



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



MERIT AND NEEDS BASED SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM (MNBSP) STUDY

DEVELOPING A HIGHLY EDUCATED FEMALE WORKFORCE
IN PAKISTAN: OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

OCTOBER 2014

This publication was produced at the request of the United States Agency for International Development by Laine Berman, Yasmin Zaidi, Rehana Shaikh, and Babur Mufti. It was prepared by Management Systems International (MSI) under the Monitoring and Evaluation Program (MEP).

MERIT AND NEEDS BASED SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM (MNBS) STUDY

DEVELOPING A HIGHLY EDUCATED FEMALE
WORKFORCE IN PAKISTAN: OPPORTUNITIES
AND CONSTRAINTS

Contracted under Order No. AID-391-C-13-00005

Monitoring and Evaluation Program (MEP)

DISCLAIMER

This study/report is made possible by the support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the sole responsibility of Management Systems International and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.



Photo: Waseem Nazir. *The Express Tribune*, 2014.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/662574/fjwu-convocation-higher-education-opens-up-new-vistas-says-punjab-governor>.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to express their thanks to all those who facilitated the team's work and enabled us to complete this assessment. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- MNBSP implementing partners and faculty from the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad; Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad; Institute of Business Administration, Karachi; Agricultural University, Peshawar; Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan; The Islamia University of Bahawalpur; University of Punjab, Lahore; Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University, Peshawar; University of Karachi; and Mehran University of Engineering & Technology, Jamshoro, who shared their valuable time and insights with the team, provided information through discussion and relevant documents, and facilitated successful field visits;
- MNBSP alumni, who shared their successes, issues, and experiences, both positive and negative, so that future scholarship recipients can benefit;
- Employers of MNBSP alumni, who helped us better understand the issues of women transitioning into the workforce;
- USAID and Pakistani Higher Education Commission (HEC) officials, who shared their insights and information through lively discussions; and
- The many young girls who helped us understand the needs and experiences of potential MNBSP recipients, and their parents and siblings, who related how these girls literally risk their lives to attend school and provided a wealth of local, cultural, social, and personal information. We wish them success in their future careers.

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
INTRODUCTION	5
USAID RESPONSE	9
ASSESSMENT PURPOSE AND QUESTIONS	11
METHODS AND LIMITATIONS	12
FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS	15
RECOMMENDATIONS	28
ANNEXES	1
Annex 1: Statement of Work	1
Annex 2: Research Tools	55
Annex 3: Bibliography.....	67
Annex 4: Bios of Team Members	69

Tables and Figures

Table 1: Comparison of MNBSP Phase I and II.....	10
Table 2: Respondents According to Experience with MNBSP	13
Table 3: Meetings by Location and Number.....	13
Table 4: Non-Traditional Fields of Study	18
Figure 1: MNBSP Partner Universities in Phase I and Phase II	iii
Figure 2: Gender Parity Index by Educational Level.....	5

ACRONYMS

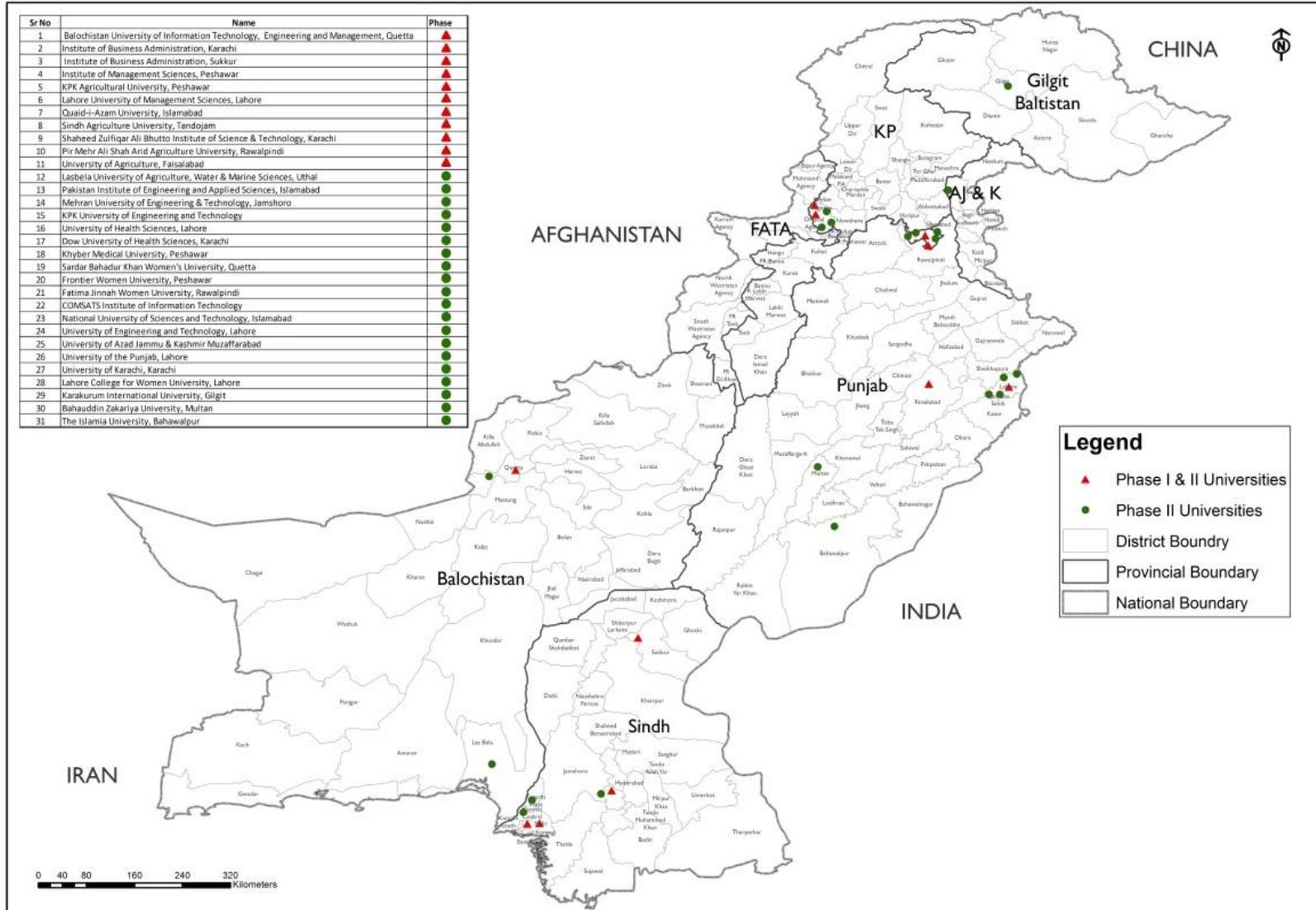
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FWS	Female Workforce Study
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GI	Group Interview
GOP	Government of Pakistan
HEC	Higher Education Commission
ICT	Islamabad Capital Territory
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
MNBSP	Merit and Needs Based Scholarship Program
M.Phil.	Master of Philosophy
M.S.	Master of Science
NEMIS	National Education Management Information System
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PC-1	Planning Commission 1 (GOP's program description document)
Ph.D.	Doctor of Philosophy
SOW	Statement of Work
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
U.S.	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Coding of Data¹

G	Girls
M	Mothers
D	Fathers
F	Faculty
E	Employers
A	Alumni
P	Punjab
S	Sindh
K	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

¹ All quotes in the report are attributed to the interview or focus group discussion in which they occurred, according to our coding system. Thus, G2P means the second girls' focus group in Punjab, A3S is the third alumni interview in Sindh, and so forth.

FIGURE I: MNBSP PARTNER UNIVERSITIES IN PHASE I AND PHASE II



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The biggest threat to the Taliban is a girl with a book.

—Malala Yousafzai of Pakistan, Nobel Laureate 2014

The issue of gender equity in U.S. Government-funded education programs in Pakistan gained prominence in 2012 when Malala Yousafzai, an activist for girls' education, was attacked and critically wounded by the Taliban in her Swat Valley village. In response, U.S. Senators Barbara Boxer and Mary Landrieu introduced the Malala Yousafzai Scholarship Act to promote girls' and women's education in Pakistan. With the Merit and Needs Based Scholarship Program (MNBSP) already in place in Pakistan since 2004, it was identified as the channel through which to meet this new objective. Under MNBSP Phase I, a target of 25 percent female participation was set. Project performance fell just short of this goal, with 23 percent of scholarships awarded to female students. Starting in 2014, in line with the Malala Yousafzai Scholarship Act, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) must ensure that 50 percent of all merit- and needs based scholarships are awarded to disadvantaged women in Pakistan.

To inform USAID efforts to meet this goal of 50 percent female scholarship recipients, this MNBSP Female Workforce Study (FWS) was designed to assess the perceptions, beliefs, constraints, and opportunities faced by women in their decisions to enter academic and professional life. The findings will also provide recommendations for Pakistan's Higher Education Commission (HEC) in terms of future programs and policies related to women's participation in higher education.

USAID/Pakistan identified the following four key questions for this study:

1. What are the aspirations and life goals of academically high-performing, but economically disadvantaged young women, and to what extent and in what ways would a higher education enable them to achieve these goals?
2. What are the most and least promising fields of study and career options for these young women, and why?
3. What social, economic, or other constraints are female MNBSP participants most likely to face in their university education and career, and how do these women accommodate or mitigate these constraints?
4. What changes to the university climate, job market, and workplace might best allow female MNBSP alumni to achieve their full potential, and what existing conditions or factors have supported their success?

The FWS assessment team interviewed female MNBSP recipients from Phase I, their faculty, and current employers. The team also held six focus groups with 72 potential MNBSP recipients, i.e., young girls who show academic promise, but without the economic means to attend university. In separate focus groups, the team also interviewed their mothers and fathers. In addition to the interview and focus group data, assessment findings and conclusions are strengthened by an extensive literature review on gender issues in Pakistan's higher education system. These data were then synthesized to assess the overall opportunities and constraints women face in the struggle for an education in Pakistan.

The FWS key findings and conclusions are presented here in three parts: 1) pre-university information that addresses the barriers and means for attracting more female MNBSP applicants; 2) university constraints and the mitigating factors alumni have employed to succeed on campus; and 3) post-university issues and means of facilitating women's transition to the workforce.

1) Pre-university

For most young Pakistani women and their parents, a university education and degree are the final goals, and by themselves represent a great achievement. Their thoughts of career were even narrower, with the majority not thinking beyond the prestige and enhanced marriage prospects resulting from earning a degree. Prevailing gender norms combined with the multidimensional effects of poverty have long defined what work is acceptable and available for women. Thus, the majority of women and their families have very narrow aspirations and goals revealed through a very limited set of choices for potential fields of study.

With finances the most commonly reported constraint faced by families, the usual choice is to educate boys, not girls. Nonetheless, families could be more amenable to educating their daughters if they were aware of scholarship opportunities. It is common for students in Pakistan to find out about financial aid only after gaining admission into university, meaning that families need to be able to cover admission and tuition expenses at least for the first 6 months. This lack of prior information is one of the key problems in attracting more female MNBS candidates. However, as reported by all female respondents (i.e., alumni, girls, and mothers), these potential scholars do not make important decisions on their own. Agreement and moral support from parents, husbands, future husbands, and in-laws are what allow young women to pursue higher education. Once parents are committed to their daughter's education, however, they will find any means possible to make it happen.

2) In university

Respondents indicated that university education increases young women's confidence and awareness of a wide array of fields of study and career choices that they were unable to conceive of prior to entering university. Women apply for university based on their chosen field of study, and, for rural, disadvantaged women, these limited options could hinder their admission. Medicine was unanimously mentioned as the main career choice for those women who were focused on a career. However, medical colleges are notoriously difficult to get into. Without awareness of alternatives, academic careers could be halted prematurely.

Keeping in mind that the majority of young women are not thinking of a career, just the degree, teaching was the most broadly mentioned career option. Teaching is perceived not as a "career," but rather an *option*, available if and when a woman decides to seek employment. Armed with a degree of any kind, women can teach whenever their financial or marital situation requires it, such as if a husband is disabled or in the case of divorce. All respondents mentioned both medicine and teaching as the *traditional* career choices for Pakistani women. The most promising fields are not the ones with the highest employment or remuneration prospects. Instead, the job choices that are broadly considered the most socially acceptable for women are those with working hours that do not interfere with their primary responsibility to the household, that can be engaged in primarily female environments, and that are desk-based or sheltered from the possibility of male harassment.

University officials, faculty, and alumni all indicated that because they are ill prepared, disadvantaged young women are challenged by university life. Public secondary schools do not equip girls with the variety of skills required for university, including English language mastery and computer, communication, study, and social interaction skills. Despite these weaknesses at the start of their university career, there is no record of scholarship recipients dropping out. Girls meet these challenges with the help of informal peer support networks, sympathetic faculty, and their determined habit of working hard.

Inadequate and unsafe transport is a major concern of parents and girls alike, with its implications for all aspects of women's mobility and specifically access to school, university, and career. Women in public are vulnerable to harassment. It is this vulnerability that was most often mentioned as a major constraining factor in both educating girls and also their professional life choices. Protecting women is the main responsibility of males in the extended family, meaning that they need to morally and personally support the education of

female relatives, as these men are the ones who will be called upon to escort the women back and forth and to ensure their safety.

3) Post-university workforce transition

As participants explained, Pakistani women are undergoing a cultural transition that only recently has opened up the possibilities of employment and careers. Most are still ambivalent about a career, and rural, disadvantaged women who do work often do so only for economic survival. Issues of personal satisfaction, independence, empowerment as a process of self-development, or an increased ability to make strategic life choices were not mentioned by any of the potential MNBSP scholars or their families, although these would be the results of their choosing to work if they were permitted the opportunity. Thus, the assessment team identified factors that “enabled” transition into the workforce and listed those factors mentioned by participants themselves that could “facilitate change” or could assist with this transition.

Alumni, employers, and faculty noted that university coursework does not emphasize practical knowledge and skills and therefore does not necessarily prepare students for employment. Only business faculties have internship or work/study programs that specifically engage students with work experiences. Further, public universities do not have effective career development centers with links to a range of industries and employers, especially those that have the potential to employ women, nor do they have efficient and transparent systems for informing students about job opportunities, all of which would better prepare students to transition to the workplace. Female students are more hindered by an emphasis on recruiting males or the selection of just the brightest students to be assisted through job services.

Organizations that have gender-sensitive policies and services that accommodate women’s specific gender needs will facilitate women’s entry and retention in the workplace. Considering issues of transport, security, non-harassment policies, women-friendly facilities, and the number of women already in the workplace can make for the right conditions to attract women to work.

Key Recommendations

Recommendations here are divided into those directed toward USAID and HEC, and toward HEC and universities.

For USAID/HEC

1. Outreach: Information campaigns for MNBSP should target more women’s colleges and high schools in provincial districts so that potential recipients from economically disadvantaged families *and* their parents have the necessary financial aid information, without which they might not consider enrolling in university.
2. Role Models and Mentors: MNBSP alumni and current recipients should be engaged in these outreach activities, especially those alumni who work or reside in the districts where the outreach event is held.
3. Role Models on Campus: Support female guest speakers at university-based events to address the lack of exposure to the range of fields of study and career options increasingly available to women. Meeting successful women across a range of professions and careers addresses this gap, as does supporting female students to attend conferences and meetings of professional groups.
4. Research: Support formation of MNBSP recipients’ network for monitoring and evaluation and information sharing. A variety of media can be employed to keep the network dynamic and relevant to the needs of the students and alumni.

5. **Social Responsibility:** MNBSP scholarships could also include social responsibility clauses through which recipients are encouraged to give back to the program and their communities in various ways.
6. **Regional Differences:** The scholarship may require some adapting to respond to the challenges that constrain women in areas such as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), and Balochistan, not the least of which is that the travel distances required to reach universities is not possible without male escorts.

