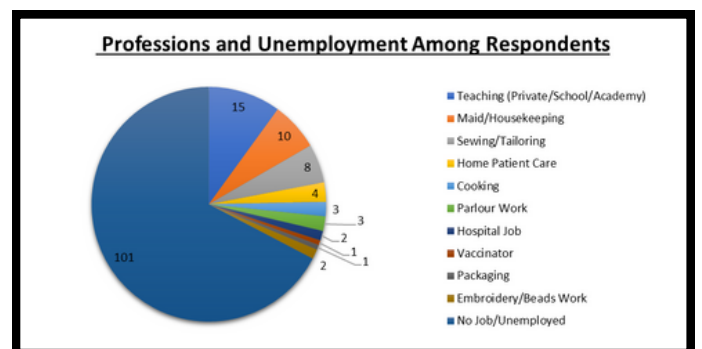
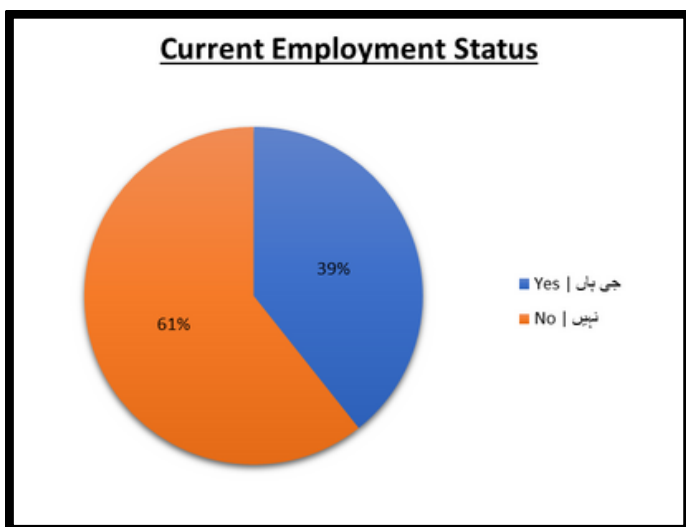


# THE PROJECT

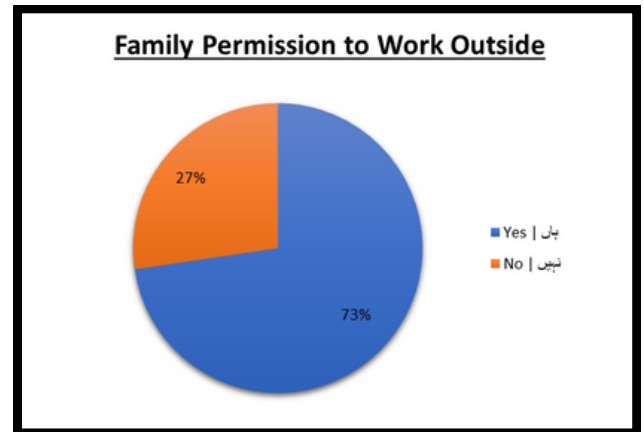
Educationally, a concerning 27% of respondents had no formal schooling, while 33% had only primary education, and just 12% had reached the intermediate level. Despite this, over 80% of women reported possessing practical skills, predominantly in sewing, cooking, and teaching, suggesting a strong foundation for vocational and entrepreneurial training. The linguistic diversity, with Urdu and Pashto being most common, implies that program materials should be multilingual for broader accessibility.



