

# NOWCommunities

## Organizational Portfolio 2025



*“Building Rights, Voice, and Dignity for Working Communities”*

NOWCommunities

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# About Us

The National Organization for Working Communities (NOWCommunities) is a rights-based, feminist, and participatory organisation established in 2008 by a group of labour, women, and youth activists. With its roots in Karachi, NOWCommunities works with both formal and informal sector workers to strengthen their voices, rights, and access to resources. It operates across Sindh and connects with networks nationally and regionally.

Our work is grounded in evidence-based advocacy, grassroots mobilisation, and policy engagement. NOWCommunities has been instrumental in creating workers' unions, women's alliances, and youth platforms, and it continues to advocate for gender equality, labour rights, social protection, peacebuilding, and climate justice.



## Vision & Mission

Our vision is to create a society where workers, women, youth, and minorities live with dignity, equality, and justice. Our mission is to empower working communities through organisation, education, advocacy, and policy engagement.

## Core Values

- Feminist and rights-based approach
- Participation and inclusion of marginalised groups
- Evidence-based advocacy and research
- Commitment to labour rights and social justice
- Solidarity, peace, and non-violence

# Leadership

## Mahnaz Rahman

President of the NOWCommunities' Board



Mahnaz Rahman is the President of the Board of NOWCommunities and a distinguished Pakistani writer, journalist, and women's rights activist known for her long-standing work in civil society and the media. Born on 16 June 1949 in Karachi, she began her political journey as a student leader with the National Students Federation at Karachi University, where she became the first female vice president of the Economics Society.

Her career in journalism started at Daily Musawat and continued with Weekly Mehvar and Daily Amn, later expanding internationally when she lived in China from 1985 to 1993, where she wrote popular columns such as "Letters from China" and translated Chinese literature into Urdu. For her contributions, she was honored with the Chinese Friendship Award in 1991. On her return to Pakistan, she became deeply involved in women's rights and social justice, serving nearly two decades with Aurat Foundation as Resident Director Sindh and also working with the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. Known for her advocacy on gender equality, provincial rights, and freedom of expression, Mahnaz Rahman remains an influential voice in journalism, literature, and human rights activism.

# Farhat Parveen

## Executive Director



NOWCommunities is led by Farhat Parveen as Executive Director. Farhat is a prominent labour rights activist and researcher, who has dedicated over three decades to advancing the rights of workers, women, and minorities in Pakistan.

She has recently concluded three studies, the most recent one being a baseline study of the export-oriented Textile manufacturing workers in Pakistan. The second was on the Terms and Working Conditions of Tanneries and the Leather Workers in Pakistan in general and Karachi in Particular. Another was on the Access of Women Workers to Resources such as land, property and other financial resources. She has worked extensively on implementation of social clauses in the textile industry during the 1990s.

In 2008, she co-founded NOWCommunities with like-minded activists, to organise workers from both formal and informal sectors. Her leadership has been central to initiatives such as Women Action for Better Workplaces, trade unions of Lady Health Workers, and research on textile and leather value chains. Currently, with support from Levi's Foundation, she is leading projects to strengthen grassroots worker organisations, particularly among women textile workers.

Farhat is a member of several national and international bodies, including the Tripartite Labour Standing Committee, Sindh Commission on the Status of Women, Minimum Wage Board-Sindh, UNODC Task Force on Gender, and UN Women's Task Force. She is also a founding member of HomeNet Pakistan and HomeNet South Asia. Her areas of expertise extend to climate change, social protection, peace and security, and international labour standards such as GSP Plus.

Farhat Parveen holds a Master's degree in Women and Development from the International Institute of Social Studies (The Hague, Netherlands) and a diploma in Labour Laws from NILAT.

# NOWCommunities Strategic Direction



NOWCommunities' strategic direction is shaped by its commitment to labour rights, gender justice, youth empowerment, minority inclusion, and climate action. Grounded in evidence-based research and grassroots mobilisation, the organisation continues to address structural inequalities and strengthen democratic spaces for working communities in Pakistan. Our strategy builds upon past achievements and aligns with global frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

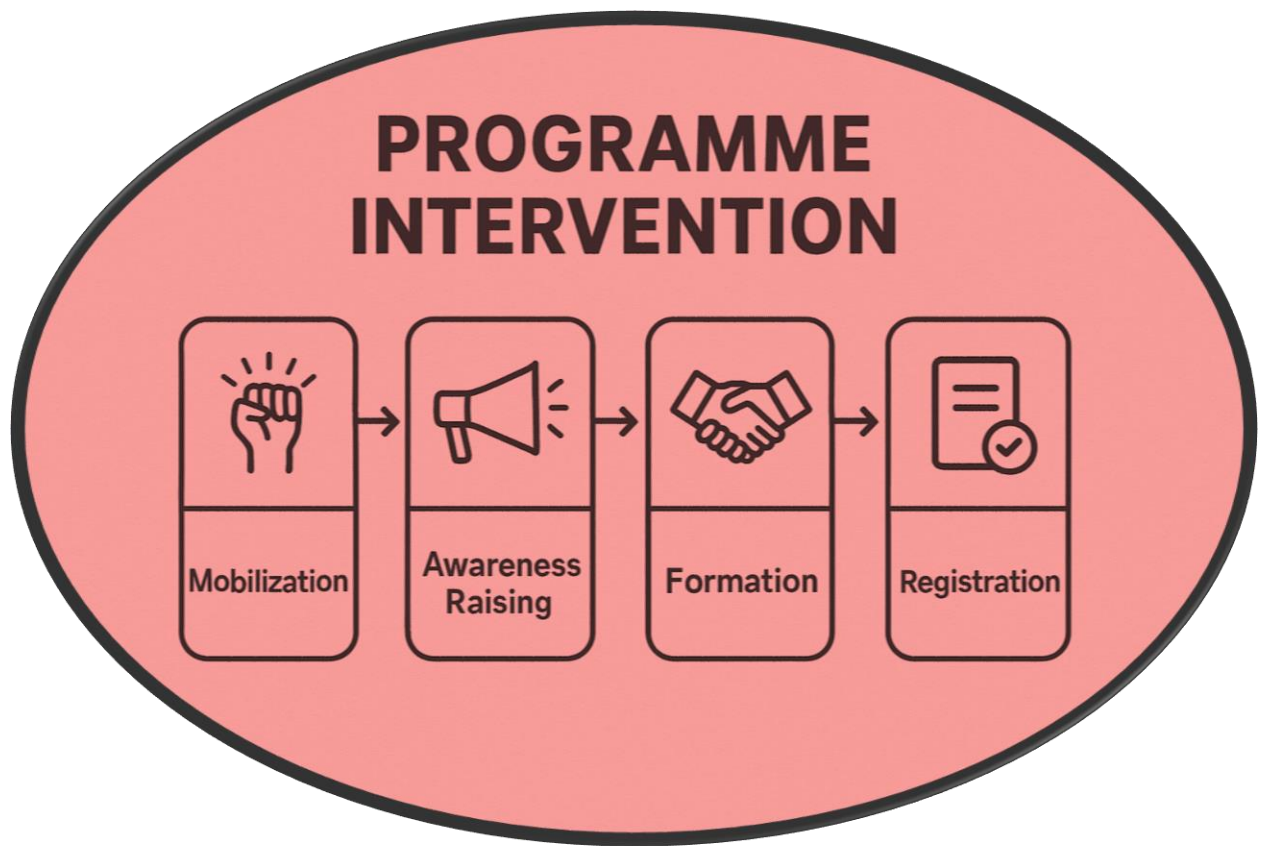
## Strategic Goals (2021–2025)