For HEC/Universities

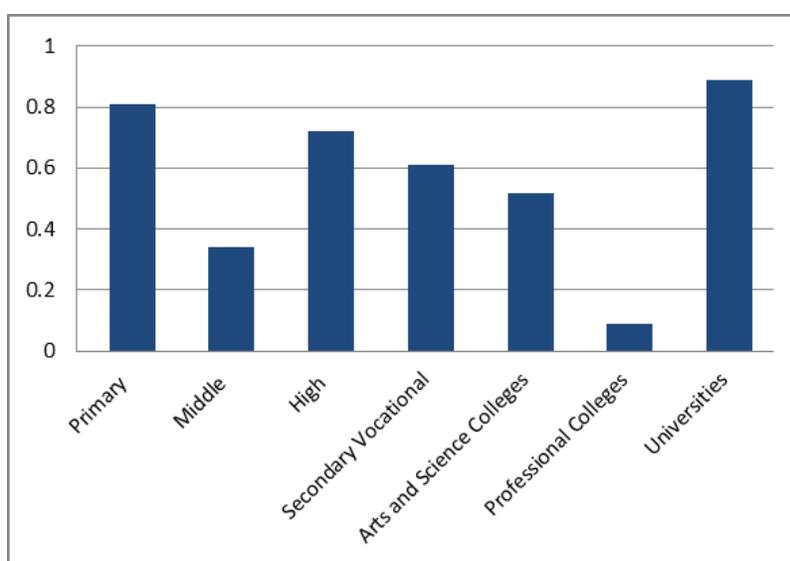
1. **Orientation:** Assist universities to organize bridging courses for MNBSP recipients to prepare them academically, socially, and personally and to ease the transition from secondary to tertiary education.
2. **Transport:** Explore ways of improving university transport systems for women in order to increase access for female students through safe and reliable transport systems.
3. **Inform Students about Harassment and Gender Policies:** Support wider and sustained dissemination of existing gender policies in higher education institutions through pamphlets and awareness-raising events. Such events can inform all students, especially new admissions, about existing gender policies that address harassment issues so that students and faculty are informed of the procedures and consequences of actions that infringe on women's rights.²
4. **Internships:** Support internships and work study opportunities to increase women's skills and confidence in the transition to the workplace. This direct experience at work could provide women the experience and confidence to engage in a rewarding and beneficial career.
5. **Career Counseling Centers:** Support pre-graduation workshops, career counseling, and placement services through effective university-based career development centers. The centers should consider including small post-graduation grants to support female MNBSP alumni in their job search, as they lack the means to access job opportunities (e.g., application fees, transport, or internet/computer access).
6. **Create safe/dedicated spaces for women:** University campuses should provide safe spaces for women within existing university structures to support the specific needs of female students. These can include counseling facilities and should be a "safe" place where female students can go if they experience harassment and for other types of assistance. They can also host orientations, seminars, and workshops for women, as well as provide information services.

² The Government of Pakistan's Harassment against Women at the Workplace Act 2010 mandates setting up committees and procedures to address sexual and other harassment cases against women. The Act is currently being reviewed for a possible amendment to include educational institutions; however, policies to address harassment and gender-related grievances are in place at universities, as per the information received from the interviews.

INTRODUCTION

Education is significant to the development of human society. It can be the beginning not only of individual knowledge, information, and awareness, but also of a holistic strategy for development and change. Women's education is so inextricably linked with the other facets of human development that to make it a priority is also to make change on a range of other fronts: from the health and status of women to early childhood care; from nutrition, water, and sanitation to community empowerment; from the reduction of child labor and other forms of exploitation to the peaceful resolution of conflicts.³ In the words of research participants, “Men’s education is only useful for him, but women’s education is useful for the whole community” (G3K). With gender comparisons showing a bias toward educating sons rather than daughters (see Fig. 2), Pakistan risks lowering the average level of human capital for this generation and the next even further.⁴

FIGURE 2: GENDER PARITY INDEX BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL



Source: Zaidi, *Status of Women and Men in Pakistan 2012* (UN Women Pakistan, 2013).

Pakistan ranks among the world’s lowest performing countries in terms of education, and is unlikely to meet the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education by 2015.⁵ Declining education expenditures, regional discrepancies in gender parity (including the resistance to mainstream education in tribal areas), and a series of natural disasters and crises are often given as the reasons for Pakistan’s poor performance in poverty alleviation, lack of long-term development goals, and low economic growth. In other words, the relative lack of educational opportunities in Pakistan does more than just minimize job opportunities; it is a key contributor to the nation’s ongoing political and social instability.⁶

³ Goel, *Education and Socio-Economic Perspectives of Women Development and Empowerment* (New Delhi: The Flammer, 2004).

⁴ Ramachandran, *Gender Equality in Education: Looking beyond Parity An IIEP Evidence Based Policy Forum* (Paris: UNESCO-IIEP, 2011).

⁵ <http://www.pk.undp.org/content/pakistan/en/home/library/mdg/pakistan-mdgs-report-2013/>

⁶ Akhtar, et al., *Merit and Needs Based Scholarship Program (MNBSBP): Evaluation report* (USAID, 2012).

Higher education performance shows parallel problems to those affecting education overall. HEC statistics show that only 7.8 percent of the eligible population has access to higher education, placing Pakistan on par with the world's worst achievers.⁷ Furthermore, Pakistan has the lowest percentage in South Asia in terms of women's access to higher education. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 6 percent of Pakistanis (9 percent of men and 3.5 percent of women) were university graduates as of 2007.⁸ Pakistan plans to increase this figure to 10 percent overall by 2015 and subsequently to 15 percent by 2020, as outlined in Pakistan's 2009 Education Policy.

As HEC admits, there are large income and regional differences in tertiary education participation. In the more economically advanced regions such as Punjab and the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), trends in university enrollments show nearly equal numbers of men and women for bachelor's degrees, and women even surpassing men in many fields and in advanced degrees.⁹ In more conservative regions, male to female ratios are reversed. Throughout KP, university enrollments showed 42,711 males to 13,440 females. In Balochistan, 6,256 males were enrolled in a bachelor degree program as compared to 1,812 females.¹⁰ The gross enrollment rate in urban areas (8.8 percent) is two times higher than in rural areas (3.8 percent), where a lack of sufficient facilities prevents most rural students from pursuing higher education.

Girls have been particularly disadvantaged, as evidenced by Pakistan's national Gender Parity Index of 0.39 for higher secondary (i.e., Grade 12) enrollment and only 0.29 in rural areas.¹¹ The national GPI at the college level is 0.52, and at the university level is 0.89.¹² The combined effects of earlier social selection and the low transition rate to tertiary education result in a highly skewed enrollment distribution.¹³

The Biggest Losers

At the policy level, the state has implemented a legal guarantee of free and compulsory primary education to all school-age children. However, at 2 percent of GDP, the allocation of the national budget to education is well below the average of South Asian countries, making enforcement difficult. Because of this, the poorer sections of the population continue to suffer the most. Resources need to be allocated to promote social mobilization and adult non-formal education programs, particularly in conservative rural communities, to allow parents to understand the positive aspect of their daughters' educational attainment.

Sources: Chitrakar, 2009, xiii; NEMIS-AEPAM, 2013.

⁷ Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, the Gambia, Lesotho, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Djibouti and Pakistan. See also Pakistan Higher Education Commission Planning Commission, *USAID Merit and Needs Based Scholarship Program, Phase II* (Pakistan: HEC, 2013; hereinafter PC-1).

⁸ UNESCO Institute of Statistics, *Global Education Digest 2009: Comparing Educational Statistics Across the World* (Montreal: UNESCO, 2009): 16.

See also <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.TER.ENRR>, which notes 10 percent enrollment for 2012, again placing Pakistan above only Burkina Faso, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Seychelles, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe in global comparisons.

⁹ The University of the Punjab publishes male/female ratios that show how at undergraduate levels, males and females are close to parity (50.9 percent to 49.1 percent), while at graduate levels, females surpass males (M.A./M.S.: males 46.4 percent to females 53.6 percent). At the Ph.D. level, women have taken the lead at 55.9 percent of enrollments (University of the Punjab, *Fact Book*, 2013). ICT: 211,088 males to 292,942 females enrolled at the bachelor's level (Pakistan National Education Management Information System [NEMIS], *Pakistan Education Statistics 2011-12*, 2013).

¹⁰ NEMIS, *Pakistan Education Statistics 2011-12*, 2013.

¹¹ Ibid; PC-1:6.

¹² Zaidi, *Status of Women and Men in Pakistan 2012* (UN Women Pakistan, 2013).

¹³ PC-1: 6

Pakistan's poor performance in education is largely due to consistent government underfunding. In the mid-2000s, the Government of Pakistan (GOP) spent a very low 2.9 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on primary and secondary education. World Bank data for 2012 show a further decline to 2.1 percent, higher only than Georgia and Sri Lanka of all data provided,¹⁴ with a drop to 2.0 percent in more recent statistics.¹⁵ The GOP's spending on tertiary education has declined in recent years too, from 0.3 percent of GDP in 2007-08 to 0.2 percent in 2009-10.¹⁶

According to the HEC, Pakistani universities award about 700 Ph.D.s per year, but lack qualified research faculty. Only 20 percent of faculty members in Pakistan's higher education institutions have Ph.D.s. Universities are poorly governed, and the management structures and practices are ineffective. Until recently, there was inadequate vetting of staff credentials, such as degrees and research.¹⁷

Nevertheless, the GOP has shown a strong commitment to improving higher education, starting with the establishment of the HEC in 2002. Since then, the percentage of students in higher education has increased from 2.6 percent of college-age students to 7.8 percent. Recent doctoral programs graduates, from both national and international universities, are guaranteed a faculty position at one of the public universities upon graduation. HEC also has set new policies and standards to equalize access to higher education, such as establishing the country's first needs based scholarship program and associate degree programs.¹⁸ However, the need to upgrade the quality and relevance of coursework, research, and faculty capacity at Pakistan's major universities has yet to be addressed by HEC.¹⁹ Achieving the goal of increased university enrollments in such a difficult and underfunded context will be particularly challenging.

Beyond these already substantial obstacles, the other major hurdle to higher education is affordability. Data from the Household Integrated Economic Survey suggest that fewer than 20 percent of households in Pakistan earn more than 35,000 rupees per month.²⁰ This is the threshold where higher education is thought to start becoming affordable.²¹ The costs of higher education have also been rising steadily. Because of these financial barriers, plus the fact that cultural practices across most of the nation's rural areas prioritize men's education, rural women are the most unlikely to pursue higher education unless specifically targeted for participation.

MNBSP Brings Benefits to Recipient and Her Community

"Yes, this thing has brought a positive change, as many of the people who were living near our community became so impressed that they changed their minds and started sending their girls to university." (A4S)

¹⁴ See <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.XPD.TOTL.GD.ZS>

¹⁵ Pakistan Ministry of Finance, *Highlights of Pakistan Economic Survey 2013-14* (Pakistan: Ministry of Finance, 2014), http://finance.gov.pk/survey/chapters_14/Highlights_ES_201314.pdf.

¹⁶ Mukhtar, *Macro Trends in Financing of Education in Pakistan: An Analysis of Public Sector Allocations and Expenditures*. (Pakistan: UNESCO, 2011).

¹⁷ Hoodbhoy, "Pakistan's Higher Education System—What Went Wrong and How to Fix It," *The Pakistan Development Review* 48(4) Part II.

¹⁸ PC-I.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ See <http://www.pbs.gov.pk/content/household-integrated-economic-survey-hies-2011-12>

²¹ 35,000 Rupees/Month is the income cutoff to qualify for MNBSP.

While scholarship programs may have boosted overall enrollment in higher education, the range of potential beneficiaries able to participate in these scholarship programs has been limited for the following reasons:²²

- Universities generally award scholarships on the basis of merit. Needy students who are qualified to pursue higher education are generally not in the top bracket of academic standing, and thus are unable to obtain scholarships based on merit alone.
- Many scholarship programs cover only tuition and basic expenses. Non-tuition costs, such as transportation, boarding and lodging, books and other incidentals are a significant part of the overall cost and represent a substantial barrier to students from rural areas who cannot live at home while attending university.

²² Akhtar, et al., *MNBSP Evaluation report*, 2012.

USAID RESPONSE

The motivation behind this study and the inclusion of female target goals is the 2012 attack on Malala Yousafzai, who was shot in the head and seriously wounded by the Taliban. This 16-year-old activist for girls' education from rural Swat Valley in Pakistan has since won the Nobel Peace Prize for her bravery and continued efforts to make education available to all girls. In January 2013, U.S. Senators Barbara Boxer and Mary Landrieu introduced the Malala Yousafzai Scholarship Act to promote girls' and women's education in Pakistan, with MNBSP identified as the channel through which to meet this objective. Starting in 2014, in line with the Malala Yousafzai Scholarship Act, USAID must ensure that 50 percent of all MNBSP scholarships are awarded to disadvantaged women in Pakistan.

The MNBSP, initiated by USAID in 2004 in cooperation with the HEC, was revised as Phase II in 2014 in an attempt to address the gender, financial, and rural/urban issues described above. MNBSP provides scholarships to the specific subset of the Pakistani population that is most often omitted from higher education: those who have demonstrated academic merit through strong performance in their upper secondary studies and leaving exam scores, but whose economic circumstances do not permit them to begin or complete university studies, particularly women. MNBSP will contribute to the larger USAID/Pakistan Mission Strategic Objective to support and strengthen economic and social development in Pakistan among rural, needy populations, with a stronger emphasis on women. Scholarships are open to those wishing to complete a degree in the fields of agriculture, business, engineering, medicine, or social sciences.

Unlike other scholarship programs currently available in Pakistan, MNBSP scholarships include payment of tuition as well as a stipend to cover transportation, books, lodging, and incidental expenses, as an incentive for covering the extra costs incurred by rural, disadvantaged students. In 2010, the program adopted an explicit geographical focus on students from rural or remote areas of Pakistan, especially in northern Sindh, Balochistan, southern Punjab, KP, and FATA.

Phase II, which launched in early 2014 and continues through 2020, will issue an additional 3,000 scholarships to students at 31 universities. Participating fields of study have expanded from Phase I following project evaluation recommendations. Most importantly for this study, the goal for female participation has been raised to 50 percent. The financial need and academic criteria have not changed from Phase I. Table 1 shows the significant differences between Phase I and Phase II.

TABLE I: COMPARISON OF MNBSP PHASE I AND II

Parameter	MNBSP Phase I (outputs)	MNBSP Phase II (targets)
Scholarship Slots	1,807 Scholarships awarded to needs based eligible students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undergraduate: 729 • Graduate: 1,078 	3,000 Scholarships Undergraduate: 1,970 Graduate: 1,030 Annual increment of 5 percent in scholarship amount In case the donor contribution is reduced, the number of scholarships will be reduced accordingly.
Gender parity	Male students: 1,442 Female students: 365 (21 percent)	This Phase will increase female participation to 50 percent of total students.
Disciplines	Scholarships in the following two disciplines were offered at graduate and undergraduate levels: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agricultural Sciences 2. Business Administration 	Scholarships shall be in the following disciplines at the graduate and undergraduate levels: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agricultural Sciences (including veterinary sciences and biotechnology) 2. Business Administration 3. Engineering and Technology 4. Medical Sciences 5. Social Sciences (peace and conflict studies, anthropology, archaeology, economics, linguistics, law, communication, and media studies, international relations, and psychology) M.S. and M.Phil. students will also be supported.
Participating Institutions: Pakistani Universities	9 public and 2 private Pakistani universities	29 public universities and 2 private universities. Of the total 31 universities, four are women only universities. A provision will be made available for the addition of new universities.
Program Components	Scholarships were offered to Pakistani students and HEC MNBSP staff.	Program has two components: Needs based scholarships for Pakistani youth and capacity building for MNBSP staff and participating institutions

ASSESSMENT PURPOSE AND QUESTIONS

Considering that Phase I of the MNBSP failed to meet its female recipient target of 25 percent by a narrow margin, this new mandate under the Malala Yousafzai Scholarship Act for a 50 percent goal is even more ambitious. USAID/Pakistan has identified the need for specific information to guide an implementation strategy for Phase II that ensures this target is met. While there have been several studies on gender in Pakistan that analyze the constraints to girls' and women's education, USAID seeks specifically to investigate the perceptions and beliefs around female higher education in relation to women's eventual participation in the workforce as a result of receiving university scholarships at the bachelor's and master's levels.