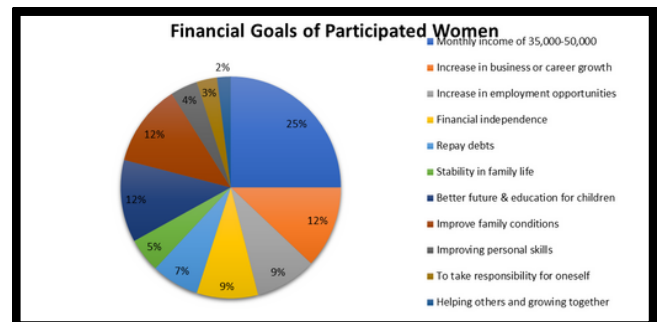
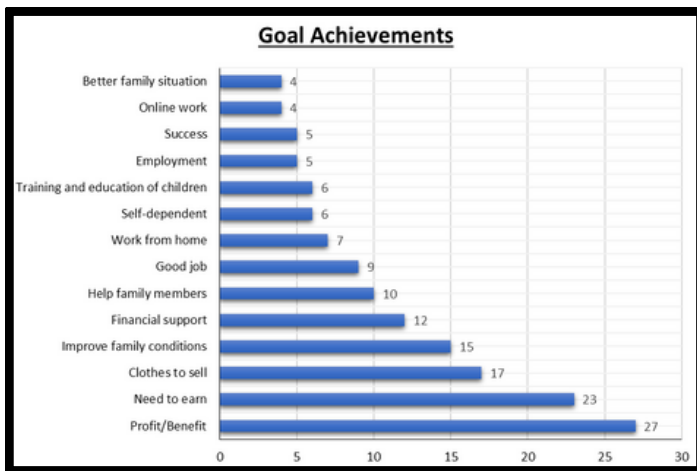
In terms of financial behavior, 63% reported that their husbands managed household finances, although 50% said they managed finances themselves, indicating some level of autonomy. Bank account ownership was relatively low, with only 22% of women having their own accounts. An overwhelming 90% saved money at home, reflecting a lack of trust in or access to formal banking systems. This finding highlights a key opportunity for financial literacy training focused on safe saving practices and banking services.



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Employment data showed that 59% of women were currently working, mainly in informal jobs like teaching, domestic work, or sewing. Monthly earnings mostly ranged between Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 15,000. Notably, 98% of respondents expressed a strong interest in starting their own business, with many aligning potential ventures to their existing skill sets. However, social and cultural norms still influence economic participation: while 100% had family permission to join the program, only 73% were allowed to work outside the home.



The women's aspirations were clear and ambitious. Many aimed to improve household conditions, increase income, and support their children's education. Around 25% identified a target monthly income of Rs. 35,000–50,000, and others expressed desires for financial independence, debt repayment, and career growth. These responses underscore a strong motivation to break cycles of poverty and dependency, but also point to the need for targeted support in entrepreneurship, digital and financial literacy, and community engagement to address social restrictions.

# THE PROJECT

## Project Kickoff Meeting: Empowering Women through Financial Literacy in Shireen Jinnah Colony

The official kickoff of the Financial Literacy Program for Women in Shireen Jinnah Colony marked a significant milestone in the collective pursuit of empowering underserved communities through practical, skills-based education. Held on **April 24, 2024**, at the Ziauddin University Clifton Campus, the meeting brought together a diverse group of stakeholders, including academic leaders, government representatives, university students, and community women, to collaboratively set the direction for this ambitious and transformative initiative.

Dr. Fatima Jahangir (Head of Family Medicine), Sir Mukesh (SMEDA Chief Executive), and Dr. Zulfiqar (Director ORIC) opened the session with compelling remarks, reinforcing the importance of inclusive development and the university's role in catalyzing social impact. The program's objective, equipping women with foundational and advanced financial knowledge, was introduced as both a response to urgent socio-economic needs and a step toward long-term community resilience.

The session laid out the structured design of the three-phase workshop series, each focused on a core financial skill: money handling, digital banking, investment strategies, budgeting, pricing, and business literacy. In an innovative approach, the program will cluster women into small, skill-aligned groups and pair them with trained students from Welfare Aid and Clinical Psychology departments. This model not only ensures personalized learning but also fosters mentorship and mutual growth between students and community participants.



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Strategic discussions underscored the need for tailoring content to each woman's existing skills and entrepreneurial potential. Attendees emphasized pre-workshop profiling through detailed questionnaires and interactive "show and tell" sessions where women would present their products. This will help assess quality, market readiness, and the training required to overcome barriers related to production, pricing, or customer engagement.

A strong focus was placed on sales and market exposure, including techniques for pricing, customer interaction, and product refinement. Weekly stalls at university events were proposed as a feedback loop providing real-time insights from students, faculty, and visitors, and helping women recalibrate their offerings in response to market expectations. The meeting also highlighted the integral role of students, not just as passive observers but as active facilitators, advisors, and logistical supporters. Gender-sensitive participation strategies were carefully discussed to respect community norms while ensuring inclusivity and support across all dimensions of the project.