- Strengthen workers' rights through organisation, education, and advocacy at the local and national levels.
- Advance gender equality and ensure women workers' access to resources, social protection, and decent working conditions.
- Empower youth and minorities to take leadership roles in community development and advocacy platforms.
- Promote climate justice and integrate environmental sustainability into community organising and policy engagement.
- Influence labour and social protection policies through evidence-based research, campaigns, and coalitions.
- Enhance institutional capacity and build resilient partnerships at national, regional, and global levels.

## Thematic Focus Areas

- Labour Rights & Decent Work
- Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment
- Youth Leadership & Skills Development
- Minority Rights & Social Inclusion
- Peacebuilding & Social Cohesion
- Climate Justice & Environmental Sustainability

# Programme Intervention



NOWCommunities implements its mission through evidence-based, rights-oriented, and participatory programme interventions. These interventions are designed to address the multiple challenges faced by working communities in Pakistan, with a special focus on women, youth, minorities, and marginalized workers in both formal and informal sectors.

## 1. Labour Rights and Decent Work

- Organising workers into grassroots organisations, trade unions, and alliances.
- Advocacy for fair wages, improved working conditions, and occupational health & safety.
- Campaigns for compliance with international labour standards and GSP Plus commitments.
- Engagement with textile, leather, and other export-oriented sectors for labour law implementation.

## 2. Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality

- Formation of Women Action for Better Workplaces (WAW), an alliance of formal sector women workers.
- Supporting the unionisation of Lady Health Workers in Sindh.
- Research and advocacy on women's access to land, property, and financial resources.
- Capacity-building programs to strengthen women's leadership in labour movements and community platforms.

## 3. Youth Empowerment

- Engaging young workers and community members in leadership training.
- Skills development programs tailored for youth in urban settlements.
- Mobilising youth for peace, climate action, and advocacy campaigns.

## 4. Minority Rights and Social Inclusion

- Promoting interfaith harmony and inclusive community participation.
- Building advocacy platforms for religious and ethnic minorities in urban areas.
- Ensuring equal opportunities for minorities in education, labour markets, and policy spaces.

## 5. Climate Justice and Environmental Sustainability

- Integrating climate change awareness into community organising.
- Research on climate vulnerabilities of working communities.
- Advocacy for social protection measures linked with environmental resilience.
- Collaboration with regional platforms such as CANSA (Climate Action Network South Asia).

## 6. Research and Evidence-Based Advocacy

- Primary data-based studies on labour rights, women's access to resources, and working conditions.
- Baseline studies in textile, leather, and other industrial sectors.
- Publications to influence policy reforms and international trade agreements.

# Flagship Projects and Achievements

Since its inception in 2008, NOWCommunities has spearheaded a wide range of transformative initiatives. These projects reflect our commitment to labour rights, women's empowerment, peacebuilding, governance reforms, and inclusive development. Below is a year-wise account of our flagship interventions and their impact:

## 2007–2009: Foundations of Peace and Rights

The period between 2007 and 2009 was a defining phase for NOWCommunities, as it laid the foundation of its peace and rights-based work in Karachi and beyond. These early initiatives reflected the organisation's commitment to mobilising grassroots voices, engaging youth, and fostering collective action for peace and justice in a city deeply affected by violence, ethnic strife, and political instability.

### Social Movements Assembly in Pakistan (2007/2008)

This pioneering initiative brought together diverse grassroots organisations, community groups, trade unions, and social movements from across Pakistan under one platform. The Assembly created a rare space for open dialogue on issues of social justice, human rights, and democratic participation at a time when civil society voices were fragmented.

Objectives:

- Build a collective voice of social movements to influence policy and governance.
- Strengthen the capacity of grassroots organisations to engage in democratic processes.
- Create an environment of solidarity among movements working on women's rights, labour rights, youth empowerment, and peace.

Key Outcomes:

- Developed a joint action agenda for social justice movements in Pakistan.
- Built long-term alliances that shaped future collaborations, particularly in Karachi's urban settlements.
- Enhanced the visibility of community voices at provincial and national levels.

### Peace My Right (2009)

Launched as a youth-led peace initiative, this project mobilised young people from colleges, universities, and community-based organisations to take a proactive role in peacebuilding. Against the backdrop of rising violence and extremism, "Peace My Right" emphasised the right of every citizen — especially youth — to live in a peaceful, tolerant society.

- Approach:
- Conducted awareness sessions in schools and colleges across Karachi.

- Engaged youth in creative campaigns using theatre, debates, and cultural activities to counter violence.
- Established local youth peace groups trained in leadership and conflict resolution.
- Impact:
- Created a new generation of youth activists who became ambassadors of peace in their communities.
- Strengthened young people's confidence to challenge narratives of intolerance and extremism.
- Laid the groundwork for youth participation in later movements such as the Aman Dost Networks.

### **National Conference on Peace Diplomacy (2009)**

This conference brought together civil society leaders, academics, trade unions, youth, women's groups, and policymakers from across Pakistan. The gathering was historic in its ability to unite diverse stakeholders around the urgent need to de-weaponise Karachi and promote peace through diplomacy and dialogue.

Highlights:

- Issued the Karachi Declaration on Deweaponisation, a landmark document calling for stricter arms regulation and political accountability.
- Created opportunities for cross-sector collaboration on peace initiatives.
- Elevated grassroots concerns to national platforms, linking local struggles with global peace agendas.

### **Achievements of the Period (2007–2009)**

- Successfully established Five Aman Dost Networks in Karachi, functioning as community-level peace forums in violence-prone areas.
- Formalised the Karachi Peace Alliance, a broad coalition of CSOs, CBOs, trade unions, and youth groups that worked jointly to campaign for peace and security.
- Introduced youth and grassroots actors into peace dialogues, breaking traditional barriers that excluded them from decision-making.
- Positioned NOWCommunities as a pioneer in grassroots peacebuilding in Pakistan, setting the tone for its future programmes on democracy, rights, and inclusion.