This report provides the results of a study conducted among potential and past MNBSP beneficiaries and their circle of influence, (i.e., faculty, employers, and parents). This study will inform USAID efforts to increase the proportion of female scholarship recipients to at least 50 percent and to strengthen program participation and outcomes for women.

To address the purpose described above, the assessment answers the following four key questions:

1. What are the aspirations and life goals of academically high performing, but economically disadvantaged young women, and to what extent and in what ways would a higher education enable them to achieve these goals?
2. What are the most and least promising fields of study and career options for these young women, and why?
3. What social, economic, or other constraints are female MNBSP participants most likely to face in their university education and career, and how do these women accommodate or mitigate these constraints?
4. What changes to the university climate, job market, and workplace might best allow female MNBSP alumni to achieve their full potential, and what existing conditions or factors have supported their success?

METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

Data Collection and Analysis

The evaluation applies a mixed-method approach, relying on qualitative techniques to collect data from multiple sources in a variety of locations to ensure multiple levels of triangulation. The two broad groups targeted by the assessment are past MNBSP scholarship recipients and potential recipients, as well as people who are key influences in their lives (faculty, employers, and parents). Each of the four questions above are explored, then, through the perspectives and practices of these two key stakeholder groups, divided according to their *past* (i.e., post-university) or *potential* (pre-university) experience with the MNBSP process (see Table 2). In order to cover regional differences and variations in attitudes and perspectives mentioned in HEC and literature reviews, FWS teams covered the rural and urban areas of Punjab (Lahore), KP (Peshawar), and Sindh (Karachi).

The study employed the following data collection methods:

Document review: The assessment team reviewed the 2012 USAID MNBSP evaluation and various background documents to understand the project, the development needs it addresses, and the basis for the research questions. The team also reviewed and summarized relevant literature pertaining to the objective of this study, particularly for relevant information from Pakistan (see Bibliography in Annex 3).

Focus Groups: Focus groups formed the primary source of data for this study. Pre-university respondents and their parents were interviewed anonymously in separate focus groups of 12 people each (with the exception of one group of fathers who had to leave to pick up their daughters from school), in their local, regional languages.

Individual Interviews: The assessment team, all experts in gender and education, conducted in-depth and group interviews with those respondents listed under “Post-university” in Table 2 to obtain the perspectives of alumni and relevant university staff, including department heads, professors, and financial aid coordinators (see Annex 4 for a complete list of these respondents).

TABLE 2: RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO EXPERIENCE WITH MNBSP

Pre-university Respondents	Totals
a) academically talented female high school seniors	6 focus groups = 72 girls
b) male family members (fathers, brothers) of academically talented female high school seniors	6 focus groups = 65 fathers; 1 brother
c) mothers of academically talented female high school seniors	6 focus groups = 72 mothers
	210 individuals in 18 focus groups
Post-university/MNBSP Experienced Respondents	Totals
d) female MNBSP alumni who graduated in 2013 or earlier, plus one current Ph.D. student	1 individual interview, 4 group interviews, 1 focus group = 20 alumni
e) university faculty and administrators supporting MNBSP students	25 individual interviews, 3 group interviews = 37 faculty/staff
f) employers of MNBSP alumni	6 individual interviews = 6 employers
	63 individuals in 32 individual interviews, 7 group interviews, 1 focus group

These primary data were collected between September 16 and 27, 2014, by four separate teams, using semi-structured interview guides specifically designed for each of the specific groups listed in Table 2 (see Annex 2).

In total, the assessment team held 58 meetings, including 18 focus group discussions (FGDs) and 40 individual and group interviews, with a total of 273 participants, as shown in Tables 2 and 3.

TABLE 3: MEETINGS BY LOCATION AND NUMBER

Methodology	Location	Respondents	Province					Total
			Islamabad	Balochistan	Sindh	Punjab	KP	
Individual Interviews	Universities	Faculty	3	2	7	8	8	28
		Employers			3	3		6
Group Interviews	Universities	Alumni			2	2	2	6
		Students			2	2	2	6
Focus Groups	Girls' Colleges	Mothers			2	2	2	6
		Fathers			2	2	2	6
								58

Content analysis of the data was conducted by first identifying themes relevant to the evaluation questions that emerged in the interviews. The data were then coded in a tally sheet according to these themes to identify key findings relative to each assessment question. Themes that occurred in multiple data sources across at least two stakeholder groups were identified as key findings. These key findings became the basis for conclusions and recommendations. Thus, evidence for each finding is described in terms of how often it appeared in discussions and by respondent groups. As not all respondents spoke of exactly the same issues, lower numbers do not signify that a topic is less significant, but rather that it was brought up by fewer groups. This is not surprising since these were not homogenous groups. While analyzing the data, the difference in perspectives between the *Post-university* and *Pre-university* respondents became apparent. The Alumni and Faculty responses were based on their experience of academia and the workplace; while the pre-university respondents—girls and their parents did not have first-hand experience of higher education and women in the workplace, and this is reflected in their responses. As is common in data collection methods, even amongst supposedly homogeneous groups, such as faculty, there were discrepancies as faculty represented different disciplines: business and agriculture (from MNBSP Phase I) and engineering, medicine, and social sciences departments (MNBSP Phase II) who responded based on their unique perspectives.

The data were analyzed as the opinions and perceptions of these various categories of respondents, and the findings and response summaries presented in this report are disaggregated accordingly. Conclusions and recommendations are grounded in these findings, while taking note of the various differences described above.

Limitations

The methods for collecting and analyzing study data are invariably subject to selection bias, which occurs when the participants do not represent the larger population of interest. In this case, selection bias is the result of convenience sampling, or using those participants who were available at a given time. Alumni participants were mainly those who are currently employed, although this study revealed that the majority of female MNBSP recipients do not intend to use their degree to seek employment. For example, the 2012 MNBSP evaluation found that 62 percent of female MNBSP alumni were unemployed at the time,²³ and faculty interviewed for the FWS estimate that 80 percent of female scholarship recipients do not intend to work. Therefore, it would have been beneficial to also interview unemployed alumni to gain insights on why they are not in the workforce and how they have made use of their degrees.

Although the study also aimed to explore variations in the perspectives of rural and urban families, the selection of locations (mainly large and small cities) made it difficult to isolate such differences systematically.

The FWS also did not meet with any current MNBSP recipients due to the limits of time and the study's focus on the barriers to women's access to university and the workforce. Further, most of the Phase II universities visited had yet to award the MNBSP scholarships.

Interviews with employers were again limited to those currently employing MNBSP alumni. Further useful information could have been gleaned by interviewing major sector employers of female graduates.

Despite these limitations, the assessment team has taken every available measure to ensure the greatest possible reliability and validity of the findings and conclusions.

²³ Akhtar, et al., *MNBSP Evaluation report*, 2012.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings and conclusions presented in this section are organized according to the questions' component parts. Each finding is accompanied by the number of interviews/FGDs that inform the analysis according to the respondent category (e.g., faculty, alumni, employers, girls, mothers, or fathers) in relation to the total number of interviews conducted within that category. However, as these were not close-ended questions, a small number of responses does not necessarily imply that the others did not agree with a particular response, rather that they did not speak on the topic. Responses are further described in terms of the personal experiences of respondents, which can often explain why a finding may be relevant to one group, but not the other. Conclusions for each assessment question appear after the findings for that question.

Question 1:

What are the aspirations and life goals of academically high-performing, but economically disadvantaged young women, and to what extent and in what ways would a higher education enable them to achieve these goals?

This question, asked as an open-ended question to enable a range of responses, led to interesting findings that perhaps reflect prevailing gender norms about women in employment as well as the multidimensional effect of poverty on the aspirations of girls growing up in resource-poor households. Faculty drew upon their experiences in asking these questions of admission applicants and those who applied for MNBSP scholarships. Alumni reflected back to when they were applying for admission. The parents of the potential MNBSP applicants noted their daughters' aspirations, but seemed cognizant of the realities that constrain them.

Findings

Aspirations and Goals

Mothers and fathers of potential students identified financial security and independence as a key aspiration for economically disadvantaged women. Financial security allows women to lead better lives than their parents and provides the foundation for a happier life for their children (mothers 6/6; fathers 5/6). Alumni too were keen to become financially stable (3/6 alumni interviews), but more so to improve the financial wellbeing of their families (5/6 alumni interviews). This sentiment was also shared by the majority of focus groups with potential MNBSP students (4/6), which could be a reflection of the emphasis in Pakistani family life on children's responsibility to their parents and siblings.

Faculty (10/28 interviews) and employers (3/6 interviews) were less likely to identify financial security as a goal of young women. For faculty, this, in part, reflects what they heard from their prospective students at the time of admission, who identified their interest in obtaining a university degree as a goal in itself (11/28 faculty interviews).

"No one would harass an educated woman." (M3K)

Financial vulnerability leads families to consider a scholarship as "extra income," and women seek such opportunities not only to reduce the burden of educational expenses on parents, but also to contribute to household expenses through their stipend, as noted in several FGDs (girls 3/6; fathers 3/6; mothers 2/6). Alumni narrated stories of using their stipends to pay utility bills or tuition for younger siblings. One ambitious alumna saved her undergraduate MNBSP stipend to partially pay for an MBA.

Overwhelmingly, however, faculty and alumni noted that young, disadvantaged women enter university with limited aspirations and goals (faculty 20/28; alumni 4/6), partly because of the lack of access to information

and resources on possible options. Examples were given of women choosing a discipline because a friend or someone in the family had done so, or, after failing to make it to medical college, joining any available university program with no clear direction of how it would benefit them.

Further evidence for the general lack of career-oriented aspirations emerged from the most common responses from the pre-university cohorts, most notably social status. These respondents perceive higher education as a way to attain enhanced social status for both themselves and their family, noting that when a student pursues university studies, the family is seen as one with means or with the potential to improve their economic circumstances. Parents mentioned this unanimously (FGDs: mothers 6/6; fathers 6/6; girls 4/6), and many alumni echoed this sentiment as well (3/6 interviews).

An implicit goal of higher education for girls is improved marital prospects and family life. Young women are more likely to receive proposals for marriage from educated men, and they also can better manage marital life and child rearing due to their education. Mothers and fathers were clearly focused on this issue with nearly unanimous responses (FGDs: mothers 5/6; fathers 6/6; girls 4/6). Furthermore, mothers (6/6) overwhelmingly saw their daughters' education as a way to enhance their status and as a means of preventing harassment and domestic violence.

Both mothers and fathers wanted the chance to show that their daughter could do better than boys and still remain well within social and moral expectations (mothers 6/6; fathers 6/6). Parents are aware of the benefits that accrue from supporting their daughters' university education: increased opportunities, a broader selection of choices, better marriage prospects, and an increase in social capital. Educated daughters become role models for others in the family and community. Sociocultural expectations and pressures that shape gender norms ensure that rural, potential MNBSP scholars are probably not thinking at all about a career after graduation, but rather the prestige and benefits they can repay to those who supported them. Fewer faculty (9/28) commented on enhanced marital prospects or improved family life for women as a deliberately sought outcome of higher education.

Why Mothers Support their Daughters' Education

"I want to give higher education to my daughter so she can help other women and their rights. Because in our society women suffer a lot—either this is no education or other things. In our society women are kept toward the back. If we educate one girl, and, in turn, she helps other girls, in this way we can create awareness for education of girls in our society and can provide good citizens to our country." (M6K)

To what extent and in what ways would a higher education enable them to achieve these goals?

Despite their general lack of pre-university career aspirations, once they begin their university studies, women are exposed to a wide range of disciplines and sub-fields, as well as role models in the form of faculty, especially female faculty and guest speakers. Academia provides an awareness that broadens women's horizons and builds their confidence, which helps them achieve their newly acquired goals, as noted in the majority of interviews (faculty 18/28; employers 3/6; alumni 4/6). Even though participants in only 2 of 6 FGDs of girls and mothers and none of the FGDs with fathers thought that academia broadened horizons, this only reflected a limited awareness of the opportunities that await them at university. A university education enables women to aspire to good jobs from a wider range of employment options, as noted by almost all alumni (5/6 interviews) and the majority of FGDs (girls 3/6; mothers 5/6; fathers 3/6). A university degree can facilitate entry to a Ph.D. program, improving women's teaching and research career options, as noted primarily by faculty (8/28 interviews). As all alumni reported (6/6 interviews), a higher education helps women to choose career options that they were previously unaware of, in fields such as human resources, research, food security, biotechnology, and crop sciences.

Young women's aspirations are shaped by social gender norms and the options available within the limits prescribed by those norms. Faculty were very aware of this. The majority (20/28) reported having seen otherwise brilliant female students settle for lower paid jobs or give up a career to accommodate concerns of

social acceptability. For example, an engineer teaches in a neighborhood high school as her in-laws were opposed to her taking up better paid employment because it was in the city and a full day job. This issue was also mentioned in the majority of alumni interviews (4/6) and many FGDs, which indicated the most important career or life choices were guided by social acceptability first (fathers 4/6; mothers 2/6; girls 2/6).

How these social constraints are – or are not – recognized, and how they limit women’s goals and career choices are explored further in Questions 2 and 3. Nevertheless, higher education has positive social benefits for young women and their families.

“When girls are educated they can improve the financial status of their parents and can change the social attitudes of their relatives and community.” (FGD Girls, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa #4)

Conclusion

Attaining a university education and a degree is a goal and an achievement in and of itself for women entering university. Their aspirations, which are narrow and generally not career-focused, are shaped as much by their socioeconomic context (which offers limited opportunities and exposure) as by social gender norms that define what type of work is acceptable, and often available, for women. Social norms define women’s lives in Pakistan and are accepted as part of daily life. For some girls aspirations are likely shaped and limited by social norms, others transgress social norms to achieve what may not be initially acceptable to their community. Social position, family background, and location are factors that influence the extent of such transgressions and how they will be addressed by family and community. Nonetheless, university education exposes them to a wide array of fields of study and new career choices, even within their own disciplines.

Question 2:

What are the most and least promising fields of study and career options for these young women, and why?

Question 2 is answered in three parts: 1) most promising fields of study (university-level course options); 2) most promising career options (the choices women make upon graduation); and 3) least promising career options (those described as socially unacceptable for women). As with Question 1, the findings are further defined by narrower aspirations and goals and show deep divides between the pre-university and post-university groups, with the latter basing their responses on their already broadened awareness of fields of study and career options.

Findings

Fields of Study

According to girls (5/6), mothers (5/6), and fathers (5/6), the most promising field of study for girls is medicine. In fact, it was the only field of study mentioned by the majority of FGD participants in all regions. Respondents stated that becoming a doctor was the main goal for all, whether they actually desired a career from the start or not²⁴. Mothers and fathers associate the medical profession with high prestige and stated that, as doctors, their daughters could “help the poor.”²⁵ Medicine is perceived as a “traditional” study choice for women.

²⁴ “Fifty percent of female doctors never work after graduation” Junaidi Dawn, Oct. 22, 2014.

²⁵ As stated in the Question 1 findings, there is great prestige in bearing the huge sacrifices of educating a daughter, who can then return some benefit from that education as a role model to the community.

Admission into medical colleges is quite difficult, however, and three of six interviewed alumni who had applied to medical colleges failed to gain admission. In all cases, they picked alternative choices that were less traditional, but were covered by Phase I of the MNBSP scholarship: agriculture and business. All of these women described how disappointed they were by their failure to get into medicine, but upon settling into the new field, all stated that they were thrilled with the new opportunities and possibilities these fields offered for women. These responses provide further evidence regarding the narrow goals and aspirations of girls and their families prior to university admission. Out of the 58 interviews and FGDS, 30 identified medicine as the most promising field of study. Those that did not, unsurprisingly, were faculty, employers, and alumni in disciplines other than medicine (faculty 9/28; employers 3/6; alumni 3/6; FGDS: girls 5/6; mothers 5/6; fathers 5/6).