Lastly, the inclusion of the Clinical Psychology Department's youth club was proposed to further skill development and business readiness among women participants. This cross-departmental partnership demonstrates the program's holistic vision: building capacity, confidence, and connection for women in one of Karachi's most underserved neighborhoods.

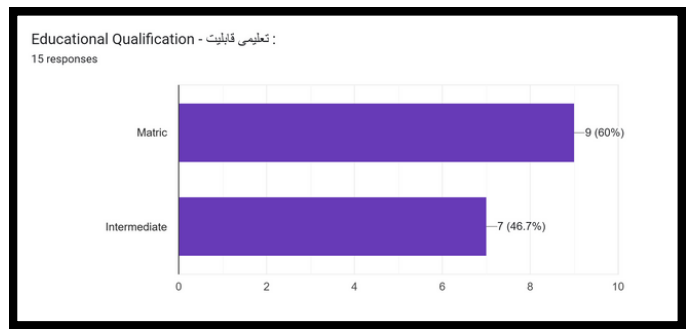


# THE PROJECT

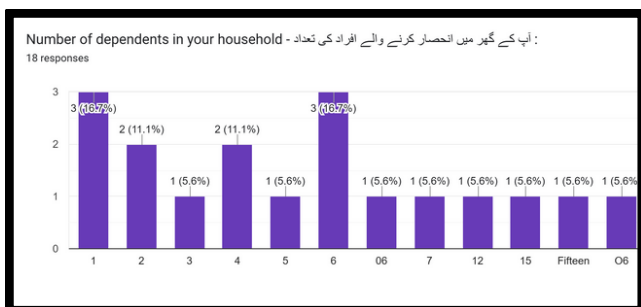
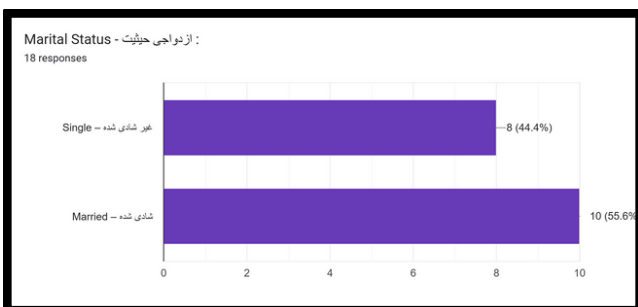
## Mid-Project Survey Analysis

As part of the Financial Literacy Program, a pre-training assessment was conducted with a group of **20 women**, who were randomly selected from an initial **pool of 150 women surveyed**. This smaller group was chosen to represent the diverse backgrounds and experiences of women from the community, providing valuable insights into their needs, aspirations, and challenges before commencing the training.

The age range of participants varied from their early 20s to around 50 years, with the majority falling between **32 and 42 years**. This indicates that the program successfully reached women who are in their prime working age, often balancing household responsibilities alongside their desire to contribute to family income. In terms of education, most participants had attained **Matric (60%) or Intermediate (47%)** qualifications. This highlights the importance of delivering program content in a simple, accessible manner that avoids complex terminology and focuses on practical, actionable knowledge.

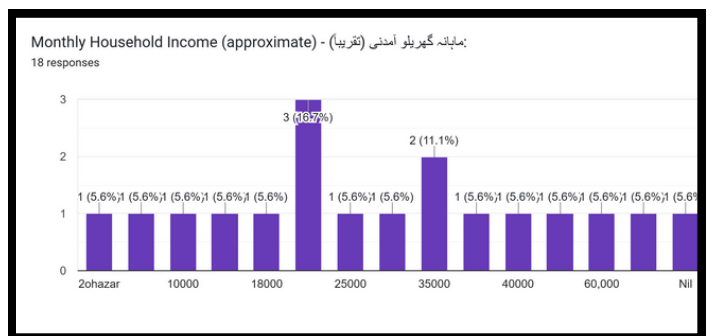
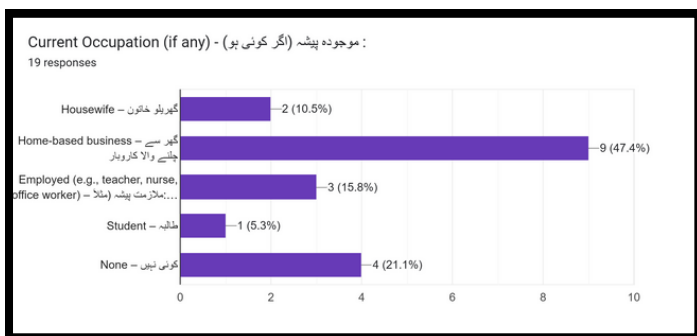