### **2010–2013: Strengthening Labour and Community Voices**

The years 2010 to 2013 marked a significant shift in NOWCommunities' work — from its early peacebuilding foundations toward organising workers, promoting labour rights, and strengthening community voices for accountability. During this period, the organisation became a front-runner in empowering women workers, highlighting the

struggles of informal workers, and creating platforms for citizens to demand improved governance and social protection.

### **Lady Health Workers' Movement (2010 – to date)**

The Lady Health Workers (LHWs) programme, initiated by the Government of Pakistan, employs thousands of women across the country who play a crucial role in delivering primary health services. Despite their essential contributions, these women long remained underpaid, insecure, and unrecognised as government employees.

NOWCommunities recognised the importance of organising this workforce and began working with Lady Health Workers in Sindh to build their collective strength and amplify their voices.

Key Strategies:

- Organised training workshops on labour laws, workers' rights, and leadership skills.
- Supported the formation of the All Pakistan Lady Health Workers' Union, the first union of its kind in Pakistan's health sector.
- Facilitated advocacy campaigns at provincial and national levels to demand job regularisation, better wages, and social protection.

Impact:

- Thousands of Lady Health Workers became unionised and better organised, enabling them to negotiate with government institutions.
- The movement successfully brought the issue of women's unpaid and underpaid labour into mainstream political debates.
- The campaign continues today, serving as a symbol of grassroots women workers' resistance and their struggle for dignity and recognition.

### **Domestic Workers in Pakistan – A Pioneering Research Study (2011)**

In 2011, NOWCommunities conducted one of Pakistan's first systematic research studies on domestic workers, a segment of the workforce often hidden within private households and excluded from labour protections.

Focus Areas:

- Documented the working conditions, wages, and vulnerabilities of women and child domestic workers.
- Identified the absence of formal contracts, social security, and legal frameworks for this group.
- Collected primary data from Karachi and other urban centres to build an evidence base for advocacy.

#### Impact:

- The findings were widely disseminated, bringing national and international attention to the plight of domestic workers.
- The study laid the groundwork for subsequent policy discussions on extending labour laws and social protection to informal sector workers.
- It positioned NOWCommunities as a thought leader in research-driven advocacy for invisible and marginalised groups.

### **Provincial Advocacy Campaign for Education (2011–2013)**

As part of its broader work on governance and accountability, NOWCommunities served as the secretariat for a provincial advocacy campaign focused on education budgets and policy reforms in Sindh.

#### Objectives:

- Ensure transparent allocation and utilisation of education budgets.
- Mobilise parents, teachers, and communities to demand accountability from education authorities.
- Build a stronger civil society coalition advocating for free and quality education as a fundamental right.

#### Achievements:

- Provided evidence-based monitoring reports on provincial education budgets.
- Empowered local communities to hold schools and education departments accountable.
- Strengthened public discourse on education governance and its links to inequality and poverty reduction.

### **Citizens First: Improving Human Security (2013–2016)**

Building on its earlier peace initiatives, NOWCommunities launched the Citizens First project with a broader vision to improve human security across Pakistan. Implemented in 15 districts nationwide, this project was one of NOWCommunities' most ambitious citizen mobilisation efforts.

#### Key Interventions:

- Mobilised 50,000 people, including women, youth, and minorities, around peace, tolerance, and improved public services.
- Organised community dialogues, training workshops, and advocacy campaigns to address issues of extremism, violence, and poor governance.
- Strengthened 100 Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) to become active advocates for human security at the local level.

## Impact:

- Citizens across 15 districts were empowered to voice their demands for security, tolerance, and services in education, health, and governance.
- Created sustainable grassroots structures (CBOs) that continue to function as platforms for rights-based advocacy.
- Established a nationwide network of citizen voices contributing to peace and democratic accountability.

## Overall Achievements (2010–2013)

- Organised women health workers into Pakistan's first sector-specific health union.
- Conducted pioneering research on domestic workers, sparking new advocacy on informal labour rights.
- Strengthened education budget monitoring and accountability at the provincial level.
- Mobilised tens of thousands of citizens through Citizens First, giving communities the confidence and platforms to engage directly with policymakers.

## 2014–2016: Expanding Women's and Minorities' Rights

This period marked a new phase of NOWCommunities' work, where the organisation deepened its focus on labour rights for women, minority inclusion, and preventing violent extremism. The projects initiated between 2013 and 2016 addressed systemic discrimination, amplified women's leadership in workplaces, and explored the often-overlooked role of women in countering extremist ideologies. These initiatives demonstrated NOWCommunities' ability to connect grassroots struggles with broader national and global debates on rights and justice.

## Enhancing Women Workers' Awareness of Labour Laws (2014–2015)

Karachi's SITE industrial area, one of the largest industrial zones in Pakistan, employs thousands of women in textiles, garments, and related industries. However, most women workers remained unaware of their basic labour rights, faced wage discrimination, and endured unsafe working conditions.

### Objectives:

- Equip women workers with knowledge of labour laws, occupational health and safety regulations, and workplace rights.
- Build networks of women workers to increase their collective bargaining power.
- Engage employers in dialogues on compliance with laws and gender-sensitive workplace practices.
- Disseminate information through radio campaigns, posters, and awareness sessions to reach wider audiences.

### Key Achievements:

- Trained hundreds of women in SITE, creating a pool of informed workplace leaders.

- Formed initial networks of women workers that later contributed to broader alliances like Women Action for Better Workplaces.
- Radio campaigns reached thousands of workers across Karachi, extending awareness beyond direct participants.
- Women began to challenge wage gaps and unsafe practices, demonstrating the effectiveness of rights-based training.

### **Access of Minorities to Social Protection (2013–2014)**

While initiated in 2013, the research findings significantly influenced the discourse during 2014–2015. The study was carried out in Karachi and Mirpurkhas to assess how minorities, particularly Hindu and Christian communities, accessed social protection schemes such as Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) and Bait-ul-Maal.

Findings:

- Revealed systemic discrimination in accessing benefits — from documentation hurdles to local-level biases.
- Highlighted how lack of awareness and exclusionary practices prevented minorities from availing entitlements.
- Documented the double marginalisation faced by minority women who were both socially excluded and economically disadvantaged.

Impact:

- Sparked dialogue on the need to reform state-run social protection programmes to ensure inclusivity.
- Provided evidence that was used by minority rights groups to advocate for more equitable access.
- Strengthened NOWCommunities' role as a research-based advocacy organisation committed to amplifying marginalised voices.