Faculty, employers, and alumni selected the more non-traditional fields of study in line with their own areas of interest, few of which were mentioned in FGDS, supporting the conclusion to Questions 1, that girls and families are limited in their aspirations and goals. Faculty mentioned banking/finance, computer science/IT, business management, agriculture, and social sciences that open access to NGO work as promising fields of study (see Table 4). Banking is the only field from this list to be mentioned in many of the FGDS with parents (mothers 3/6; fathers 3/6). Fathers' reasons for allowing their daughters to enter the banking sector include the secure office base, as well as what parents perceived as limited working hours, clear career paths, and defined salary structures.

TABLE 4: NON-TRADITIONAL FIELDS OF STUDY

Field of Study	Respondents	Explanation
Agriculture	Faculty 7/28; Employers 1/6; Alumni 2/6; Girls 2/6; Mothers/Fathers 0/6	Indicated as promising by Agriculture faculty, as well as alumni, who discovered that the areas of food security, research, and nutritional studies were very satisfying.
Banking/Finance	Faculty 14/28; Employers 3/6; Alumni 1/6; Girls 2/6; Mothers 3/6; Fathers 3/6	Indicated as useful because of perceptions that jobs have limited hours, can be located locally, and are desk-based and safe.
Business Management	Faculty 5/28; Employers 2/6; Alumni 3/6; Girls 2/6; Mothers/Fathers 0/6	Indicated by faculty in these disciplines and alumni working in these fields. Parents considered it unacceptable because of the risk of interacting with men.
Computer Science/IT	Faculty 10/28; Employers 1/6; Alumni 2/6; Girls 1/6; Mothers 2/6; Fathers 0/6	An up-and-coming option for women because of the office base and opportunities for self-employment.
Social Sciences/NGO	Faculty 7/28; Alumni 1/6	Very promising for women with a social science degree, but not mentioned in FGDS because of inappropriate mobility needs.

Career Options

Teaching is by far considered the most promising career option for girls. Respondents unanimously agreed on the following reasons: teaching is respectable; it has limited hours that do not interfere with a woman's main responsibilities to her household; work sites can be close to home; and teaching can take place in an all-female environment. Teaching is the "fall-back" job that women can always depend on if, and when, they need the financial support or independence. A degree allows a woman to turn to teaching if, or when, her husband cannot provide or in case of his death or divorce. Of a total of 58 interviews and FGDs, 46 mentioned teaching as the best, and only, option for women. Among FGD respondents, participants unanimously selected teaching as girls' best career choice, keeping in mind that teaching is still an option they can return to at any time when responsibilities to the home permit. The majority of faculty (24/28 interviews) also mentioned teaching as the best choice, showing how they too recognize these sociocultural and gendered limitations on women. In contrast, only one alumna, herself a lecturer, selected teaching. The other alumni were employed in non-traditional sectors, and were not limited by these "traditional" constraints.

In addition, several faculty respondents (9/28 interviews) mentioned self-employment/entrepreneurship as an alternative to office jobs, an option, which is significant because of the emphasis on entrepreneurship by the GOP, aid agencies, and international financial institutions. However, none of the other respondent groups mentioned this as a career option.

Several respondents (faculty 7/28; alumni 1/6) also mentioned the development sector (NGOs) as a source of employment, reflecting the presence of a relatively large number of development sector projects, especially in underserved areas, which make a conscious effort to employ women with a social science degree.

Least Promising Career Options

Any jobs that require mobility, fieldwork, or particularly, interactions with males, are considered socially or morally unacceptable. Employers recognized these limitations on women's mobility (5/6), as did half of the faculty interviewees (14/28). Fieldwork is linked to transport, accommodation at field sites, and public interaction. These issues came up repeatedly, although not significantly in terms of high numbers, across the assessment questions as the primary reasons for women either not entering the workforce or refusing employment, even though it promised higher remuneration.

Women's Work

"Women can do all kind of jobs, but mostly they prefer the jobs which is [sic] safer and secure and where there would be no objection from their families. Our families don't like those jobs where there are males, and those girls who work with males will be subject to 'bad behaviors' from their communities. There is no concept of married women taking jobs in our societies, because women are to handle the household chores and males are for earnings." (G3K)

Least Promising: Nursing

Nursing is not considered a good profession. However, one of the participants explained that she was always curious to know why people disapprove of nursing jobs, but she could not get any reasons. She shared one case from her extended family, where her cousin wanted to marry a nurse, but his mother told him she would never approve of a nurse as her daughter-in-law. (G2P)

“All the nurses get employment right away since there is such a huge demand and they find work immediately in private health institutions or in INGOs and NGOs”
Faculty of Medical College (FI9K)

These issues are reflected in discrepancies between what faculty, employers, and alumni indicated as promising careers and what the FGD participants mentioned as unacceptable because of the perceived “freedom,” social interaction, and mobility they require. NGO work, business/sales, and banking were mentioned as bad for daughters, but only by one or two FGDs each (see Table 4). Similarly, medical employers mentioned the strong need for female nurses and other aligned medical staff, such as physical therapists, pharmacists, and speech therapists, which again were singled out as unacceptable careers by some girls and parents (girls 2/6; mothers 1/6; fathers 3/6).

Conclusion

The most promising fields are not necessarily the ones with the highest employment or remuneration prospects, but rather the ones that provide options to women specifically in terms of social acceptability, working hours, and whether the job is desk-based. These conditions are met by the more “traditional” occupations such as teaching or medicine, but are increasingly becoming available in the computer/IT field, among others. For example, there is a dearth of nurses in Pakistan, with a reverse ratio of three doctors per nurse, and good employment prospects within the country and overseas. Overall, however, most parents were not considering career choices at all for their daughters, especially in the far more conservative region of KP.

Question 3:

What social, economic, or other constraints are female MNBSP participants most likely to face in their university education and career, and how do these women accommodate or mitigate these constraints?

Findings

Question 3 is answered in two parts: university-level constraints and mitigation strategies, followed by career-level constraints and mitigation strategies. Again, the vast divide between FGD reports from the “field” and the post-university experience is remarkable, exposing the constraints and strategies that all women face in their struggle for an education.

Constraints: University Education

Financial Hardships

Financial hardships, overwhelmingly mentioned by faculty (22/28) and in almost all the FGDs (17/18), prevent women’s enrollment in and completion of university. In fact, these economic barriers may stop families from even considering education. All stakeholders shared a common view that a large number of the female students who intend to study in public universities belong to poor or lower middle class families, for whom it is impossible to pay for university fees, books, stationery, and living and transport costs. Due to these financial constraints, families invest in their sons’ education when they have to make a choice (faculty 22/28; alumni 6/6; FGDs: mothers 6/6; fathers 6/6; girls 5/6).

Mitigation Strategies

Once families are committed to girls' education, they will pursue alternative options available. Girls and their parents seek financial or other support from extended family or working siblings, which is considered an acceptable norm. For example, extended families can help in the form of paying expenses or providing accommodation or transport (faculty 11/28; alumni 1/6; FGDs: girls 4/6; fathers 3/6; mothers 2/6).

High school girls and university women often work part-time, particularly tutoring other students, to get funds for their study and to support their families (faculty 12/28; FGDs: girls: 3/6; mothers 3/6). Once parents are committed to their daughters' education, they reported how they make sacrifices such as seeking extra work and cutting back where they can to earn money for educational fees (mothers 6/6; fathers 5/6; girls 2/6).

Unprepared for University

Alumni and faculty stated that disadvantaged students are unprepared to enter university because of limited awareness of course options and personal goals (alumni 5/6; faculty 15/28; see also Questions 1 and 2). Moreover, their previous education in colleges and high schools does not equip them with sufficient English language, computer, communication, study, or social skills. This leads to major challenges in coping with coursework and maintaining a good grade point average at university (faculty 19/28; alumni 3/6).

Girls initially face sociocultural challenges in the new co-education environment after 12 years of segregated education, and there is no mechanism (e.g., social counseling support) for handling such issues. University faculty indicated, and alumni supported, that many of the new needs based scholarship students take up to a year to adapt to this new environment (faculty 19/28; alumni 4/6).

Mitigation Strategies

Girls seek out faculty assistance with course work, as well as social and economic issues (faculty 16/28; alumni 2/6). Women also use their habit of working hard to adjust to university life by working harder than men, because they cannot go out and have limited extra-curricular activities, which helps them to stay focused on academics. This is a habit that helps in work life too, as reported by faculty and employers ((faculty 14/28; employers 6/6).

Social Constraints

Pressure to get married at a young age was reported by all stakeholders as a major constraint in achieving higher education. This pressure comes from immediate and extended family members who are more concerned that girls get married at the appropriate time and university studies can potentially delay marriage. Further, a suitable match may not be available in the community if girls are educated. These issues were raised in 30 out of 58 interviews and seem to be of particular significance to parents (faculty 14/28; employers 2/6; alumni 3/6; FGD: girls 2/6; mothers 5/6; fathers 4/6).

Female respondents (girls and mothers) in the more conservative KP province expressed concern about the negative attitudes of community and male family members toward girls' education (girls 5/6; mothers 4/6), and fathers less so (2/6). Girls and their parents also explained that access to higher education is dependent on permission from family, future husbands, and in-laws (fathers 4/6; mothers 3/6; girls 3/6), and that marriage negotiations often include discussions on attitudes and expectations regarding girls' education and careers. The decision for a girl to study or not is a complex mix of social and economic factors. Household decision-making is also not so simple. Fathers may have the final say as far as economic means are concerned, but mothers are the ones who manage the social front, such as perceptions of neighbors and relatives. In general, if economic conditions permit, and there are opportunities available (e.g., a college nearby) fathers and mothers will let the girls go on to higher education if the girls so desire. Many parents do everything possible to provide study time and space for their daughters.

Mitigation Strategies

Women earn the trust and support of parents by doing well in academics and by conducting themselves in socially accepted and appropriate ways outside of the home. Once this trust has been earned, families will find any means available to help educate their girls (mothers 5/6; fathers 5/6; girls 4/6). It also explains why some of the girls chose silence rather than describe to parents or teachers problems encountered outside of the home.

Constraints to Mobility

The lack of adequate and safe transport systems prevents many young women from participating in any education, particularly higher education (mothers 6/6; fathers 5/6; girls 5/6). This problem is widespread, from primary school to employment. Transportation issues take different forms, including inappropriate public transport, which does not allow women to travel safely, and the shortage of comfortable buses on campuses for the daily commute from residences. Buses are congested during peak hours, and limited schedules do not allow girls to take evening classes.

Parents are concerned about safety and reluctant for their daughters to use public transport alone. While only nine faculty mentioned mobility and harassment issues as constraints in education, 23 out of 28 mentioned it in relation to career constraints (see below), showing again the diverse perspectives encountered, as well as how they do mutually support these findings.

Harassment

Issues of harassment and its effects were mentioned throughout the FGDs:

“If girls complain against someone, ultimately the bad impact would be on the girls, which affect her whole life.” (M5S)

Girls and their parents reported that women experience harassment as they commute to school, in public spaces, and within educational institutions, which acts as a deterrent to those who want to walk outside of the home, travel, or go to university or places of employment (mothers 6/6; fathers 5/6; girls 5/6). Parents’ reluctance to send daughters to university is also linked to the inappropriate remarks and language that girls experience when they venture out.

Mitigation Strategies

Within the university, the majority of faculty claimed to have departmental and university-level committees that address harassment complaints and other grievances, and reported that there are formal gender polices in place (21/28). To mitigate these issues, women support one another, forming mutual support groups in a safety-in-numbers approach (alumni 4/6).

Constraints: Career

Weak Linkages between University and Job Market

As this study has demonstrated, most women do not attend university to improve their career options—just their life options.²⁶ Thus, the assessment team investigated some of the issues that can add to what is already a difficult transition into the workforce. Most significantly, as reported by the majority of faculty (22/28) and alumni (4/6), job counseling and placement services at public universities are inadequate and do not link graduates with prospective employers or prepare them for the job market. As such, women do not have the skills and networks to access information for career development. Further, there is also a general lack of job

²⁶ As already mentioned, 62 percent of female MNBSP alumni interviewed for the evaluation (2012) were unemployed; faculty stated that 80 percent of female university graduates will not seek employment; Dawn reported that 50 percent of female medical graduates will never work (Junaidi, “50pc of female doctors never work after graduation, Dawn, Oct. 22, 2014).

opportunities for women in Pakistan, with Balochistan and KP mentioned by faculty (10/28) as particularly difficult places for women to find work.

Mitigation Strategies

Women draw upon faculty and informal university alumni networks to stay informed about job opportunities and to seek advice on whether to apply to a particular organization. Women often take underpaid jobs in schools that are close to home while they wait for a better option to emerge, and also to gain some work experience.

Workplace Environment

Transport, mobility, and harassment issues were mentioned again as the main constraints for women in their career development. These issues range from an expensive and ultimately not woman-friendly public transport system, appropriateness of office location, the presence of other women in the office, and the law and order situation, which can be particularly threatening for women. These issues of mobility and security were mentioned by the majority of faculty (23/28 interviews) and all the employers (6/6), but was of more concern to mothers than any of the other groups interviewed (FGDs: mothers 4/6; girls 3/6; fathers 3/6).

Only two out of six alumni interviewed mentioned mobility as a constraint. The remaining four were using family and office transport. Alumni who are working have managed to address their mobility constraints to some extent. Security remains an issue, but their increased maturity and experience of higher education and employment enable them to deal with street harassment issues more confidently. Mothers and their high school attending daughters, who have not yet stepped out of the bounds of their immediate community, appear to be afraid of what might happen as girls attend a university or go to work. These fears stem from perceptions, based on locally circulating stories of girls being harassed, and from the lack familiarity with the available transportation options at universities or the work place.

Mitigation Strategies

All six employers interviewed were aware that a predominantly male workplace, with long hours and rigid schedules or fieldwork, can be daunting for women. Gender-sensitive employers, however, recognize and respond appropriately to gender issues and constraints by limiting work hours for women; providing flexible schedules, transport, and separate washrooms for women; and generally accommodating their female employees as far as possible to retain them. Women try to find employment where they have friends or fellow alumni working, and tend to opt for office-based jobs (with other women employees) that are as close to home as possible.

Social Constraints

Long working hours are deemed unsuitable for women, as this prevents them from fulfilling their “primary responsibilities in the home,” a problem that was clearly recognized by all employers (6/6) and most of the faculty interviewed (23/28). In addition, some girls and parents mentioned that, like education, employment is dependent upon permission of male family members and in-laws (alumni 2/6; FGDs: girls 3/6; mothers 1/6; fathers 1/6). The relatively low numbers here may reflect that gendered attitudes and expectations are taken for granted, or that parents do not see their girls in employment at the pre-university stage. As noted earlier, teaching is a preferred occupation for women, and is socially accepted because it falls within the traditional work domain.

Mitigation Strategies: Career

Due to the sociocultural gender norms that emphasize women’s primary responsibility within the home and restrict their mobility outside the home, women are presumed to be less distracted and more focused, organized, committed, and determined in their academic and professional careers. All six employers

interviewed recognized this and expressed willingness to adopt gender-sensitive policies that would help women to manage their dual roles in the home and workplace.

Conclusions

- Financial aid creates a space for girls to advance into higher education, but only on the condition that parents are fully committed to this choice. Lack of information on scholarships in rural communities means that many young women will not even think about entering the university due to their limited financial circumstances. An issue that needs to be thoroughly considered is the way in which information on scholarships is shared with potential recipients *and* their parents in target communities.
- Although parents make every effort to support their daughters education, including creating time and space for them to study the reality is that it is difficult, if not impossible, for poor households with large families and limited physical space and to provide a quiet space.
- Limited access to quality education and sociocultural gender norms leave female students ill-prepared for academic life at university, where they face “culture shock” as they struggle to adapt to this new co-ed environment. No matter how exceptional they may have been in high school or college, female students remain weak in English language, computer, communication, study, and, no less important, their social skills and ability to interact with males.
- Inadequate and unsafe transport is a major constraint, which, coupled with the issue of harassment, is a deterrent to pursuing higher education or a career, as noted by all respondents.

Question 4:

What changes to the university climate, job market, and workplace might best allow female MNBSP alumni to achieve their full potential, and what existing conditions or factors have supported their success?