The assessment revealed that **55.6% of the participants were married**, while **44.4% were single**. This mix illustrates that financial empowerment is relevant across different marital statuses, as women in both groups expressed a desire to achieve economic independence and support their families. The number of dependents per household varied widely, with many women reporting between 1 to 6 dependents, underscoring the economic pressures they face and their motivation to generate additional income.



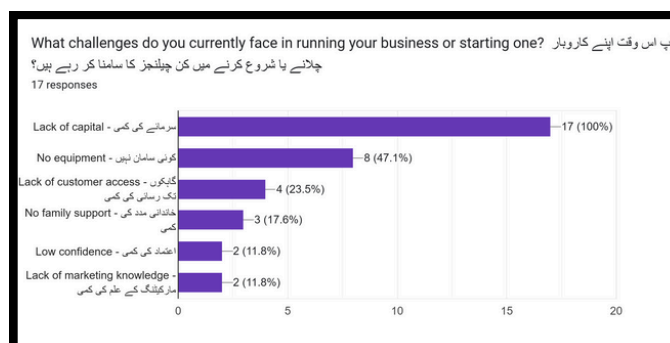
# THE PROJECT

When examining occupations, the data showed that **47.4% were housewives**, **21% reported no current occupation**, while a smaller portion were engaged in home-based businesses or employed in roles such as teaching or office work. Monthly household income levels were modest, with most respondents indicating earnings between **PKR 10,000 and PKR 25,000**, and some reporting no steady income at all. These figures reflect the financial vulnerability of participants and the critical need for initiatives that enable income generation.



Motivations for starting or growing a business centered on improving household conditions, achieving self-reliance, and supporting family members. Despite their enthusiasm, only **38.9% of the women reported currently running a business**, while **61.1% were not yet engaged in any enterprise**. For those with existing businesses, common ventures included small shops, home-based parlors, or selling garments and food items.

The challenges reported were multifaceted. A striking **100% of participants identified lack of capital as the primary barrier**, followed by **47.1% citing lack of equipment**, and smaller numbers mentioning limited customer access, low confidence, or lack of marketing knowledge. These findings point to the need for holistic support that goes beyond financing to include capacity building, mentorship, and market linkage.

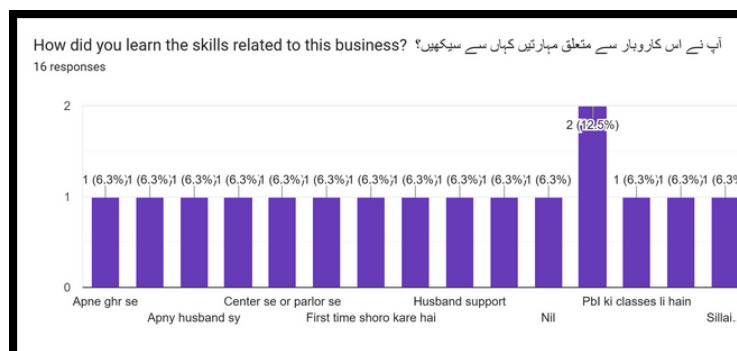


# THE PROJECT

On the subject of financial and digital inclusion, only **33.3% of the women had a bank account in their name**, and none had ever taken a loan or used a microfinance service. While **47.1% were familiar with digital payments**, a significant **76.5% had never sold anything online**, demonstrating gaps in digital readiness that could limit business scalability. Encouragingly, most participants expressed strong interest in learning to use digital tools to manage and promote their businesses.