### **Role of Women in Preventing Violent Extremism (2013)**

Conducted in urban settlements such as Sultanabad and Hijrat Colony in Karachi, this research project was one of the first initiatives in Pakistan to document women's role in countering violent extremism.

Focus Areas:

- Explored how women influence narratives within families and communities.
- Documented how women often serve as peace influencers, using dialogue, parenting, and community engagement to counter extremist ideologies.
- Highlighted the invisible contribution of women in maintaining social cohesion amidst rising radicalisation.

#### Key Outcomes:

- Brought women's voices into the peace and security agenda, an area often dominated by male-led discourse.
- Informed later initiatives on gendered approaches to countering extremism, showing that empowering women can be a strategic tool against radicalisation.
- Positioned NOWCommunities as a pioneer in gender-sensitive peacebuilding research.

#### Other Significant Initiatives & Emerging Campaigns (2014–2016)

Beyond the highlighted projects, NOWCommunities also expanded its thematic interventions:

- Supported home-based women workers in mapping their representation in labour and trade forums.
- Initiated early campaigns against child marriage in Sindh, advocating for legislative reforms.
- Enhanced minority communities' voices in state entitlement programs, linking grassroots struggles with national advocacy platforms.

#### Overall Achievements (2014–2016)

- Strengthened women workers' capacity to demand their rights in industrial workplaces.
- Produced pioneering research on minorities' access to social protection and women's role in countering extremism.
- Laid the foundation for broader women's alliances and trade unions, including home-based workers' groups.
- Led early policy advocacy campaigns that contributed to progressive legal reforms in Sindh, including the Child Marriage Restraint Act.
- Solidified NOWCommunities' reputation as an organisation bridging labour rights, gender equality, minority inclusion, and peacebuilding.

#### 2016–2018: Women's Leadership in Workplaces and Governance

Between 2016 and 2018, NOWCommunities consolidated its reputation as a pioneering organisation for women's workplace rights and democratic accountability. During this period, the organisation launched flagship initiatives that not only empowered women in the formal labour sector but also strengthened democratic processes through citizen participation. These interventions elevated grassroots voices into national-level debates on governance, gender, and rights.

## Women Action for Better Workplaces (WAction, 2016–2018)

The WAction project was a groundbreaking intervention designed to organise women workers in formal workplaces across Pakistan’s major cities — Karachi, Lahore, Quetta, Islamabad, and Peshawar. Women in these industries often faced sexual harassment, wage discrimination, lack of maternity benefits, and unsafe working conditions. WAction aimed to address these systemic injustices by creating a national movement of women workers.

### Objectives:

- Form Women’s Workplace Alliances in industrial and service sectors.
- Build the capacity of women leaders to advocate for gender-sensitive policies.
- Provide women with tools to challenge harassment, wage discrimination, and unsafe practices.
- Engage provincial assemblies and national policymakers in debates on labour rights reforms.

### Key Activities:

- Established alliances of women workers across five major cities.
- Conducted extensive training sessions on labour laws, leadership, and workplace safety.
- Organised dialogues between women workers, trade unions, and policymakers.
- Launched media campaigns and advocacy forums to amplify women’s voices.

### Impact and Achievements:

- Women workers gained confidence to collectively address harassment and discrimination in their workplaces.
- Provincial assemblies debated legal reforms on workplace safety and women’s labour rights, triggered by advocacy from these alliances.
- A national women’s labour alliance was created — one of the first in Pakistan — that continues to represent women workers at national and international forums.
- WAction became a model initiative, inspiring similar organising strategies in other provinces.

## Citizen Voice Project (CVP, 2017–2018)

As Pakistan prepared for the General Elections 2018, NOWCommunities implemented the Citizen Voice Project (CVP) to strengthen electoral transparency and accountability. Focused on Korangi’s constituencies in Karachi, the project addressed widespread concerns about electoral irregularities, voter suppression, and lack of citizen participation in monitoring democratic processes.

### Objectives:

- Promote transparent, fair, and accountable elections through independent observation.
- Mobilise citizens, particularly youth and women, to take part in election monitoring.

- Document irregularities and advocate for corrective measures at the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

#### Key Activities:

- Trained local citizens as independent election observers.
- Deployed monitors in polling stations across Korangi.
- Published reports highlighting irregularities, voter intimidation, and systemic weaknesses.
- Engaged with ECP officials, media, and civil society to advocate for reforms.

#### Impact and Achievements:

- Citizens became active participants in monitoring democratic processes, reducing feelings of exclusion.
- Advocacy efforts created public debate around election transparency and accountability.
- The project provided evidence-based recommendations for improving future electoral processes.
- Strengthened trust between communities and democratic institutions through grassroots-led monitoring.

### Overall Achievements (2016–2018)

- WAction created a national women’s labour alliance, uniting women workers from across Pakistan under a common platform.
- Women leaders influenced policy debates in provincial assemblies, making workplace safety and gender equality a legislative priority.
- CVP ensured greater electoral transparency, empowering citizens to engage in democratic processes.
- Together, these projects established NOWCommunities as both a champion of women’s workplace rights and a guardian of democratic accountability, bridging the gap between community struggles and governance reforms.

### 2018–2023: Building Global Partnerships for Rights

From 2018 to 2023, NOWCommunities strengthened its role as a bridge between grassroots struggles in Pakistan and global human rights platforms. This period marked a new era in the organisation’s journey — expanding from national-level advocacy to transnational movements. Two flagship initiatives, Women’s Voice and Leadership – Pakistan (WVL-P) and Together for Decent Leather (T4DL), demonstrated NOWCommunities’ commitment to advancing women’s rights, labour dignity, and global solidarity.

#### Women’s Voice and Leadership – Pakistan (2018–2024)

The Women’s Voice and Leadership – Pakistan (WVL-P) project, funded by Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and implemented through Oxfam Canada, was designed to strengthen Women’s Rights Organisations (WROs) across the country. This project recognised that WROs — often underfunded and excluded from decision-making — are the backbone of feminist movements in Pakistan.



#### Objectives:

- Provide multi-year core funding to strengthen organisational sustainability of WROs.
- Build the technical and advocacy capacities of women-led organisations.
- Support grassroots movements addressing gender-based violence (GBV), economic empowerment, and political participation.
- Amplify women's voices in policy dialogues, legislative reforms, and governance platforms.

#### Key Activities:

- Supported dozens of WROs through financial grants and technical mentoring.
- Organised national and provincial dialogues where women leaders engaged directly with policymakers.
- Strengthened feminist networks, enabling local organisations to connect with regional and global women's movements.
- Developed toolkits and campaigns to address GBV, equal pay, workplace safety, and political representation.

