

SUCCESS STORY

A SITTING WITH FIRST BATCH ALUMINI OF THE MASKAN INSTITUTE



*“Saving, protecting, and preparing a girl for dignified life saves
and prepares generations”*

Background

On November 20, 2022, a sitting was organized with the Alumni of the first batch of the Maskan Institute. It was a sunny day and the Alumni who are now in their late 50s and early 60s surrounded by the children telling stories of their life at Maskan with smiling faces. The life experiences sharing with children fully captured the minds of the children, who perhaps were imagining or dreaming something similar for themselves to be successful in life. The shining sun in the blue sky and chirping of the birds made the moments pleasant silently conveying the message of hope just as the gloomy and melancholic weather couple of days ago turned to a pleasant one.

Methodology

An individual interview was conducted with each of the six Alumni followed by a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with all to get useful insights by recalling their memories decades ago. A proper verbal consent was taken for publishing the case story based on their feedback about their life story. The unique identifier such as their names are changed, and group photo is blurred to protect their privacy and ensure confidentiality. Only Shan Baji the eldest, the first one who got registered at Maskan gave consent for sharing her photo to be published as part of this case story.

Reflections - A deep dive in the ocean of the memories

“Thinking If there was not Maskan at that time, make us fearful today but also feel blessed that luckily we were in safe hands and protected” – Shan Baji

An Iron lady Shan Baji ¹started quoting the statement on the left. She along with her three younger sisters encountered the miseries of life very early after their father’s death when they all were below 5, the age of playing with toys. It didn’t stop here, and another tragedy happened when their mother got married and abandoned

them few months after their father’s death. It was 1967, the era when Swat was not merged into Pakistan and was one of the Princely states in the Sub-Continent and they had to seek assistance from the Royal family of Swat. Begum Naseem Aurangzeb holding an international recognition and being famous for her kindness and welfare work was the first choice to be consulted. Shan Baji along with her three sisters were taken to the Bungalow where Naseeb Bibi made temporary arrangements for their living. They were spending their daytime in the Banglow playing with princess Fakhri, prince Adnan, and prince Mahmud who were of the same age group while for the night stay, they were sharing portion adjacent to the

¹ A name given by her colleagues being the eldest, the most active, and the first one to get enrolled in Maskan. This was learnt when her old colleagues invited for a catchup called her with the same name after 5 decades

Banglow. Despite all our sufferings, this was our golden age as we were then living a privileged life and were treated equally by Naseem Bibi like her own children having access to food and clothing without any discrimination. This triggered the idea to have safety nets for the orphans, which was further enriched by the ideas taken by Naseem Bibi during her official visit in 1967 to Jerusalem (in control of Jordan those days) while she came across a model project almost addressing the need of similar nature related to orphans' welfare. A year, later Maskan Institute was established.

Pointing at the entrance with her finger Shan Bibi remarked "That is the place we were standing to welcome Naseem Bibi for the inauguration ceremony of Maskan in September 1968. I, along with my three sisters were among the first batch of 16 girls enrolled in Maskan"

Another Alumni Narmeen, who is serving as Senior School Teacher (SST) shared her story. "It was 1979 when my parents got separated and my father got married to another woman. My mother left home and started serving as maid in the house of a local businessman in Mingora city. This was the most difficult time of our life as being children and girls we had to live without our mother. Our stepmother never accepted us and was very cruel not treating us fairly. Few months later my mother decided to take us and get us admitted in an orphanage named Maskan Institute which she explored and was fully satisfied that we will be in safe hands due to the credibility of the institute being run by the Royal family"

Responding to a question to recall their memories of something that was very delightful, and they were always desperately waiting for, the group mentioned one day picnics, storytelling of the movies, and novels by Tahira Rehman (a matron at that time) at night; watching movies on a projector; and surprisingly watching movies at two local cinemas (Palwasha, and Swat cinema). This indeed is the evidence how progressive, tolerant, peaceful the society was at that time treating women with equity and having work life balance with enough space for entertainment and social activities. TV which was luxury at that time and only the elite class was privileged with it. Prince Adnan bought a TV for Maskan when he was back from the USA. The pleasure that day when TV was brought to Maskan can't be expressed in words.