In terms of skills, the women reported expertise in areas such as **cooking (70.6%), stitching and beautician services (each 35.3%)**, with fewer skilled in handicrafts or digital design. Many of these skills were self-taught or learned within their families and communities, and participants showed keen interest in upgrading these skills through further training. Market exposure was mixed; **58.8% had visited local markets or exhibitions**, and among them, **66.7% found inspiration or new ideas** from these visits.



Finally, a very positive finding was that **94.1% of the women reported having family support for starting a business**. This, combined with their aspirations for independence, better income, and contributing to household wellbeing, highlights their readiness to benefit from structured financial literacy and entrepreneurial training.

# THE PROJECT

## First Workshop: A Heartening Beginning – Women’s Stories, Challenges, and Aspirations

On **15th May 2025**, the Financial Literacy Pilot Project commenced with its first workshop—an icebreaking and orientation session hosted at Ziauddin University. This session marked the formal beginning of the initiative and was designed to create a welcoming space where the selected participants could engage with the project team, connect, and share their personal stories, skills, and hopes for the future.

The workshop provided an opportunity for the women to introduce themselves and reflect on their journeys. Many spoke with candor and dignity about the realities of their lives—managing households under significant financial constraints, balancing domestic responsibilities, and working informally through sewing, embroidery, cooking, handicrafts, and small-scale beauty services. Despite their efforts and talents, most of these women shared that they have little access to formal financial systems, training, or market opportunities to help grow their enterprises beyond subsistence levels.

In addition to sharing their products and skills, the participants discussed the hardships they face: limited mobility, minimal financial education, lack of national identification in some cases, and the persistent social norms that restrict their economic participation. These reflections revealed not only the depth of the challenges but also the immense resilience and resourcefulness of these women.



# THE PROJECT

In addition to sharing their products and skills, the participants discussed the hardships they face: limited mobility, minimal financial education, lack of national identification in some cases, and the persistent social norms that restrict their economic participation. These reflections revealed not only the depth of the challenges but also the immense resilience and resourcefulness of these women.

What was most striking about this heartening session was the strong sense of aspiration expressed by the participants. Many articulated a desire to formalize their work, start small home-based businesses, and gain the confidence and knowledge to manage their own finances. They saw this project as a pathway toward greater independence, stability, and the ability to contribute more meaningfully to their families' futures.

This inaugural workshop set the tone for the project—grounded in empathy, respect, and a shared commitment to meaningful change. It established the foundation of trust and understanding that will guide the project's future activities, ensuring that the interventions are aligned with the lived realities of the women this initiative seeks to empower.



# THE PROJECT

## Second Workshop: Unlocking Entrepreneurial Potential in Shirin Jinnah Colony

On **17th June 2025**, the second workshop of the Financial Literacy Pilot Project was held at the community center in Shirin Jinnah Colony, with a focus on enabling women to see how their everyday skills could be transformed into small-scale businesses. The session was met with enthusiastic participation, as women shared their experiences in activities such as stitching, embroidery, cooking, and beadwork—skills that, until now, many viewed solely as household contributions.

The workshop provided practical guidance on how these talents could become sources of income. Women learned about basic concepts of small business management: how to calculate costs, set fair prices, manage simple records, and identify customers within their immediate community. The session emphasized low-cost, home-based business models that would align with their realities, given the mobility constraints and cultural expectations many face.

What made this session particularly meaningful was the involvement of university students, who acted as mentors throughout the workshop. The students worked in small groups with participants, helping them brainstorm ideas, practice calculating profits, and draft simple business plans. This one-on-one mentorship created a supportive environment where women felt confident asking questions and imagining new possibilities for themselves.

Following the workshop, the project team visited the surrounding colony, gaining deeper insight into the daily struggles these women navigate, including limited space, unreliable utilities, and restricted access to marketplaces. This visit reinforced the importance of designing solutions that are realistic, practical, and tailored to their specific needs. The workshop concluded with a shared sense of optimism: that with the right knowledge, mentorship, and support, these women can take the first steps toward economic independence and resilience.