#### Impact and Achievements:

- Enhanced the institutional resilience of WROs, enabling them to sustain operations beyond project cycles.
- Increased women's representation in policy dialogues and legislative forums, influencing reforms in labour rights, child marriage, and workplace harassment laws.
- Amplified grassroots feminist movements, ensuring rural and urban women workers had a collective voice.
- Reduced gender-based violence in targeted areas through awareness, survivor support, and community engagement campaigns.
- Strengthened Pakistan's women's rights movement by linking local feminist agendas to international commitments such as CEDAW and SDGs.

## Together for Decent Leather (2020–2023)

The Together for Decent Leather (T4DL) project was a European Union-funded transnational initiative implemented in Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh, with consortium partners in the Netherlands, Germany, and Austria. The project focused on exposing and addressing the exploitative conditions in the leather and footwear supply chains, where workers — particularly women — faced unsafe workplaces, low wages, and human rights violations.



### Objectives:

- Conduct evidence-based research to document labour conditions in Pakistan’s tanneries, particularly in Karachi.
- Highlight gendered exploitation, including wage discrimination, harassment, and denial of maternity rights.
- Advocate for binding corporate due diligence laws at the EU level to ensure accountability of multinational brands sourcing from South Asia.
- Strengthen local workers’ voices through grassroots organising, awareness sessions, and alliances with trade unions.

### Key Activities:

- Conducted extensive field investigations in Karachi’s tannery sector, collecting primary data from workers.
- Published globally recognised reports, including “Labour on a Shoestring”, which documented poverty wages and inhumane conditions.
- Organised advocacy campaigns in Pakistan and Europe, connecting the struggles of South Asian workers to global supply chain debates.
- Engaged with EU policymakers, parliamentarians, and civil society in Brussels to push for legally binding corporate responsibility.

### Impact and Achievements:

- Brought international attention to the plight of leather workers in Pakistan, challenging multinational brands to take responsibility.
- Strengthened the capacity of local workers and community-based organisations to demand fair wages and safe conditions.
- Influenced European Union debates on ethical supply chains, contributing to momentum for mandatory corporate due diligence.
- Positioned NOWCommunities as a regional player in global labour rights advocacy, working hand-in-hand with partners across South Asia and Europe.

## Overall Achievements (2018–2023)

- Strengthened dozens of Women’s Rights Organisations (WROs) across Pakistan through funding, capacity-building, and advocacy platforms.
- Increased women’s participation in decision-making spaces, enabling them to influence laws, policies, and social norms.
- Exposed exploitative practices in Pakistan’s leather sector through rigorous, globally cited research.
- Advocated successfully at global platforms, including the EU Parliament, for corporate accountability and ethical trade.
- Elevated NOWCommunities’ role from a national NGO to a global advocacy actor, connecting Pakistan’s struggles for gender and labour justice to transnational solidarity movements.

## 2021–2025: Urban Women and Economic Empowerment

As Pakistan’s cities expand, urbanisation brings both opportunities and deepening inequalities. Migrant, displaced, and marginalised women face unique challenges in accessing livelihoods, urban governance, and safe public spaces. Between 2021 and 2025, NOWCommunities expanded its work to strengthen women’s economic agency in urban centres, while also building pathways for recognition, resilience, and inclusion in labour markets. This period saw flagship programmes that linked grassroots women to governance structures, new economic opportunities, and global rights agendas.

### Urban Women in Transitional Change (UWTC, 2021–2025)

The UWTC project, supported by Global Affairs Canada (GAC) through Oxfam, is one of the most ambitious urban-focused gender programmes of NOWCommunities. It focuses on migrant, displaced, and marginalised urban women in Karachi, Lahore, and Quetta, recognising the specific vulnerabilities women face in contexts of displacement, informal employment, and rapid urbanisation.

Objectives:

- Enhance women’s voice in urban governance structures such as municipal bodies and city development forums.
- Create safe public spaces for women, enabling mobility and participation in community life.
- Improve women’s access to livelihood opportunities, skills development, and income-generating activities.
- Link displaced and marginalised women with social protection schemes and entitlements.

Key Activities:

- Conducted extensive urban needs assessments with women in informal settlements.
- Trained women leaders in civic participation, advocacy, and leadership.
- Worked with city authorities to improve urban safety infrastructure, such as lighting, sanitation, and public transport access.
- Built women’s solidarity groups in low-income areas to collectively demand services and rights.

## Impact and Achievements:

- Increased women's participation in local governance, with women from informal communities engaging directly with municipal authorities.
- Improved safety and mobility for women in public spaces through advocacy-driven interventions.
- Enabled urban women to access livelihood training and income opportunities, strengthening resilience in fragile economic contexts.
- Raised visibility of urban migrant and displaced women in national-level debates on gender and urban policy.

## Enhancing Women Workers' Access to Markets (EWAM)

The EWAM project focuses on the economic empowerment of informal women workers by enabling them to connect to markets, cooperatives, and e-commerce platforms. Many home-based and informal workers remain excluded from mainstream markets due to lack of recognition, financial literacy, and access to digital tools.



#### Objectives:

- Build women's financial literacy and entrepreneurship skills.
- Support product development, packaging, and quality improvement for goods produced by women workers.
- Facilitate women's participation in trade fairs, exhibitions, and cooperatives.
- Connect women to digital platforms and e-commerce channels, expanding income streams.

#### Key Activities:

- Trained hundreds of women in business planning, marketing, and cooperative management.
- Supported women workers to register enterprises and cooperatives in urban areas.
- Established linkages with online platforms and market actors, giving visibility to women's products.
- Conducted policy advocacy to secure recognition of informal workers in provincial labour and trade policies.

#### Impact and Achievements:

- Hundreds of informal women workers gained new income streams and improved livelihoods.
- Women's products — once confined to local neighbourhoods — achieved market visibility at national trade fairs and online platforms.
- Increased recognition of informal women workers in provincial policies and development debates.
- Strengthened women's entrepreneurial identity, enabling a shift from survival work to sustainable business ventures.

### **Grassroots Workers Organization for Women Workers (Ongoing)**

Funder: Levi Strauss Foundation

Implementer: NOWCommunities

Focus: Mobilisation, awareness-raising, trade union formation, and registration of women workers in the garment and textile sector.

### **Context & Strategic Importance**

The Levi Strauss Foundation is globally committed to advancing worker rights and well-being in apparel industries and promoting systemic, equitable transformation in global supply chains Levi Strauss & Co. Its funding of NOWCommunities' grassroots initiative aligns directly with this mission: empowering women workers at the ground level to claim their rights, build organizational power, and transform workplace dynamics.