The group also highlighted the importance of proper upbringing and mentioned how effective were some of life skills, and behaviors that had been inculcated in their habits which are still in their practice. Knitting, cutting & stitching, cooking, communication, table manners are few mentioned specifically. One of the participants recalled how they were taught to avoid munching, gobbling while eating.

"Education along with life skills actually prepared us to smoothly transition to our family lives" - Narmeen

Impact

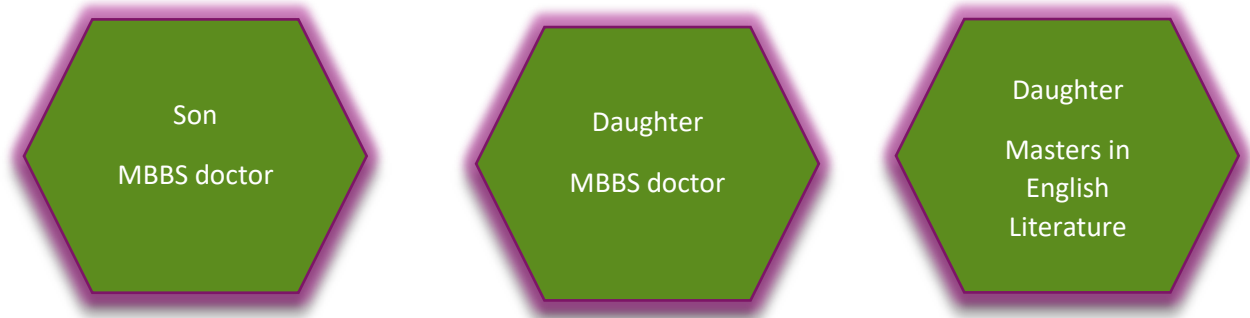
Shan Baji is a retired Government school teacher. She has three daughters, and her husband is dead, but she is having enough pension to meet her family living expenses and to educate them to reach their full potential.

First daughter
Masters in Urdu

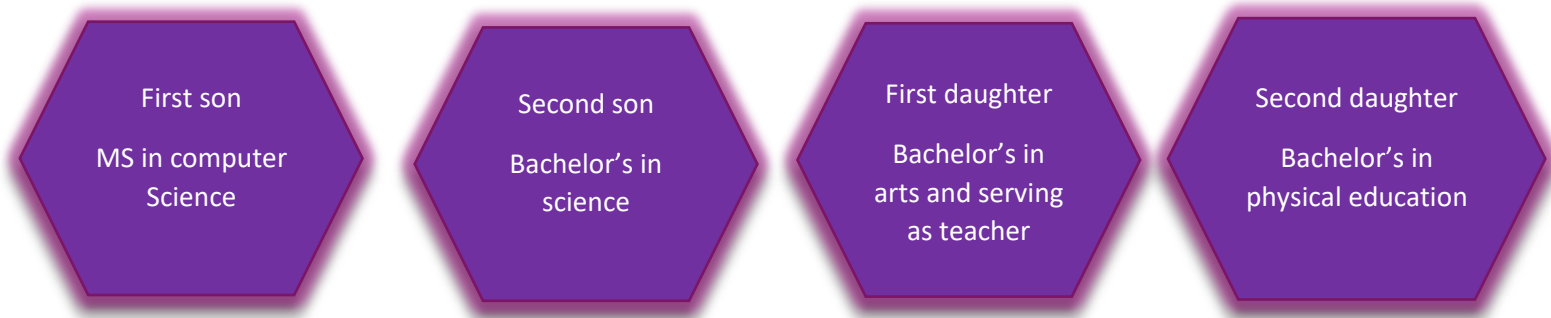
Second daughter
Hafiz-e-Quran
(learnt the holy
book by heart)

Third daughter
Bachelors in Arts

Alia Bibi, sister of Shan Baji. She is holding master's degrees in Urdu, and Islamic Studies. She served as headmaster in the government school. She is now retired having 1 son and 2 daughters.



Abiha served as teacher in government school, got retired after serving for 25 years. She is having 4 sons and four daughters.



Nazo served as a schoolteacher and got retired after completing her service tenure. She is having 2 sons, and 3 daughters. One daughter completed her bachelor's degree while remaining three children are in secondary and intermediate level. Nazo is fully committed to complete the education of her children.

Zoha is serving as teacher in government school and have 4 children.