# SUCCESS STORIES

**Today, Sumaira Tariq is a proud beneficiary of the Financial Literacy Project, an initiative aimed at creating livelihood opportunities for deserving women from Shirin Jinnah Colony, helping them achieve financial independence and build a more secure and empowered future.**

Meet Sumaira! A talented beautician from Shirin Jinnah Colony, Sumaira had always dreamed of expanding her small home-based salon. While her skills and dedication were undeniable, limited access to financial knowledge and digital tools kept her ambitions just out of reach.

That changed when she became part of the Financial Literacy Project, an initiative aimed at equipping women like Sumaira with the tools to build sustainable livelihoods. Through the program, Sumaira learned essential skills in budgeting, saving, and digital marketing. With this knowledge, she began promoting her services through WhatsApp Channels, showcasing her work, engaging with clients, and managing bookings more efficiently.



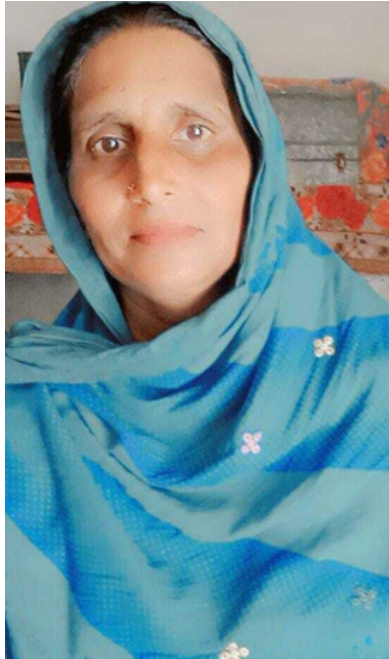
Her efforts paid off. Sumaira's business grew steadily, attracting a larger and more diverse clientele from both within and outside her community. Digital outreach not only increased her visibility but also gave her the confidence to scale her services.

But Sumaira didn't stop there. Inspired by her journey, she began offering free training to young women in her neighborhood, teaching them beauty techniques and sharing tips on how to run a business. Today, she is not just a successful entrepreneur; she's a mentor, a role model, and a source of hope for many.

Sumaira's story is a powerful example of how knowledge, when paired with opportunity, can ignite lasting change not just for one woman but for an entire community.

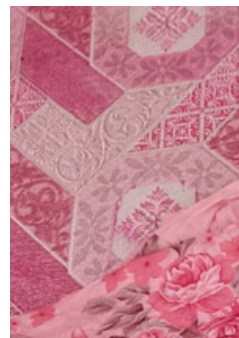
# SUCCESS STORIES

Today, Perveen Bibi is a proud beneficiary of the Financial Literacy Project, an initiative aimed at creating livelihood opportunities for deserving women from Shirin Jinnah Colony, helping them achieve financial independence and build a more secure and empowered future.



Parveen Bibi, a beneficiary of the Financial Literacy Project, has transformed her life through newfound skills and confidence. With support from Clinical Psychology students, she learned how to use digital marketing tools to promote and sell her stitched clothes online. From creating posts to managing customer queries, Parveen now runs her small clothing venture with pride.

She has also set up her NayaPay account, allowing her to save her earnings securely and manage her finances independently. Her story is a powerful example of how women can thrive when given access to the right tools, guidance, and encouragement.



# SUCCESS STORIES



Under Ziauddin University's Financial Literacy Project, a group of women from marginalized communities was allowed to develop essential financial knowledge and practical life skills. Initially focused on teaching the fundamentals of budgeting, saving, and financial planning, the project gradually evolved to support the holistic empowerment of participants, both economically and socially.

As a direct result of their engagement with the project, the women were able to **collaborate** with **Welfare Aid Society** and **Helping Hands**, who offered free-of-cost embroidery and stitching training. This partnership provided the women with hands-on instruction in traditional and modern stitching techniques, including design, finishing, and garment construction.



The integration of financial literacy with vocational training created a powerful impact. Many participants, who had previously lacked confidence or income-generating skills, are now using their new capabilities to take tailoring and embroidery orders from within their neighborhoods. Several women have begun working together on group orders, setting the foundation for small-scale home-based enterprises.