This question was directed at understanding what existing conditions, or enabling factors, supported the success of female MNBSP alumni when they were at university. The question also asked them to consider enabling factors that helped them transition to the workplace and succeed during their employment. Reflecting on the enabling factors also helped the study respondents to comment on the factors that facilitate change at each of these levels: during university, in the job market, and during employment. The findings have been grouped accordingly for each level. Fewer responses on these topics arose in FGDs, which is understandable given that neither the girls nor their parents have experience of university education and women in formal employment.

A faculty member mentioned that the parents of a student had sold their only cow to pay for her semester fees. (F13K)

Findings

University: Enabling Factors and Facilitating Change

All stakeholders cited the availability of financial aid as the key factor enabling female students to complete their university education (faculty 25/28; alumni 6/6; FGDs: girls 4/6; mothers 4/6; fathers 5/6). Indeed, this was a refrain heard throughout the fieldwork. Without financial aid, young women may be discouraged from applying to university at all or at least from applying to programs of their choice. Financial aid relieves them and their families of the stress of meeting deadlines for tuition payments, such as resorting to sale of assets or taking loans from extended family.

Availability of increased financial aid that is disbursed on time appears to be an important step that facilitates women's entry into and success at university. At the same time, many alumni (4/6 interviews) noted that there has to be wider dissemination of information about opportunities for financial aid through a variety of media so that women can access such opportunities.

Value-added education adds practical skills to the university experience of MNBSP students and is a good predictor of women's success in academics and in the transition to the workforce. Alumni (5/6) noted that the emphasis in their particular program on skills-based learning and team assignments enabled them to assimilate knowledge and to articulate their ideas better, skills that were useful during their job search and at work. Such methods include internships (often mandatory for business students) and work study programs (faculty 25/28; employers 4/6; alumni 3/6). The latter are a relatively new phenomenon in Pakistani universities, but have great appeal for faculty and students, who benefit from acquiring work skills and a stipend. Furthermore, value-added education enhances students' confidence and motivates them to achieve (faculty 18/28; employers 4/6; alumni 5/6). Teaching methods that emphasize presentations and include co-ed team assignments enable women to become comfortable in a mixed male-female environment, enhance their confidence, and facilitate communication skills that prepare students for competitive workplaces.

In addition, the majority of faculty (20/28 interviews) and some alumni (4/6) mentioned pre-university orientation and additional training in language, computer, and study skills as the most important intervention in preparing disadvantaged students for the challenges of university life.

An Environment that Encourages and Appreciates Women

University environments provide women with broad access to peers and an informal mutual support system that helps them adapt to the first year's academic and social challenges (faculty 20/28; alumni 4/6). This is particularly important for female needs based scholarship students who lack the social skills to navigate a complex and mostly co-educational environment. Women also gain confidence from successfully competing with men and often gain an academic edge through their sheer hard work, which is often necessitated by the requirement of maintaining a minimum grade point average for retaining the MNBSP scholarship. As noted by the vast majority of faculty (27/28) and alumni (4/6), this competitive, merit-based environment, combined with peer support, enables women to grow and to be successful.

Role Models

An alumna reported that not only had she drawn strength from a female family member as a role model, but that now she is admired by cousins who want to follow in her footsteps and has been cited by family members as someone who graduated from university and is now working with an international NGO. (A5K)

Universities facilitate change when the administration fosters an environment in which gender-aware students, faculty, and staff help women feel safe and respected (faculty 9/28; alumni 3/6; FGDs: mothers 2/6; girls 3/6; fathers 3/6), and where the general environment allows women to compete on par with men (faculty 23/28; alumni 4/6). All faculty noted that their departments have harassment and grievance policies in place to deal with cases when they arise.

Sociocultural Factors

At the same time, there are also a number of social factors that enable success at university. The presence of successful role models in the family or community, as noted in the FGDs with fathers (6/6) and mothers (5/6), motivates young women to succeed and increases the likelihood that parents will support their daughters' pursuit of higher education. Role models were only mentioned in one of the six FGDs with girls, possibly because the majority of them lack such role models. While role models were not explicitly mentioned as significant by alumni, a few of them did refer to older cousins or a friend who had pursued university education or had enrolled in a specific program (alumni 2/6).

Supportive parents and a home environment that both encourages daughters to aspire and achieve and relieves them of some of their household duties so they can focus on their studies is helpful for women at university, especially if they commute to classes every day (mothers 4/6; fathers 4/6).

One university employer noted that they support women faculty who prefer the morning class schedule so they can return home in time for lunch with their children. (E6S)

Parents also noted that daughters are accustomed to working hard at home, where they balance their schoolwork with household chores, a discipline that helps them to put in the hours needed to succeed in academic life (mothers 5/6; fathers 4/6). Faculty in all interview locations (19/28) noted that women work harder and stay focused on their work, which is why they prefer them for departmental positions such as research officers.

Girls' Tenacity

Her daughter had to quit school and wasted 2 academic years because her family could not afford the school fee and other expenses. This mother stitches clothes to earn extra money to support her daughter, as the father is a wage laborer with limited means. Not being able to afford her daughter's studies, she wanted to marry her off—but the daughter refused to do so. Instead, she took up home tutoring, paid her school admission fee, and resumed her studies again this year.

Transitioning to the Workforce: Enabling and Facilitating Change

Only a few of the universities visited by the assessment team had a career development or job placement center, but alumni did not consider any of them very effective or efficient (3/6). Post-university respondents agreed that a strong career development center—which provides placement services, develops linkages with organizations, and explores potential new fields for employment—would serve the needs of graduating students, especially women (faculty 12/28; employers 4/6; alumni 4/6). Once out of university, women find it difficult to access information on employment opportunities, may not have access to the internet and social media, and may not be able to afford or be allowed to travel to potential job interviews, as reported by faculty (3/28) and alumni (2/6). Pre-graduation career orientation for students in their last year at university would certainly facilitate female MNBSP recipients' ability to find jobs (faculty 20/28; alumni 3/6). Dynamic use of social media websites to circulate job information and a vibrant alumni network help students find out about and secure jobs (employers 6/6; alumni 2/6). Faculty and Alumni did not mention alumni networks or social media as much because it is the personal references that secure jobs for women, who are able to pursue employment opportunities. Universities do not have proper alumni tracking systems and meaningful networking events or job fairs—other than the better-placed business schools.

Gender-sensitive Workplace

In the workplace, the presence of gender-sensitive policies and women-friendly services, including transport facilities, internet and computer provisions to enable work from home, flextime, shorter work hours, and day care services, facilitate the retention of women in the workforce (faculty 10/28; employers 6/6; alumni 6/6). Employers noted that they accommodate women's needs with flextime policies, maternity benefits, day care, transport services, and exemption from staying late for work. Employers also reported that they have been sufficiently impressed by their female staff to encourage women they have trained to return to work after getting married or having a child, even after a year or two of leave. Acknowledging and making space for women's reproductive responsibilities allows them to stay employed.

Conclusions

- Availability of financial aid and quality academic support at university in the form of pre-orientation to enhance students' language, study, and social skills assist women to do well.
- Universities that provide opportunities to interact with peers and successful female role models through exposure visits, seminars, guest speakers, and other means help to address female students' social constraints. Involving parents through open days and special events, as noted by one university with an active talent hunt program, reinforces parental commitment and generates support for women's education and beyond.
- Universities with career development centers, such as those at the business schools, with links to a range of employers and a system for informing students about opportunities, better prepare female students to transition to the workplace.
- Organizations that have gender-sensitive policies as well as services that accommodate women's specific needs facilitate women's entry into and retention in the workplace.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations are divided into those directed toward USAID and HEC, and toward HEC and Universities.

For USAID/HEC:

- 1) Outreach: Information campaigns for MNBSP should target more women's colleges and high schools in provincial districts so that potential recipients from economically disadvantaged families *and* their parents have the necessary financial aid information, without which they might not consider enrolling in university.

Taking note of the significant role of parental commitment in supporting young women's admission into university, as well as families' limited awareness regarding fields of study or career choices, outreach/information efforts should take these factors into consideration in their design. Target parents as well as potential scholars, and ensure that additional fields of study now available in Phase II and new and exciting opportunities for safe women's career options are well presented.

- 2) Role Models and Mentors: MNBSP alumni and current recipients should be engaged in these outreach activities, especially those who work or reside in the area where an event is held.

MNBSP alumni and current recipients are a valuable resource tool not only for encouraging other young women to apply, but also for providing the advice and encouragement needed by new recipients as they adapt to the new and challenging university environment.

- 3) Role Models on Campus: Support female guest speakers at university-based events to address the lack of exposure to the range of fields of study and career options increasingly available to women. Meeting successful women across a range of professions and careers addresses this gap, as does supporting female students to attend conferences and meetings of professional groups.

An example, as reported by one faculty member, is the participation of female engineering students at events of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers of Pakistan, which has formed a Women Engineering Group. In the absence of any mentoring system for female students in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, such participation facilitates learning and networking. This holds true across all disciplines, where exposure to female role models will broaden students' horizons and encourage them to think of career options for themselves.

- 4) Research: Support the formation of a MNBSP recipients' network for monitoring and evaluation and information sharing.

An alumni network also would serve as a research tool for the project's evaluation and for maintaining information on how graduates have used, or not used, their degrees; what choices they have made and why; and which careers have they pursued. A variety of media could be employed to keep the network dynamic and relevant to the needs of students and alumni.

- 5) Social Responsibility: MNBSP scholarships also could include social responsibility clauses, through which recipients are encouraged to give back to the program and their communities in various ways. As mentioned above, this could be done through outreach, role models, mentoring, and encouraging women's leadership groups in their home communities.

- 6) Regional Differences: The scholarship may require some adaptations to respond to the challenges that constrain women in areas such as KP, the FATA, and Balochistan, especially the distance that must be traveled over difficult terrain to reach universities, which is not possible without male escorts/family members.

While MNBSP already proposes to identify potential scholarship recipients in the poorer areas of KP, Balochistan, and the FATA, study findings point to the far more complicated factors affecting women in those regions. Further study may be needed to identify the specific issues and mitigating strategies needed to increase women's access to university in these regions.

For HEC/Universities:

- 7) Orientation: Assist universities to organize bridging courses for MNBSP recipients to prepare them academically, socially, and personally and to ease the transition from secondary to tertiary education.

Orientation support in the following areas will mitigate some of the challenges female students encounter upon entering university: English language skills required for university academics, computer literacy, and soft skills, such as interacting with faculty and peers (especially men), making presentations and asking questions in class, and dealing with issues assertively.

- 8) Transport: Though most universities have extensive transportation systems for students, it is recommended that universities pay special attention to the mobility/transportation needs of these girls. Explore ways of improving university transport systems to increase access for female students through safe and reliable transport.

Considering the harassment that many women face, parents raised the issue of unsafe transport as a major barrier to allowing their daughters to continue their education. Guaranteeing safe and reliable transport has the potential to increase access opportunities for female students. The number of university buses and routes may be increased to benefit the majority of female commuter students, as not all students are provided with campus housing and some may not be permitted by their families to live on campus.

- 9) Inform students about harassment and gender policies: Support wider and sustained dissemination of existing gender policies in universities through pamphlets and awareness-raising events. Such events can inform all students, especially new admissions, about existing gender policies that address harassment issues to ensure that students and faculty are aware of the procedures and consequences of actions that infringe on women's rights.²⁷

The dissemination should not be a one-time event; instead, a number of activities could be planned throughout the year. Requiring all students to sign a zero-tolerance statement to abide by this policy could further emphasize the seriousness with which the university strives to create gender-sensitive environments.

- 10) Internships: Support internships and work study opportunities to increase women's skills and confidence in the transition to the workplace. This direct work experience could provide women the experience and confidence to engage in a rewarding and beneficial career.

²⁷ See footnote 2.

Such opportunities also accustom parents, husbands, and in-laws to the idea of daughters and wives in the workplace, thus increasing the possibility of support for women's employment after graduation.

- 11) Career Counseling Centers: Support pre-graduation workshops, career counseling, and placement services through effective university-based career development centers. Centers should consider offering small post-graduation grants to support female MNBSP alumni in their job search, as they lack the means to access job opportunities, such as application fees, transport, or internet/computer access. Training in soft skills such as job hunting should also be provided by universities.

A career development center can offer the assistance women graduates need to seek jobs, such as online services for job searches, help with designing resumes, and opportunities to practice interviewing skills. These centers could develop linkages with prospective employers and industries and explore potential new fields for women's employment.

- 12) HEC/Universities should consider creating dedicated study spaces for girls after hours on campus.
- 13) Create safe/dedicated spaces for women: University campuses should provide safe spaces for women within existing university structures to support the specific needs of female students. These can include counseling facilities and should be a "safe" place where female students can go if they experience harassment and for other types of assistance. They can also host orientations, seminars, and workshops for women, as well as provide information services.

ANNEXES

Annex I: Statement of Work



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

MERIT AND NEEDS BASED SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM (MNBSP) STUDY

DEVELOPING A HIGHLY EDUCATED FEMALE WORKFORCE IN PAKISTAN: OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

SPECIAL STUDY STATEMENT OF WORK

MAY 2014

MERIT AND NEEDS BASED SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM (MNBSPP) STUDY

DEVELOPING A HIGHLY EDUCATED FEMALE WORKFORCE IN PAKISTAN: OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

SPECIAL STUDY STATEMENT OF WORK

ACRONYMS

CAS	Centers for Advanced Studies project
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FWS	Female Workforce Study
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GER	Gross Enrollment Ratio
GOP	Government of Pakistan
HEC	Higher Education Commission
ISAC	Institutional Scholarship Award Committee (in universities)
KII	Key Informant Interview
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MNBSP	Merit and Needs Based Scholarship Program
M.Phil.	Master of Philosophy
M.S.	Master of Science
MTDF	Medium Term Development Framework, 2011-15
PC I	Planning Commission I (GOP's program description document)
Ph.D.	Doctor of Philosophy
S&T	Science and Technology project
SMC	Scholarship Management Committee (in HEC)
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SOW	Statement of Work
SSI	Semi-Structured Interview
TEP	Teachers Education Project
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
U.S.	United States of America
USD	United States Dollar

MNBSP [Phase I] Participating Universities

AUP	Agricultural University - Peshawar
BUITEMS	Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences
IBA-K	Institute of Business Administration - Karachi
IBA-S	Institute of Business Administration - Sukkur
IMS	Institute of Management Sciences
LUMS	Lahore University of Management Sciences
QAU	Quaid-Asam University
SAUT	Sindh Agriculture University Tandojam
SZABIST	Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Institute of Science and Technology
UAAR	University of Arid Agriculture – Rawalpindi
UAF	University of Agriculture Faisalabad

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A. Identifying Information about the Program

This Statement of Work (SOW) outlines a Female Workforce Study (FWS) to be conducted among potential and past beneficiaries of the USAID/Pakistan Merit and Needs Based Scholarship Program (MNBSP). On the basis of the information yielded by this study, USAID will tailor Phase II of the MNBSP to increase the proportion of female scholarship recipients from 23% to at least 50%. The information will also be used to tailor the planned MNBSP complementary activities to strengthen program participation and outcomes for women.

In 2004, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and HEC developed the Merit and Needs Based Scholarship Program. The objectives of MNBSP are:

- To enable the academically qualified, yet financially disadvantaged, Pakistani students to continue university studies in selected private and public universities of Pakistan in the fields of agriculture and business administration.
- To enhance the institutional capacity of the HEC of the GOP and local public and private sector universities in designing and implementing need and merit based scholarship projects.

MNBSP scholarships are comprehensive. They include payment of tuition as well as a stipend to cover transportation, books, lodging, and incidental charges. Tuition fees are paid directly to the universities and the stipends are paid directly to the students. The program initially focused on all meritorious students in need that wished to attend an eligible program at one of 11 participating institutions. In 2010, the program adopted an explicit geographical focus on students from rural or remote areas of Pakistan, especially in northern Sindh, Balochistan, southern Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. In 2010, the program also required participating institutions to reserve 25 percent of all scholarships for female students. In Phase I, MNBSP scholarships were available in the fields of Business Administration and Agriculture, for both graduate and undergraduate studies.