### **Project Goals & Objectives**

- Mobilize women workers in textile and garment sectors—particularly those employed informally or under precarious conditions—in Karachi and surrounding industrial zones.

- Raise awareness of workers' legal rights, including the right to organize, safety at work, and equitable pay.
- Facilitate the formation of trade unions or worker alliances, providing platforms for collective bargaining and advocacy.
- Achieve legal registration of unions for women workers, solidifying their legitimacy and enabling formal negotiation rights.

## Implementation Strategies

- **Grassroots Mobilization:** Conducted community outreach in industrial clusters and home-based communities, facilitating worker gatherings and group discussions to build solidarity.
- **Capacity-Building Workshops:** Delivered targeted sessions on labour laws, union organizing, collective bargaining tactics, and leadership skills.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** Included peer-led discussions, leaflets, and dialogues with employers to surface critical workplace issues and foster a rights-based mindset.
- **Union Formation Support:** Guided groups of women workers through the legal and administrative steps to establish unions, including drafting constitutions and preparing registration documents.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Engaged labour authorities, employers, and civil society to support the legitimacy of women-led unions and facilitate registration processes.

## Impact & Outcomes

- **Enhanced Collective Power:** Marginalized women workers have developed organizational structures that enable them to advocate for fair treatment, pay, and working conditions.
- **Unionization Underway:** Multiple groups are now legally registering or have successfully registered, marking significant progress in rights formalization for women in the workplace.
- **Worker Rights Awareness Elevated:** A newfound understanding of labour rights among women workers has empowered them to advocate collectively and individually for improved conditions.
- **Foundational for Broader Policy Influence:** These grassroots unions form a powerful base for influencing labour policy discussions at broader levels, bridging the gap between local struggles and national reforms.

## Role in NOWCommunities' Legacy

This project represents the latest link in NOWCommunities' long history of organizing women workers—from the Lady Health Workers Movement to city-wide women's labour alliances. By penetrating informal sectors and focusing on unionization, it advances the organization's commitment to worker-led, rights-based transformation.

## Future Potential

- Serves as a model for similar initiatives in other provinces and sectors—where informal women workers are currently excluded.
- Enables policy-level advocacy for reform in labour laws to better include informal women workers under social protection regimes.

- Aligns with global pushes for worker-driven social responsibility, as seen in binding accords like the Pakistan Accord on apparel safety

## Key Achievements at a Glance (2007–2025)

Over nearly two decades, NOWCommunities has evolved into one of Pakistan’s most recognised grassroots rights organisations. Its achievements include:

- Organised Lady Health Workers into Pakistan’s first health-sector trade union, securing a historic milestone in women’s labour organising.
- Built alliances of women workers across five major cities of Pakistan, amplifying voices of garment, textile, and service sector workers.
- Conducted pioneering research on domestic workers, minorities’ access to social protection, and exploitation in the global leather supply chain.
- Mobilised tens of thousands of citizens for peace, rights, and governance reforms, strengthening community-based organisations across provinces.
- Influenced policy reforms at provincial, national, and international levels — from Sindh’s Child Marriage Restraint Act to European Union debates on corporate due diligence.
- Expanded work into urban women’s empowerment, supporting migrant and displaced women to access governance, public spaces, and livelihoods.
- Secured global partnerships that linked grassroots realities in Pakistan to international feminist, labour, and human rights movements.

# Impact in Numbers

Since its inception in 2007, NOWCommunities has steadily grown from a grassroots initiative into a national rights-based organization with regional and global linkages. The impact can be measured across years of service, geographic reach, direct beneficiaries, and alliances built for sustainable change.

## 1. Years of Service

- 18+ years of continuous work in peace, labour, women’s rights, and governance (2007–2025).
- Established a reputation as one of Pakistan’s most consistent grassroots organisations focusing on the nexus of labour, gender, minorities, and governance.

## 2. Geographic Coverage

- Sindh Focus: Strong presence in Karachi, Hyderabad, Mirpurkhas, and Thatta, with urban and peri-urban community organising.
- National Footprint: Extended work to Punjab (Lahore, Faisalabad), Balochistan (Quetta), and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Peshawar) through women’s labour alliances, research studies, and peace networks.

- Global Linkages: Representation in South Asia (India, Bangladesh) through the Together for Decent Leather consortium, and at international platforms (EU Parliament, UN forums).

### 3. Beneficiaries Reached (Direct + Indirect)

- Workers: Over 150,000 workers (garment, leather, home-based, domestic, and Lady Health Workers) mobilised, trained, or supported through organising and advocacy.
- Women & Girls: More than 90,000 women empowered through labour rights training, workplace safety campaigns, and leadership opportunities.
- Minorities: At least 15,000 minority community members (Hindu & Christian households in Sindh) reached through social protection access and advocacy initiatives.
- Youth: Approximately 30,000 young people engaged in peace campaigns, electoral monitoring, and awareness drives against violent extremism.
- Total Reach: An estimated 250,000+ beneficiaries across sectors and regions since 2007.

### 4. Alliances and Networks Formed

NOWCommunities is recognised for building sustainable alliances that outlive individual projects:

- FemConsortia: A pioneering consortium of Women’s Rights Organisations supported under WVL–Pakistan.
- Women Action for Better Workplaces (WAction): A national alliance of women labour leaders in formal sectors.
- Aman Dost Networks: Five community-based peace alliances in Karachi, which later evolved into the Karachi Peace Alliance.
- Lady Health Workers Union: Pakistan’s first-ever health sector trade union, supported through capacity building and advocacy.
- Labour & Value Chain Networks: Workers’ collectives in the leather and textile sectors, linked to global rights campaigns.

### 5. Research and Advocacy Outputs

- 25+ major research studies and policy papers published (domestic workers, minorities’ access to social protection, labour in supply chains, GSP+ compliance, women in peacebuilding).
- Contributions to provincial law reforms (Child Marriage Restraint Act, Sindh Women Agricultural Workers Bill, harassment laws).
- Influenced EU-level corporate accountability debates through Together for Decent Leather.

#### **In summary:**

NOWCommunities has 18 years of impact, a national presence with global influence, reached quarter of a million beneficiaries, and built lasting alliances that continue to push for rights-based change in Pakistan and beyond.

# PARTNERSHIPS & NETWORKS



NOWCommunities' strength lies not only in its grassroots organising but also in its ability to forge alliances with diverse stakeholders — from local community-based organisations (CBOs) to international human rights coalitions. These partnerships amplify the voices of women, workers, minorities, and youth, ensuring that grassroots struggles resonate at national, regional, and global platforms.