One participant noted:

***“Before this, we never imagined we could earn from our own hands. Now we feel confident, independent, and hopeful for the future.”***



This success story highlights how targeted education, followed by strategic collaboration, can lead to sustainable community change. The Financial Literacy Project continues to explore partnerships and learning opportunities to scale this model and reach more women across Karachi and beyond.

# CHALLENGES

Some challenges faced during the project were:

- **High Dropout Rate:** Several women dropped out midway through the project due to family restrictions, lack of permission, or domestic responsibilities that took priority over participation.
- **Expectations of Financial Incentives:** Many participants expected monetary compensation for attending sessions, which created challenges in sustaining engagement purely based on skill-building and empowerment.
- **Low Initial Literacy Levels:** For some participants, limited basic literacy or numeracy skills made it difficult to fully grasp financial concepts, requiring additional time and simplified teaching methods.
- **Cultural and Social Barriers:** Talking about money management and entrepreneurship was considered unconventional in some households, making it difficult for participants to practice or apply the skills learned.



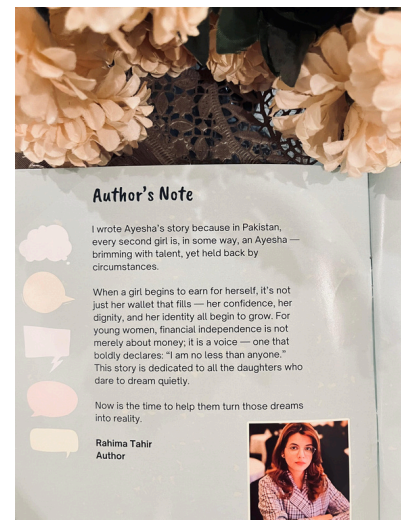
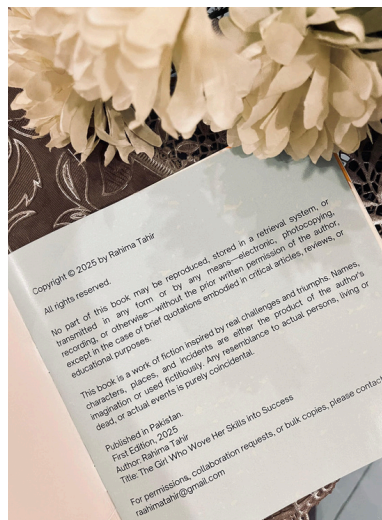
# FUTURE PROSPECTS

The Financial Literacy Project is evolving with a vision to inspire long-term change, especially among young girls. As a key next step, we are **publishing a children’s book** that tells the story of a young girl who uses her skills and determination to build something of her own and become financially independent. The book aims to spark ambition, resilience, and self-belief in young readers, planting the seeds of financial empowerment early in life. It will be **available in English and Urdu**, making it accessible to a diverse audience across linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

We hope to work with schools to incorporate this book at the elementary level so that financial literacy and empowerment become part of the learning journey from an early age, not just as a subject, but as a mindset.

Drawing on the lessons from this pilot phase, including challenges such as dropouts and the need for culturally sensitive approaches, we also plan to **expand the project** to other underserved communities with improved design and stronger community engagement.

Lastly, our goal is to scale this initiative into a nationwide model that equips women and girls with the tools, confidence, and knowledge to shape their financial futures.



# MESSAGES FROM THE STAKEHOLDERS

The Financial Literacy Project has been an inspiring journey. It's amazing to see how a little guidance can help women take control of their finances and build something of their own. I'm grateful to be part of this meaningful work.



**Mr. Fahad Usmani**  
**Manager Student Affairs**



**Mr. Mukesh Kumar**  
**Provincial Head -SMEDA**

The Financial Literacy Project is a vital step toward economic inclusion. At SMEDA, we believe empowering women with financial knowledge creates stronger families and more resilient communities. It's been an honor to support this important initiative.

Working with the women through the Financial Literacy Project has been truly heartwarming. It's incredible to see them gain confidence as they learn to manage their finances and plan for their futures. This kind of impact stays with you.



**Dr. Fatima Jehngir**  
**HOD-Family Medicine**