Since 2004, the Merit and Needs Based Scholarship Program (MNBSP) has provided scholarships and other support to academically qualified yet financially disadvantaged young Pakistanis to complete a degree at a public or private Pakistani university. The program also develops the institutional capacity of the Higher Education Commission and public and private universities to design and implement scholarship programs.

Phase One of the MNBSP will be complete in 2016, by which time 1,807 scholarship recipients at 11 universities will have completed their programs. 1,195 scholarship recipients have graduated to date (461 are still enrolled). To date, USAID has invested a total of \$7.7 million in the program. By the time all current students complete their studies (estimated March 2016), USAID's total investment is expected to reach \$13.1 million.

Phase Two, which launched in early 2014, will issue an additional 3,000 scholarships to students at over 31 universities. In Phase II, which will conclude in 2020, the fields of study will be expanded and the number of participating universities will increase. Most importantly for this study, the goal for female participation has been raised from 25% to 50%. The financial need and

academic criteria have not changed from Phase I. Table I shows the significant differences between Phase I and Phase II.

TABLE I: COMPARISON OF MNBSP PHASE I AND II²⁸

Parameter	MNBSP Phase I (outputs)	MNBSP Phase II (targets)
Scholarship Slots	1,807 Scholarships awarded to needs based eligible student - Undergraduate: 729 - Graduate: 1,078	3,000 Scholarships Undergraduate : 1,970 Graduate: 1,030 Annual increment of 5% in scholarship amount In case the donor contribution is reduced, the number of scholarships will be reduced accordingly.
Gender parity	Male students: 1,442 Female students: 365 (21%)	This Phase will increase female participation to 50% of total students.
Disciplines	Scholarships in the following two disciplines were offered at graduate and undergraduate levels: Agricultural Sciences Business Administration	Scholarships shall be in the following disciplines at the graduate and undergraduate levels: 6. Agricultural (incl. veterinary sciences and biotechnology) 7. Business Administration 8. Engineering & Technology 9. Medical Sciences 10. Social Sciences (peace & conflict studies, anthropology, archaeology, economics, linguistics, law, communication, and media studies, international relations, & psychology) MS and M.Phil students will also be supported
Participating Institutions Pakistani Universities	9 public and 2 private Pakistani universities	29 public universities and 2 private universities (31 total). Of the total 31 universities, four are women only universities. A provision will be made available for the addition of new universities.
Program Components	Scholarships were offered to Pakistani students and HEC MNBSP staff.	Program has two components: Needs based scholarships for Pakistani youth & capacity building for MNBSP staff and participating institutions
Audit & other cost	For third party evaluation and audit, etc.	Third party audits, Talent Hunt to attract disadvantaged students, etc.

²⁸ Table is from the GOP's draft Planning Commission I document, pages 3 and 4. The P C I describes the next Phase of MNBSP.

TABLE 2: PROJECT SUMMARY

Title / Field	Program Information
Grant Number	391-G-00-02-00001-00 to 391-G-00-02-00001-10 391-G-00-04-01023-12 391-391-A-00-04-01023
Program Manager (G2G)	Nidal Khan, USAID/Pakistan/Education
Start Date	July 2, 2004
Completion Date	September 30, 2020
Location	Nationwide
Name of Grantee	Higher Education Commission
USAID/Pakistan Mission Strategic Framework Linkages	Cross-cutting Objective 4: Improved Opportunities for Learning and Work
Budget	US \$36.2 million

B. Development Context:

I. Problem or Opportunity Addressed

Pakistan ranks among South Asia’s lowest performing countries on many education indicators and is unlikely to achieve the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of universal primary education by 2015. Pakistan’s poor performance in education persists despite a vast body of research that demonstrates a clear link between education and poverty alleviation, attainment of long-term development goals, and sustainable economic growth. In other words, the relative lack of educational opportunities in Pakistan does more than just minimize job opportunities; it is also a key contributor to the nation’s ongoing political and social instability.

In the mid-2000s, Pakistan’s adult literacy rate was 54 percent compared to 53 percent in Bangladesh, 57 percent in Nepal, 66 percent in India and 92 percent in Malaysia. Although Pakistan’s Tertiary Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) more than doubled during the 2005-2010 period, it still sits at only 5 percent, compared to Bangladesh at 9 percent, India at 15 percent, and Malaysia at 37 percent. Pakistan’s poor performance in education is largely due to consistent government underfunding. In the mid-2000s, Pakistan’s spending on education amounted to 2.9 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) while education spending was 2.6 percent of GDP in Bangladesh, 3.8 percent in Nepal, 3.2 percent in India and 4.6 percent in Malaysia. The Government of Pakistan’s expenditure on public higher education has been declining in recent years, from 0.33 percent of GDP in 2007-08 to 0.23 percent of GDP in 2009-10. According to the HEC of Pakistan, Pakistani universities award about 700 Ph.D. degrees per year and lack qualified research faculty. Only 20 percent of faculty members in Pakistan’s higher education institutions have Ph.D. degrees. Universities are poorly governed, and the management structures and practices are ineffective. Until recently, there was inadequate vetting of staff credentials, such as degrees and research. A lack of sufficient facilities in remote & rural areas prevents most rural students from pursuing higher education. Girls

have been particularly disadvantaged, as evidenced by Pakistan's 2008-09 national Gender Parity Index of 0.37 for degree (college & university) enrollment. The Gender Parity Index in rural areas was 0.24.

Nevertheless, there is strong commitment by the Pakistan Government to improve higher education. The government and donors sponsor nearly 4,000 students for masters' and Ph.D. degrees. Recent graduates of doctoral programs, from both national and international universities, are guaranteed a faculty position at one of the public universities upon graduation. HEC has also exhibited leadership to set new policies and standards to improve higher education such as establishing the country's first needs based scholarship program and associate degree programs. However, the need to upgrade the quality and relevance of coursework at Pakistan's major universities has yet to be addressed by the HEC. HEC has prepared the second comprehensive five-year plan called the Medium Term Development Framework, 2011-15 (MTDF) to address these challenges. The MTDF identifies scholarship programs – for national and international study – as a key initiative for increasing the number of qualified faculty members at Pakistani higher education institutions. HEC awards several scholarships to support students pursuing higher education in foreign universities. Key programs include the M.S. leading to Ph.D. program for faculty development, and scholarships for M.S./M.Phil. leading to a Ph.D. Within those themes, the MTDF spelled out programs for: (a) faculty development; (b) improved access; (c) promoting excellence in learning and research; (d) ensuring relevance to the economy and industrial linkages; (e) leadership development and improved governance and management, (f) quality enhancement including quality assessment and accreditation, and (g) development of the physical and technical infrastructure.

According to Pakistan's Higher Education Commission (HEC), only 7.8 percent of the eligible population has access to higher education. This is significantly lower than most South Asian countries and places Pakistan into the peer group of sub-Saharan Africa. A key objective outlined in Pakistan's 2009 Education Policy is increasing the nation's access to higher education from 7.8 to 10.0 percent by 2015.

Achieving this goal in the context of a rapidly shifting demography will be particularly challenging. Over 35 percent of Pakistan's population is currently under the age of 15 and the percentage of the population eligible for higher education is growing every year. In light of these demographics, achieving its objective will require Pakistan to double higher education enrollments in the next five years, a significant acceleration of the current higher education enrollment trend.

FIGURE I: ENROLLMENT IN PAKISTAN'S PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES



To achieve its goal, Pakistan must overcome some significant hurdles; the issue of affordability may be the most challenging. Data from the Household Integrated Economic Survey suggest that far fewer than 20 percent of households in Pakistan earn more than 35,000 rupees per month. This is the threshold where higher education is thought to start becoming affordable.²⁹ The costs of higher education have also been rising steadily. Since 2005 the average cost of tuition and lodging has increased by over 50 percent.

One way to address the cost problem is to provide scholarships. The HEC and development partners have introduced scholarship programs to increase access to higher education in Pakistan. Most scholarship programs cover just the costs of tuition. Such programs have been most helpful for urban populations. Most higher education facilities are located in and around cities, and this gives urban students the option of attending university while continuing to live at home. Rural students, however, typically require more extensive financial support-- programs that cover both tuition and non-tuition expenses. Because cultural practices across most of the nation's rural areas prioritize education of men, rural women are the most unlikely to pursue higher education.

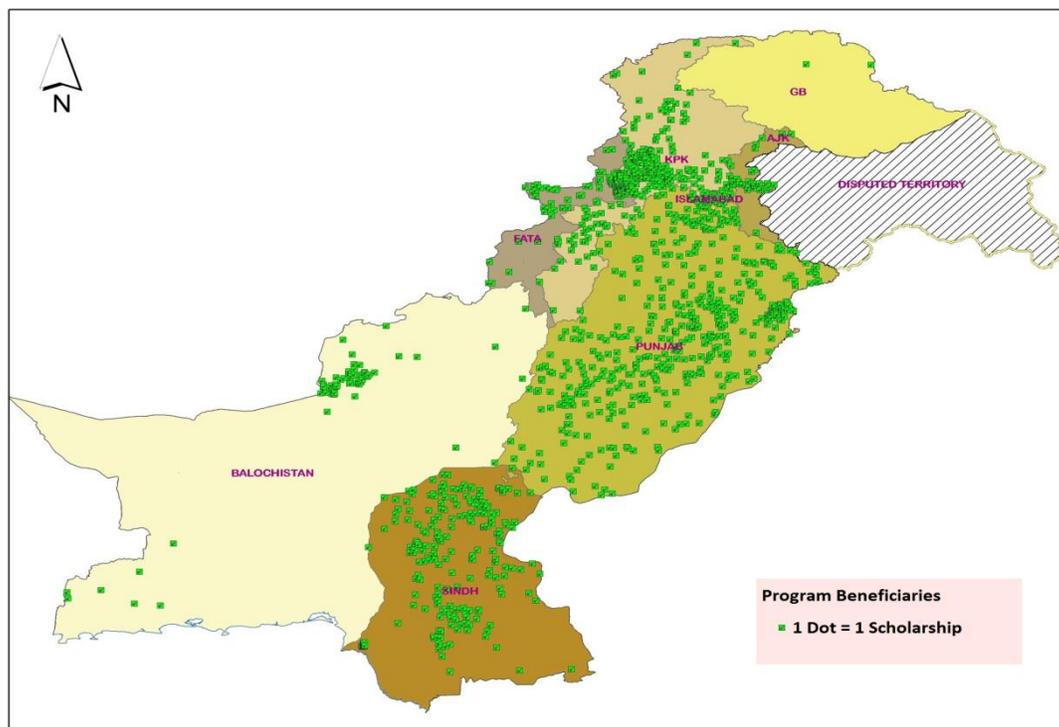
2. Target Areas and Groups

The Merit and Needs Based Scholarship Program seeks to provide assistance to a specific subset of the Pakistani population to complete a degree course of study at a local university. The beneficiaries of this assistance are Pakistanis who have demonstrated academic merit through strong performance in their upper secondary studies and leaving exam scores, but

²⁹ 35,000 Rupees/Month is the income cutoff to qualify for HEC's Merit and Needs Based Scholarship Program.

whose economic circumstances are determined to be disadvantageous to the point that the student is at risk of being unable to begin or complete university studies. This group is further narrowed by the area of study pursued: only those wishing to complete a degree in the fields of agriculture, business, engineering, social sciences or medicine may be considered for financial assistance.

FIGURE 2: GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF BENEFICIARIES



The program defines the term “merit” by the admission percentage level/marks set by a particular university or HEC for all students. “Financial need” is defined as per mutually agreed and approved evaluation criteria set by USAID and HEC; the individual’s maximum family income cannot exceed 35,000 per month. No scholarships are awarded under any circumstances to any individual not meeting or fulfilling both criteria. These criteria apply equally regardless of the student’s region of origin, academic background, gender, or other factors.

C. Development Hypothesis

MNBSP is designed to build the capacity of the Government of Pakistan and Pakistani universities to operate transparent, effective financial aid programs for talented, but economically disadvantaged students. The provision of USG funds for scholarships issued through these nascent systems will serve to initialize this financial aid system as part of the broader goal to reduce socioeconomic barriers to schooling. This effort to mitigate socioeconomic barriers through scholarships is complemented by other USAID activities focused on construction that expands and enhances the infrastructure at universities, thereby

increasing physical space to accommodate a larger number of university students. In this respect, MNBSP is a key contributor to Development Objective 4 of the USAID/Pakistan Mission Strategic Framework (MSF), which seeks to improve opportunities for quality learning and adequate livelihoods in Pakistan.

MNBSP contributes to the larger USAID/Pakistan Mission Strategic Objective to support and strengthen economic and social development in Pakistan. University degrees in the selected MNBSP fields provide students with skills in sectors that are in high demand among employers and are essential to driving the growth of the Pakistani economy. Supporting university education for underprivileged students, many of whom hail from remote rural or conflict and disaster affected parts of the country, is in line with USAID principles in favor of equity and meritocracy. This inclusiveness strengthens the foundation for a stable democracy in Pakistan by ensuring a larger and more diverse representation in the educated middle class from which social, economic and political leaders can emerge. By ensuring a more diverse middle class and representation in the workforce, the perspectives of a broader range of the Pakistani population can be taken into consideration in decision making processes. By providing scholarships to students who would not otherwise have been able to afford a higher education, the program also aims to increase household income levels and contribute to poverty alleviation.³⁰

D. Intended Results

As stated above, MNBSP contributes to USAID/Pakistan’s MSF Objective 4: “Improved Opportunities for Learning and Work”. A summary of the MNBSP results framework is presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3: MNBSP RESULTS FRAMEWORK

Objective	Indicators
DO4: Improved Opportunities for Learning and Work	4b. Percentage of graduates from USG-supported tertiary education programs reporting themselves as employed
Intermediate Results and Sub-Intermediate Results	Indicators
IR 4.1: Improved Educational Access Sub-IR 4.1.2: Reduced Socioeconomic Barriers to Education	4.1.2a. Number of students receiving US-funded scholarships to attend Pakistani institutions of higher education

³⁰ The PC-I links the MNBSP to the overall objective of poverty alleviation.

E. Approach and Implementation

MNBSP is implemented through a grant to Higher Education Commission, the principal Government of Pakistan body responsible for management, oversight and quality standards related to Pakistan's public and private higher education institutions. Day to day management of the activity is handled by the Project Management Unit (PMU), an independent contractor embedded in the HEC offices, while ultimate decision making authority, project vision and strategy are ensured by the HEC senior leadership and staff, in cooperation with the USAID/Pakistan Program Manager.

F. Current Status of Activities

As of May 2014, the launch of MNBSP Phase II is underway. Several universities already opened and closed the application window for 2014 MNBSP scholarships and conducted interviews with competitive applicants in the February to May intake window. The majority, however, are preparing to select their 2014 scholarship recipients between August and October 2014. USAID/Pakistan intends to use the findings of this study to inform the process to advertise and recruit this second batch of 2014 awardees, with the intent to achieve the program's 50% female beneficiary target.

While the 2014 selection process gets underway, students awarded scholarships in previous years are continuing their studies at their respective universities. USAID/Pakistan, in line with Agency guidance on government-to-government programs, completed an assessment of the Higher Education Commission's internal capacity in early 2014. In advance of the first full Phase II recruitment effort in fall 2014, the Mission is currently supporting HEC to act on opportunities identified in the assessment report that will enhance the efficiency, sustainability and impact of HEC and partner university achievements under MNBSP.

II. RATIONALE FOR EVALUATION

A. Purpose of the Evaluation

The issue of gender equity in USG funded education programs in Pakistan gained prominence in 2012 when Malala Yousafzai, an activist for girls' education, was attacked and nearly critically wounded by the Taliban in her village in the Swat Valley. In response, in January 2013, U. S. Senators Barbara Boxer and Mary Landieu introduced the Malala Yousafzai Scholarship Act to promote girls and women's' education in Pakistan. MNBSP was identified as the channel to meet this objective. Under MNBSP Phase I, a target of 25% female participation was set. Project performance fell just short of this goal, with 23% of scholarships awarded to female students. Starting in 2014, in line with the Malala Yousafzai Scholarship Act, USAID must ensure that 50% of all merit and needs based scholarships are awarded to disadvantaged women in Pakistan.