## 1. Civil Society & Community Alliances

- **Community-Based Organisations (CBOs):** Supported the formation and strengthening of over 100 CBOs across Karachi, Hyderabad, Mirpurkhas, and other districts. These CBOs play a frontline role in peacebuilding, labour organising, and social protection advocacy.
- **Karachi Peace Alliance:** Formed in 2009 by uniting Aman Dost Networks, bringing together CSOs, CBOs, and trade unions committed to peace, de-weaponisation, and tolerance in Karachi.
- **Women's Workplace Alliances (WAction):** Established across five major cities (Karachi, Lahore, Quetta, Islamabad, Peshawar) to address harassment, wage discrimination, and workplace safety.
- **Lady Health Workers Union:** Supported Pakistan's first health sector trade union, a landmark achievement for women's labour rights.
- **FemConsortia:** A consortium of feminist and women's rights organisations, built under WVL-Pakistan, which continues to advocate for gender equality and protection from GBV.

## 2. National Networks & Advocacy Platforms

- **Provincial Engagements:** Worked closely with the Sindh Commission on the Status of Women, Minimum Wage Board Sindh, and Labour & Human Rights Departments to influence gender-sensitive labour policies.

- National Human Rights Networks: Actively engaged with networks advocating for GSP+ compliance, child marriage reforms, and labour law implementation.
- Election Monitoring Platforms: Partnered with citizen-led networks under the Citizen Voice Project (CVP) to promote electoral transparency and democratic accountability in Karachi.

### 3. International Partnerships

- Global Affairs Canada / Oxfam Canada: Strategic partner through Women's Voice and Leadership – Pakistan and Urban Women in Transitional Change, strengthening WROs nationwide.
- Levi Strauss Foundation: Supporting the ongoing Grassroots Workers Organisation for Women Workers, focusing on mobilisation, awareness, and trade union formation.
- European Union (EU): Partnership through the Together for Decent Leather consortium, advocating for corporate accountability in global supply chains.
- Oxfam Novib, Hivos, SOMO (Netherlands): Collaborated on research and advocacy on leather value chains, women workers, and GSP+ compliance.
- UN Platforms: Represented Pakistani civil society on UNODC, UN Women Task Force on Gender, and CANSA (Climate Action Network South Asia), contributing to global debates on gender, labour, and climate justice.

### 4. Regional & Transnational Coalitions

- Together for Decent Leather Consortium: Linked CSOs from Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh with European partners (Germany, Netherlands, Austria) to demand ethical supply chains and corporate accountability.
- HomeNet Pakistan & HomeNet South Asia: Strengthened the visibility of home-based women workers, connecting them to South Asian feminist and labour networks.
- Climate & Social Protection Networks: Partnerships with CANSA South Asia and national climate action groups to link women workers' rights with resilience and social protection in the face of climate change.

### 5. Strategic Media & Knowledge Partnerships

- Collaborated with national and local media houses to amplify campaigns on GBV, workplace harassment, and peacebuilding.
- Worked with research organisations to publish evidence-based studies, including reports on domestic workers, minorities' access to social protection, and labour rights in supply chains.
- Partnered with universities and training institutes for capacity-building of young activists and women leaders.

✦✦ In essence, NOWCommunities has built a multi-layered web of partnerships — from grassroots CBOs to international rights coalitions — ensuring that local struggles for dignity and justice are connected to national reforms and global advocacy agendas.

# Research & Advocacy

Research and advocacy are at the heart of NOWCommunities' work. Since its inception in 2007, the organisation has combined grassroots mobilisation with evidence-based research, ensuring that the lived realities of workers, women, minorities, and youth inform policies, laws, and international debates.



NOWCommunities has produced primary data-based research studies, policy briefs, and community reports that have not only shaped local campaigns but also contributed to provincial reforms, national strategies, and global discourses on labour and rights.

## 1. Groundbreaking Research Studies

- **Domestic Workers in Pakistan (2011):**  
A pioneering study documenting the exploitation, invisibility, and lack of legal protections for domestic workers. This research became a reference point for national labour debates, highlighting the need for domestic workers' recognition under law.
- **Minorities' Access to Social Protection (2013–2014):**  
Field research in Karachi and Mirpurkhas revealed systemic exclusions in BISP and Bait-ul-Maal schemes for Hindu and Christian minorities. It provided evidence for inclusive policy advocacy at provincial and federal levels.
- **Role of Women in Preventing Violent Extremism (2013):**  
Documented the agency of women in peacebuilding in Sultanabad and Hijrat Colony, showing how women's narratives can counter extremism at the community level.
- **Enhancing Women Workers' Awareness of Labour Laws (2014–2015):**  
Collected first-hand evidence from women workers in Karachi's SITE area, shaping campaigns against workplace harassment and wage discrimination.
- **Leather and Textile Sector Research (2020–2023):**  
Under Together for Decent Leather, NOWCommunities conducted investigations into Karachi's tanneries, exposing unsafe conditions, child labour, and gender-

based exploitation. Findings contributed to international reports such as “Labour on a Shoestring”, presented in EU corporate accountability debates.

- **Export-Oriented Textile Manufacturing Study (2023–2025):**  
A baseline study of 300 families in Karachi’s textile sector, analysing wages, working conditions, and gendered exploitation, with findings due for publication in 2025.
- **Access of Women Workers to Resources (Ongoing):**  
Primary research on land, property, and financial resources for women workers, conducted with Oxfam Pakistan.

## 2. Policy Advocacy & Campaigns

NOWCommunities leverages its research to influence policies, build alliances, and run advocacy campaigns at multiple levels:

- **Provincial Reforms:**
  - Supported advocacy for the Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Act and the Sindh Women Agricultural Workers Bill.
  - Engaged the Minimum Wage Board – Sindh for fair wage setting and enforcement.
  - Worked with the Sindh Commission on the Status of Women on GBV and labour issues.
- **National Advocacy:**
  - Played a watchdog role in GSP+ compliance processes, publishing reports in collaboration with SOMO and other European partners.
  - Advocated for domestic workers’ recognition in national labour policies.
  - Partnered with labour organisations to push for trade union registration and labour inspections.
- **International Influence:**
  - Contributed evidence to EU Parliament debates on ethical supply chains and binding corporate due diligence.
  - Represented Pakistan on UN platforms (UN Women Task Force on Gender, UNODC, CANSA South Asia).
  - Shared field-based findings in regional coalitions such as HomeNet South Asia and Together for Decent Leather.

## 3. Advocacy Tools & Approaches

- **Policy Briefs & Reports:** Translating field research into concise, actionable policy recommendations.
- **Media Engagement:** Using TV, radio, and print media to amplify grassroots voices and highlight findings.
- **Public Campaigns:** Awareness drives on GBV, workplace harassment, education, and peace, often linked to international days (e.g., International Women’s Day, Human Rights Day).
- **Dialogue Platforms:** Creating spaces for interaction between workers, policymakers, civil society, and international agencies.