The mandate under the Malala Yousafzai Scholarship Act sets an even more ambitious target for Phase II of MNBSP than that which the program failed to meet in Phase I. USAID/Pakistan has identified the need for specific information that can guide an implementation strategy for Phase II to ensure this target is met.

Initial insight into the right approach for Phase II is provided by the mid-term evaluation conducted by Management Systems International in August 2012³¹ which examined the performance of the program during Phase I with the purpose of informing the implementation of Phase II. The evaluation provided a number of general observations about the success of the program in its first phase:

- MNBSP has met most, but not all, of its planned output and outcome targets.
- Alumni of the MNBSP program are largely employed in fields related to their academic preparation. However, relatively high unemployment persists, especially among graduates with degrees in agriculture.
- It took graduates several months to find their first job, and significantly longer for women than for men.

In addition, the following recommendations were made related to increasing women's participation in the MNBSP activity:

- Achieving the target of 25 percent female participation may require special efforts to publicize the program among prospective female students and/or consideration to increase female participation from urban areas.
- If USAID desires to target female students from "remote/vulnerable" as opposed to "rural" areas, a more robust definition of "remote/vulnerable" may better serve this purpose. District-wise Human Development Index and/or Deprivation Indices can be the basis for defining "remote"/ "vulnerable"/ "disadvantaged" areas.

The purpose of this study is to ascertain the perceptions and beliefs regarding constraints and opportunities for professional women among current and potential female MNBSP scholarship recipients and key members of their circle of influence.

USAID, HEC and the MNBSP partner universities will use the findings of this study to help ensure Phase II of the project will successfully meet its target to award 50% of MNBSP scholarships to women and ensure at least 50% of program participants who complete their degree program and obtain employment are women.

While there have been several studies on gender in Pakistan that analyze the constraints to girls' and woman's education, USAID seeks specifically to investigate the perceptions and beliefs around female higher education in relation to women's eventual participation in the workforce as a result of receiving university scholarships at the Bachelors and Master's level and other support through MNBSP.

B. Audience and Intended Use

This study is principally intended for the use of the Education Office at USAID/Pakistan and the Higher Education Commission to jointly strengthen project outcomes. The results of this study will be shared with the broader USG Mission in Pakistan and the leaders of Pakistani

³¹ MNBSP Evaluation, August 2012. The entire MNBSP midterm evaluation will be made available to the study team.

universities, particularly those participating in USAID-funded higher education projects (MNBSB, CAS, Fulbright, and S&T), to contribute to a deeper understanding of the challenges relating to ensuring equitable access to educational and professional opportunities for Pakistani women. The findings will also be shared with other technical offices, development organizations and relevant Pakistani institutions. Findings will be principally communicated through a written report and a briefing to USAID, HEC and other key stakeholders. The report and briefing will be prepared and delivered by the study team with clearance from USAID.

C. Special Study Questions

This study seeks to explore three main questions. Each question will be explored through the perspectives and practices of two or more key stakeholder groups, namely a) senior secondary school girls who meet the qualifications for MNBSB; b) women currently receiving an MNBSB scholarship; c) male family members (fathers, brothers, husbands); d) female MNBSB alumni; and e) university teachers and administrators supporting MNBSB students. The preceding letters are used to identify the particular stakeholder groups that the research consultant must engage in developing a response to each study question below:

- 1) What are the aspirations and life goals of academically high performing but economically disadvantaged young women, and to what extent and in what ways would a higher education enable them to achieve these goals?
- 2) What are the most and least promising fields of study and career options for these young women, and why?
- 3) What social, economic or other constraints are female MNBSB participants are most likely to face in their university education and career, and how do these women accommodate or mitigate these constraints?
- 4) What changes to the university climate, job market and workplace might best allow female MNBSB alumni to achieve their full potential, and what existing conditions or factors have supported their success?

III. STUDY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

A. Data Collection Methods

The study will use a snapshot qualitative methods design to analyze and document clear and defensible findings related to the research questions above. To facilitate analysis, the team will collect and report data in a way that enables disaggregation across dimensions including, but not limited to, the educational attainment level and rural/urban background of the potential, current or past MNBSB scholarship recipient and their family members.³² The study will rely on qualitative evidence to answer the study questions and draw these data from both primary and secondary sources. The principle source of secondary data will be the USAID evaluation of

³² For the purposes of this study, a metropolitan area hosting a university will be considered “urban”, and a town or community without a university will be considered “rural”.

MNBSP. USAID and HEC officials will be available to meet with the FWS team as needed. HEC may also be helpful in providing contact information for Pakistani university staff and MNBSP scholarship recipients.

The study will employ the following data collection methods.

Document review – The study team will review the USAID evaluation of MNBSP and various program background and performance documents as required to understand the project, the development needs it is designed to address, and the basis for the research questions above. USAID and HEC are available to furnish additional project documentation as needed. The FWS team is also requested to review and summarize relevant literature pertaining to the objective of this study – particularly for relevant findings from Pakistan.

Focus Groups –The primary source of data for this study will be focus groups. USAID proposes to conduct sessions in three provinces: Punjab (Lahore), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Peshawar), and Sindh (Karachi).

In each province, the following groups will be interviewed:

- 1) academically talented female seniors at urban high schools
- 2) academically talented female seniors at rural high schools
- 3) male family members³³ of the urban academically talented female seniors
- 4) male family members of the rural academically talented female seniors
- 5) mothers of the urban academically talented female seniors
- 6) mothers of the rural academically talented female seniors
- 7) female MNBSP alumni from rural backgrounds who graduated in 2013 or earlier
- 8) female MNBSP alumni from urban backgrounds who graduated in 2013 or earlier

USAID anticipates the study team will invite study participants to travel to a predetermined location in each of the major provincial cities for focus group sessions. The team may, however, choose to travel to universities or other locations and organize focus groups outside these cities as necessary.

Key Informant Interviews– The study team will organize interviews with selected key informants. KIIs will be used principally to obtain the perspective of relevant university staff, to include department heads, professors and MNBSP coordinators as appropriate. USAID/Pakistan envisions the study team will conduct 3-5 key informant interviews at each of 6-8 selected universities hosting a large number of MNBSP participants, including at least 1-2 women only universities.

³³ Defined as male head of family, in the following order of priority: husband, father, or in the absence of either, another male head of household (brother, uncle, etc.).

The study team may opt to include representatives of public or private sector organizations where MNBSP alumni have obtained employment, or relevant Pakistani specialists, to add richness to the study findings.

B. Data Analysis Methods

The FW study team will use the results of the evaluation, project document review, research literature review and interview data to conduct the analysis in response to the questions identified above.

Since USAID/Pakistan is interested in the opinions and perceptions of various categories of respondents, conclusions and summaries of responses should be disaggregated accordingly, including the following disaggregates: region/province; urban/rural; sex; and group identifier (parent, spouse, teacher/administrator, alumni, potential candidate, etc.).

The analysis should be based on these grouping and also include combinations of groupings to form conclusions and recommendations. The intention of the analysis will be to draw conclusions regarding how the USAID/Pakistan can reduce barriers for its female scholarship recipients that limit young women from reaching their full potential at university and in the job market. The results – findings and conclusions – should have a high level of confidence (within reasonable costs).

C. Methodological Strength and Limitations

The methods proposed for collecting and analyzing study information are potentially subject to selection bias. Selection bias occurs when the subjects of surveys or interviews are not representative of the population of interest. In this case, selection bias is most likely to result from the use of convenience or cluster sampling. The resources required to hold focus groups with randomly selected participants will exceed resource availability for this study.

However, this potential bias will be somewhat countered by the large sample size proposed by USAID, and the use of qualitative will be expected to get as thorough response pattern as possible; both in terms of numbers and provincial representation.

D. Existing Data

The challenges to developing a highly educated female workforce in Pakistan are of interest to academic researchers, development partners and the Government of Pakistan alike. While the extent of existing literature on the topic may be limited, the study team will be able to enrich the findings of the focus groups by reviewing and analyzing existing research. The findings of this extant research will serve to inform the analysis of the focus group data and the presentation of the findings that emerge from this analysis.

The study team will gain a deeper understanding of the design and implementation of MNBSP, the development challenge it is meant to address, and the effectiveness of its approach by reviewing the USAID evaluation of MNBSP and other activity documents and reports as needed. Three documents and data sets offer detailed background information: 1) the MNBSP evaluation; 2) the processed and raw data MSI accumulated during the evaluation, which may

provide additional information and contact information that will be useful in this study; and 3) the Planning Commission–I document for MNBSP Phase II. These MNBSP documents and performance data are available and will be provided by USAID/Pakistan and HEC as required.

E. Study Process

The study process consists of three main stages:

Stage 1: Initial planning and preparation by the study team (two weeks). USAID will provide the study team with key documentation for review, which will inform finalization of the SOW in collaboration with USAID during a team planning meeting. Following USAID approval of the SOW, the study team will identify and obtain existing research and conduct a thorough desk review. The team will organize key informant interviews with USAID, HEC and other stakeholders as required to inform the development of data collection instruments. The team will gather, verify and update contact information for focus group participants, schedule focus groups, and organize travel arrangements as needed. The interview guides will be developed during this stage and shared with USAID for review and approval. Prior to beginning survey and interview data collection, the study team will provide an in-brief to USAID and other key stakeholders detailing the study approach and timeline at the end of week two.

Stage 2: Focus group data collection (three weeks). Following USAID approval of the survey instrument, the study team will begin to collect focus group data over a three week period. This work will be conducted by three field teams of three researchers, each based in one of the three previously identified regional hub cities (Lahore, Karachi and Peshawar).

Stage 3: Data analysis and reporting (10 weeks). Data analysis will begin immediately following data collection. Three weeks will be allotted for qualitative data analysis. Following completion of fieldwork and analysis, the study team will prepare and deliver a debriefing presentation to USAID and other key stakeholders with USAID approval. The study team will incorporate comments from the presentation(s) into a draft report. After a thorough technical review, the study team will deliver the draft report to USAID – and to implementing partners if appropriate - for review and comment. Once the study team receives comments on the draft report, it will incorporate the comments, send the report to the study team home office for a final technical review, editing, and branding, and then deliver the final report to USAID at the end of week sixteen.

V. TEAM COMPOSITION

A. Study Team Positions and Skills

The contractor should propose a study team which may include the following:

- The **Team Leader** will require expertise in the areas of gender and/or linkages between higher education and workforce development. This expertise, in addition to a strong background in qualitative research methods, will enable the study team leader to

fully comprehend the nuances of the questions and responses to be explored through this study. S/he also must have good oral and written communication skills.

- **Qualitative Research Specialists (2)** report to the team leader and will each manage a team of two qualitative research assistants. The QRS will lead the focus groups, perform qualitative data analysis, and draft portions of the final report. Urdu or other appropriate local language fluency will be beneficial.
- **Qualitative Research Assistants (4)** report to the QRS. They will support their assigned QRS to conduct the focus groups, perform qualitative data analysis, and draft portions of the final report. Urdu or other appropriate local language fluency will be beneficial.
- **Disclosure of conflict of interest:** All study team members will provide a signed statement attesting to a lack of conflict of interest, or describing an existing conflict of interest relative to the project being evaluated.

VI. STUDY MANAGEMENT

A. Logistics

In terms of logistics, this assignment requires inputs and actions from the study partners as summarized below:

USAID/Pakistan

- The Program Office's Performance Management Unit (PMU) along with Education team will facilitate the preparation of the study SOW in accordance with USAID standards and good practices, review the instruments and the draft report, and provide technical inputs on the contractual matters. The MNBSP Program Manager will provide the evaluation and other relevant project documents as required.

Higher Education Commission

- HEC will provide contact lists and other data as required.

The Consulting Firm (MSI)

- The consulting firm will provide support for travel, lodging and other arrangements related to study team's work, including the defraying of travel costs for focus group participants as required, and will take the lead in scheduling meetings with participants to collect data.

B. Scheduling

The complete process, including finalization of the SOW, review of documents, developing survey and interview tools, data collection and analysis, and report writing and finalization will require approximately 16 weeks.

TABLE 5: TIMING GANTT CHART

Activity	W1	W2	W3	W4	W5	W6 (Eid)	W7	W8	W9	W10	W11	W12	W13	W14	W15	W16
Planning, document review	█					█										
Scheduling, literature review, instrument development, in-brief, SOW finalization		█				█										
Field work – focus groups			█	█	█	█										
Data analysis - qualitative						█	█	█	█							
Initial findings debriefing						█				█						
Report writing						█				█	█	█				
Submission of draft report						█						█				
USAID review and comments						█							█			
Revisions, home office review						█								█	█	█
Final report submission to USAID						█										█

C. Budgeting

The following chart presents USAID's suggested level of effort.

TABLE 6: LEVEL OF EFFORT

Tasks	Team Leader (1)	Qualitative Research Specialists (2)	Quantitative Research Assistants (4)
Planning, Document Review	5	5 (10)	
Scheduling, instrument development, in-brief, KII (USAID), SOW finalization	5	5 (10)	
Field work – focus groups	15	15 (30)	15 (60)
Data analysis - qualitative	15	15 (30)	15 (60)
Initial findings debriefing	1		
Report writing	13	15 (30)	10 (40)
Submission of draft report	1		
USAID review and comments	1		
Revisions, home office review	13	10 (20)	
Final report submission to USAID	1		
Total	70	65 (130)	40 (160)

VII. STUDY DELIVERABLES

A. Deliverables

1. Briefing(s) to USAID, State Department, HEC and other stakeholders regarding preliminary findings, conclusions and recommendations after conclusion of fieldwork (week of August 25, 2014);
2. Draft report to USAID (September 12, 2014);
3. Final report to USAID (October 10, 2014).