## 4. Achievements in Research & Advocacy

- Produced 25+ major research publications shaping debates on labour, women, and minorities' rights.
- Influenced provincial legislation on women and workers' rights in Sindh.
- Strengthened global accountability in textile and leather supply chains through field-based evidence.
- Created a culture of grassroots-led research, where communities are not just subjects but also active contributors to knowledge production.

In summary, NOWCommunities has positioned itself as a bridge between grassroots struggles and policy reform. Its research is not academic alone — it is action-oriented, advocacy-driven, and globally recognised, ensuring that the realities of Pakistan's most marginalised communities are reflected in laws, policies, and international commitments.

# Future Directions

As NOWCommunities completes nearly two decades of grassroots organising, advocacy, and global engagement, the organisation is looking ahead to the next 3–5 years with renewed commitment to deepening its impact. The future strategy focuses on consolidating past achievements, responding to emerging challenges such as climate change and urbanisation, and scaling initiatives that empower women, workers, minorities, and youth.

## Strategic Goals for the Next 3–5 Years

### 1. Expansion within Sindh and Beyond

- Extend organising and programme interventions to additional districts of Sindh, including Sukkur, Larkana, and rural areas with high concentrations of agricultural and informal women workers.
- Scale successful urban models piloted in Karachi, Hyderabad, and Mirpurkhas to other metropolitan cities in Punjab and Balochistan.
- Strengthen alliances with national labour and women's rights organisations to achieve broader coverage and policy influence.

### 2. Advancing Climate Justice and Social Protection

- Integrate climate resilience and just transition into all programming, recognising that women and informal workers are among the most vulnerable to climate-induced displacement and livelihood loss.
- Advocate for inclusive climate policies that link women's labour rights to adaptation, renewable energy transitions, and green jobs.
- Build partnerships with climate justice networks (e.g., CANSA South Asia) to amplify grassroots voices in national climate agendas.

### 3. Strengthening Community-Based Organisations (CBOs)

- Transition WASH committees, women's workplace alliances, and local peace groups into formalised, independent CBOs.

- Provide CBOs with capacity building in governance, financial management, and advocacy, ensuring sustainability beyond project cycles.
- Establish a CBO resource and learning hub to share knowledge, tools, and best practices across districts.

#### **4. Enhancing Women's Role in Peacebuilding and Governance**

- Expand women's leadership programmes to integrate peacebuilding, electoral participation, and governance reforms.
- Document and amplify women's contributions to countering extremism, promoting tolerance, and fostering inclusive urban communities.
- Build cross-sector coalitions linking women's labour alliances with peace and governance platforms, ensuring women's voices shape both social and political reforms.

#### **5. Expanding Economic Empowerment Models**

- Scale up Enhancing Women Workers' Access to Markets (EWAM) by building stronger linkages to digital commerce, cooperatives, and national/international trade fairs.
- Focus on financial inclusion and digital literacy for women, ensuring equitable access to banking, credit, and entrepreneurship opportunities.
- Advocate for formal recognition of informal workers in provincial labour laws, bridging the policy gap.

#### **6. Deepening Global Partnerships**

- Strengthen ties with international allies, including Oxfam, Levi Strauss Foundation, EU consortia, and UN agencies, to sustain funding and advocacy platforms.
- Position NOWCommunities as a regional leader in South Asia, linking Pakistani grassroots struggles with regional campaigns on supply chains, climate justice, and women's rights.
- Continue influencing global debates on corporate accountability, GSP+ compliance, and feminist labour standards through evidence-based advocacy.

### **Vision for Long-Term Impact**

In the long term, NOWCommunities envisions a just, inclusive, and peaceful Pakistan where:

- Women and workers are recognised as equal rights-holders, empowered to lead trade unions, CBOs, and governance structures.
- Marginalised communities — minorities, migrants, displaced, and informal workers — gain equitable access to social protection, education, and urban services.
- Grassroots research and advocacy shape national and global policy agendas, ensuring that voices from Pakistan's katchi abadis, factories, and communities are heard in decision-making circles.

- Climate justice is integrated into labour rights and women's empowerment, enabling communities to transition towards sustainable, resilient futures.
- NOWCommunities evolves into a national centre of excellence for women's labour rights, grassroots organising, and rights-based advocacy, continuing to link local struggles with global solidarity movements.

In essence, the future of NOWCommunities is about scaling impact, deepening alliances, and amplifying grassroots leadership — ensuring that the organisation's legacy of nearly two decades becomes the foundation for transformative change in the decades ahead.

## Contact Information

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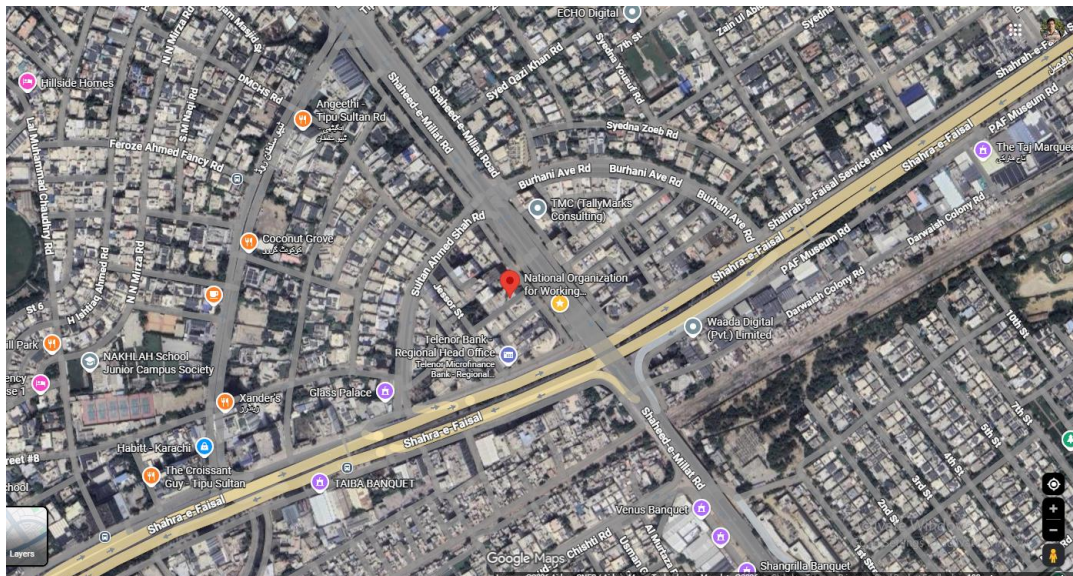
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