B. Report Content

The study report will follow standard guidelines as laid out in Appendix I of USAID'S Study Policy and operationalized in ADS 203.3.1.8 (Documenting Evaluations), reproduced in Annex 2. The study report will follow the structure given below (the section titles and order are illustrative):

- Title page
- Table of Contents;
- Table of tables and figures;
- List of acronyms
- Acknowledgements or preface (optional);
- Program summary
- Map showing the location of program activities
- Executive summary which will be 3-5 pages in length that summarizes key points (project purpose and background, key study questions, methods, findings, etc.)
- Introductory chapter;
- The Development Problem and USAID's Response (1-3 pages): This section will describe the development problem USAID wants to address. This will include USAID's response to the problem, the development hypothesis and theory of change, results framework, and project implementation (including the current status of the project or activity);
- Purpose of the mid-term study and study questions (1-2 pages): This section will include the purpose of the Study and state all questions;
- Study Design, Methodology and Limitations (1-3 pages): A written design which includes key questions, methods, main features of data collection instruments; an explanation of why these methods were chosen, with additional information in the annex as necessary; limitations of the methodology and how these have been accounted for; and data analysis plan;
- Findings and Conclusions: If there are a large number of findings, there will be a synthesis or summary of findings for each question that establishes the connection with the conclusions that follow.
- Recommendations
- References; and
- Annex
 - Study Statement of Work
 - Study Methods and Limitations
 - Data Collection Instruments
 - Bibliography of Documents Reviewed
 - List of individuals and agencies contacted and places visited
 - Meeting notes of all key meetings with stakeholders.
 - Disclosure of Any Conflicts of Interest
 - Statement of Differences (only if applicable)
 - Study Team Bios

SOW ANNEX I: TABLE OF STUDY QUESTIONS BY DATA SOURCES, COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS METHODOLOGIES

Data Collection					
Study Question	Type of Answer/ Evidence	Method	Sources	Sampling/Selection	Data Analysis Methods
1) What are the aspirations and life goals of academically high performing, but economically disadvantaged young women, and to what extent and in what ways would a higher education enable them to achieve these goals?	Descriptive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description of overall trends, with illustrative examples Objective assessment with respect to study question, with illustrative examples 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus group 	Focus group participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Female MNBSP- qualified high school seniors and their family members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purposive/ Convenience sampling for selection of focus group participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification of trends and themes across data sources, noting patterns by disaggregates
2) What are the most and least promising fields of study and career options for these young women, and why?	Descriptive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description of overall trends, with illustrative examples Objective assessment with respect to study question, with illustrative examples 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus group Literature review Key informant interviews 	Focus group participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Female MNBSP- qualified high school seniors and their family members Female MNBSP alumni Key informants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> University staff MNBSP alumni employers Documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mid-term evaluation Existing research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purposive/ Convenience sampling for selection of focus group participants Convenience sampling of key informants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification of trends and themes across data sources, noting patterns by disaggregates Linking primary qualitative data findings to existing relevant research
3) What social, economic or other constraints are female MNBSP participants are most likely to face in their university education and career, and how do these	Descriptive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description of overall trends, with illustrative examples Objective assessment with respect to study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus group Literature review Key informant interviews 	Focus group participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Female MNBSP- qualified high school seniors and their family members Female MNBSP alumni Key informants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purposive/ Convenience sampling for selection of focus group participants Convenience sampling of key 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification of trends and themes across data sources, noting patterns by disaggregates Linking primary

Data Collection

Study Question	Type of Answer/ Evidence	Method	Sources	Sampling/Selection	Data Analysis Methods
women accommodate or mitigate these constraints?	question, with illustrative examples		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> University staff MNBSP alumni employers <p>Documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing research 	informants	qualitative data findings to existing relevant research
4) What changes to the university climate, job market and workplace might best allow female MNBSP alumni to achieve their full potential, and what existing conditions or factors have supported their success?	<p>Descriptive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description of overall trends, with illustrative examples Objective assessment with respect to study question, with illustrative examples 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus group Key informant interviews 	<p>Focus group participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Female MNBSP- qualified high school seniors and their family members Female MNBSP alumni <p>Key informants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> University staff MNBSP alumni employers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purposive/ Convenience sampling for selection of focus group participants Convenience sampling of key informants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification of trends and themes across data sources, noting patterns by disaggregates

SOW ANNEX 2: REPORTING GUIDELINES

According to ADS 203.3.1.8 (Documenting Evaluations), evaluation reports must meet the following criteria:

1. Evaluation reports must represent a thoughtful, well-researched, and well-organized effort to objectively evaluate what worked in the project, what did not work, and why.
2. Evaluation reports must address all study questions included in the scope of work. The study report should include the study statement of work as an annex. The technical officer (who is the COR when the study is conducted by a contractor) must agree upon, in writing, all modifications to the statement of work, whether in technical requirements, study questions, study team composition, methodology or timeline.
3. Study methodology must be explained in detail and all tools used in conducting the study such as questionnaires, checklists, and discussion guides will be included in an annex in the final report.
4. When study findings address outcomes and impact, they must be assessed on males and females.
5. Limitations to the study must be disclosed in the report, with particular attention to the limitations associated with the study methodology (selection bias, recall bias, unobservable differences between comparator groups, etc.).
6. Study findings must be presented as analyzed facts, evidence, and data and not based on anecdotes, hearsay, or simply the compilation of people's opinions. Findings should be specific, concise, and supported by strong quantitative or qualitative evidence.
7. Sources of information must be properly identified and listed in an annex.
8. Recommendations must be supported by a specific set of findings and should be action-oriented, practical and specific, with defined responsibility for the action

SOW ANNEX 3: LIST OF KEY DOCUMENTATION

- Merit and Needs Based Scholarship Program Mid-Term Evaluation. August, 2012
- Government of Pakistan Planning Commission Document I Describing the Revised MNBSP (Phase II).
- Data Collected for the MNBSP Mid-Term Evaluation.
- Other documents listed in the References section of this SOW are available upon request.

SOW ANNEX 4: CRITERIA TO ENSURE THE QUALITY OF THE FWS REPORT

- The study report should represent a thoughtful, well-researched and well organized effort to objectively report the responses to study questions.
- The study report shall address all questions included in the scope of work.
- The study report should include the scope of work as an annex. All modifications to the scope of work, whether in technical requirements, study questions, study team composition, methodology or timeline, must be agreed upon in writing by the technical officer.
- Study methodology shall be explained in detail and all tools used in conducting the study such as questionnaires, checklists and discussion guides will be included in an Annex in the final report.
- Limitations to the study shall be disclosed in the report, with particular attention to the limitations associated with the study methodology (selection bias, recall bias, unobservable differences between comparator groups, etc.).
- Study findings should be presented as analyzed facts, evidence and data. Findings should be specific, concise and supported by strong quantitative or qualitative evidence.
- Sources of information need to be properly identified and listed in an annex.
- Recommendations need to be supported by a specific set of findings.
- Recommendations should be action-oriented, practical and specific, with defined responsibility for the action.

SOW ANNEX 5: MNBSP ALUMNI AND CURRENT STUDENTS, BY INSTITUTION

University	MBA/MSc		BBA/BSc		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
UAF	145	23	105	23	296
AU-KPK	82	35	111	30	258
SAUT	125	15	69	14	223
UAAR	63	37	28	22	150
QAU	72	14	0	0	86
IBA-S	29	13	52	11	105
IBA-K	57	31	33	19	140
IMS-P	78	16	55	7	156
BUIITEMS	44	20	16	6	86
LUMS	58	5	35	9	107
SZABIST	30	10	6	3	49
Total	783	219	510	144	1,656

Note: This table does not include the 151 students who dropped out of their programs prior to completing their degrees. This table is taken from page 7 of the MNBSP Mid-Term Evaluation, August, 2012.

SOW ANNEX 6: REFERENCES

- *Merit and Needs Based Scholarship Program Mid-term Evaluation*. USAID: August, 2012.
- *Merit and Needs Based Scholarship Program, Phase I*. Government of Pakistan: Planning Commission (PC)-I.
- *Gender Study for FATA and KP*. USAID: July, 2012.
- “Women in Northern Pakistan: Protected by Tribe, Territory or Taliban?” Jocelyn Richard. *UCL Human Rights Review*, Vol. 3.
- *Gender Analysis. Improving Educational Quality Project*. USAID: November, 2012.

Annex 2: Research Tools

Merit and Needs Based Scholarship Program (MNBSB)

A Special Study

Key informant interviews – University staff

The Merit and Needs Based Scholarship Program (MNBSB) offered by USAID/Pakistan through Higher Education Commission (HEC) seeks to provide assistance toward completion of a degree program at a Pakistani university. The scholarship is offered to students who are economically marginalized, but academically qualified. USAID/Pakistan is conducting a special study through its contractor Management Systems International (MSI). The study will assess the perceptions and beliefs regarding academic and professional constraints and opportunities for women among past and potential female MNBSB scholarship recipients and key member of their circle of influence (e.g., parents).

Your insights are critically important to this study and be invaluable in improving the scholarship program. With your permission we would like to proceed with the interview. [Oral Consent]

Questions	Prompts
1. What are the aspirations and life goals of the female MNBSB students in your university?	If for e.g. the Dean is not familiar with the MNBSB students the question can be asked as a general goal of all students
2. How do the degrees they pursue fit with those goals?	
3. What kind of barriers prevents female MNBSB students from completing their degrees?	Social (conservative families, household work etc.) Economic Personal (lack of confidence) Other
4. What kind of ways do you see female MNBSB recipients working within or around the constraints they face to complete their studies?	
5. What kind of support is available to MNBSB students at this university to complete their studies?	Accessing faculty for advice Orientation for preparation Peer mentoring
5. (a) To what extent do women MNBSB take advantage of this relative to their male counterparts, and why?	
5(b) What are other sources of support that women might use?	
6. What kinds of barriers prevent female MNBSB students from developing a successful career in line with their advanced education?	Social (marriage, relocation for job) Economic constraints Personal School-workforce mismatch Other

7. What kind of ways do you see female MNBSP recipients working within or around the constraints they face to launch a successful career?	
8. What kind of support is available to MNBSP students at this university and in the workforce that support women to develop a successful career?	More information is available More support from faculty to seek the job Alumni network Other
8. (a) To what extent do women take advantage of this relative to male graduates, and why?	
8. (b) What are other sources of support that women might use?	
8. (c) To what extent and in what ways does the students' status as a MNBSP scholarship recipient assists them to launch a successful career?	
9. What kinds of jobs do most MNBSP graduates pursue?	
9. a. Which fields of study are the most promising for women, and why?	
9. b Which fields of study are the least promising for women, and why?	
10. What factors support MNBSP women's success? a. During university education b. During the job hunt c. In the workplace	
11. What changes would assist women to develop a successful career? a. During university education b. During the job hunt c. In the workplace	
12. How do the female MNSBP students fare in comparison to other female students?	-in their aspirations -in their strategies to overcome barriers

“Thank you for your time and efforts to provide us with the information we need for our study.”

Merit and Needs Based Scholarship Program (MNBSBP)

A Special Study

Focus Group Discussion / Interview Protocol

MNBSBP Alumni

The Merit and Needs Based Scholarship Program (MNBSBP) offered by USAID/Pakistan through Higher Education Commission (HEC) seeks to provide assistance toward completion of a degree program at a Pakistani university. The scholarship is offered to students who are economically marginalized, but academically qualified. USAID/Pakistan is conducting a special study through its contractor Management Systems International (MSI). The study will assess the perceptions and beliefs regarding academic and professional constraints and opportunities for women among past and potential female MNBSBP scholarship recipients and key member of their circle of influence (e.g., parents).

As MNBSBP alumni, your insights are critically important to this study and will be invaluable in improving the program. With your permission we would like to proceed with the discussion. [Oral Consent]

Discussion Questions:

Questions	Prompts
1. Tell us about what dreams and life goals you had before entering the program/university.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education - Professional careers - Family (marriage) - Other
2. Could you describe ways in which higher education helped you achieve your dreams/goals?	
3. Have your goals changed since entering the program/university? Explain.	
4. What opportunities did the scholarship program give you that you did not have before?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access to desired field of study - Information on job opportunities - Meeting a cross section Pakistanis - Self enhancement Other
5. What were the problems or obstacles you faced during your pre-university schooling?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School – quality of teaching - Facilities - Access - Finances - Support from family/community - Attitudes/beliefs/knowledge
5.(a) How did you overcome them?	-
6. What kinds of problems did you face in university? (a) What kind of ways could these be overcome, and were you able to successfully do so?"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coursework – quality of teaching/appropriateness of study - Facilities - Finances - Access - Support from family/community - Other students - Self?
7. What would you like to change if given the chance to address some of the problems you highlighted?	
8. What was your job seeking experience like compared to other female friends? a. Were you all able to find employment? Explain. b. Who (or what) helped you/your friends? a. Are you/they happy with your/their job?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Who helped: People (Male/ Female) b) Other <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Salary 2. Work environment 3. Promotion/ growth opportunities

Questions	Prompts
9. (Mapping: Provide flip chart sheets and markers to groups of 3-4)	
A. List all the positive experiences you enjoyed as a result of the education and university experience.	
B. Now list all the problems and negative experiences you had as a result of your education and university experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - With sponsor? - With university/advisers/course selection/materials? - With lecturers? - With time management or study skills? - With fellow students? - With University environment - With family / home/ community - with language - Other
10. How were you able to overcome these problems?	<p>Self (internal qualities/resources) Received support from</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Friends, o Family, o Professors, o Organizations o Other <p>How else</p>
11. Did the support you received resolve the problem? Or did you require more or different support?	Assistance should be linked to each problem
12. Did these problems effect your study or employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mental/emotional stress - Relationships - Academic performance - Not actively seeking a job - Other
13. Has the MNBSP experience changed the way you or others in your family/community look at you? Please explain what these were.	
14. Could you explain how your understanding or views on being a woman changed at all through your experience?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How did other women, your family, treat you differently? - Recognition and use of your own strengths
15. How could more women be supported through this scholarship program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What improvements could you suggest?
16. Are you satisfied with your degree program? Did it enable you to achieve your objectives? Explain.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Linked to job market - Not enough options - Higher status/marriage options
17. How is your course of study being utilized in your current paid employment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Directly linked or partially linked - More opportunities for growth
18. If you had a chance to do it again, would you pick the same program or chose a different one? Explain.	
19. What are the best fields of study for women to pursue?"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mapping exercise
(Mapping exercise? Have girls all write down on index cards one university subject per card (OR have them prepare in advance). Then, they rank them on the wall by placing them from most interesting/useful to least. The negotiating process should be very useful. Have the girls explain their choices and their differences.	<p>have them map it along several axes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - market demand for the field - level of personal interest/pleasure pay, - social "fit" (socially acceptable, most flexibility to respond to cultural expectations for women's [mothers', wives', daughters'-in-law]

Questions	Prompts
	responsibilities)
20. What field of study needs more women? In which fields would it be beneficial for /women to should be better represented? Why are women underrepresented in these fields? Explain.	
21. What fields of study will be most attractive to other women like yourself?	
22. Were there any fields of study that your family may or others in your social circle particularly favored? Objected to?	

“Thank you for your time and efforts to provide us with the information we need for our study.”

Merit and Needs Based Scholarship Program (MNBSBP)

A Special Study

Key informant interviews – **Alumni Employers**

The Merit and Needs Based Scholarship Program (MNBSBP) offered by USAID/Pakistan through Higher Education Commission (HEC) seeks to provide assistance toward completion of a degree program at a Pakistani university. The scholarship is offered to students who are economically marginalized, but academically qualified. USAID/Pakistan is conducting a special study through its contractor Management Systems International (MSI). The study will assess the perceptions and beliefs regarding academic and professional constraints and opportunities for women among past and potential female MNBSBP scholarship recipients and key member of their circle of influence (e.g., parents).

As an employer of an MNBSBP graduate your insights are critically important to this study and will be invaluable in improving the program. With your permission we would like to proceed with the interview. [Oral Consent]

Questions	Prompts
1. What are your views on women's employment in your sector?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Role of women in growth of your sector - Number of women - Challenges
2. What challenges do you think university educated young women face in obtaining and retaining employment in highly skilled sectors like yours?	
3. What kind of challenges do you face to recruit, accommodate and retain women in this sector?	
4. How does the professional performance of your MNBSBP scholarship recipient employee compare to that of other fresh graduates working here?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attitude - Knowledge/skills - Performance - Retention - Other
5. How does the performance of your fresh female graduate employees compare to that of their male counterparts?	
6. What suggestions could you provide that would help increase the successful participation of women in the workforce?	Do you have an arrangement with the universities to hire graduates?
7. What kind of education should women pursue in order to compete successfully for jobs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specific areas of study - Level of education - Generalists or specialists? - Promising fields
8. What policies and working conditions (if any) should employers introduce with women increasingly entering the workforce?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policies exist (gender policy, sexual harassment policy, maternity leave policy, salary, pension etc.) - Working conditions (transport facility, flexible hours, day care)
9. What kind of issues have emerged in your organization as a result of women being recruited, and how are they handled? Give examples.	
10. What proportion of your staff are women, and are there any in leadership positions? How does your organization's approach to staff recruitment, retention, promotion and professional development address women, if at all?	What level are the MNBSBP graduates working on? Have they received any promotions since they were hired? Comparison with male MNBSBP recruits if applicable

Questions	Prompts
11. Is there a difference between the salary levels earned by men and women in your organization? How do you explain this?	Salary; allowances; bonus; perks?
12. What jobs do you think are best fit for women and why?	
13. What are new emerging fields/ opportunities for women in job market?	
13.(a) What type of university education is required for some of these new emerging fields?	
14. Do you believe universities are doing a good job providing young people with the necessary skills to perform well as employees? To start their own businesses? What particular different or additional skills do women need to develop to succeed as employees or entrepreneurs compared to men?	
15. What factors make you to prefer a woman or man for a particular job?	How do you usually recruit your employees?
16. Do you discuss business needs/plans with your staff? Men or women? Explain.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are women asked to provide input? - Are women also provided with training and advancement opportunities? Explain.
17. How do you think the strength and independence of Pakistani women affect their lives, their children, families and community? How do does it affect men in general?	

“Thank you for your time and efforts to provide us with the information we need for our study.”

Merit and Needs Based Scholarship Program (MNBSB)

A Special Study

Focus Group Discussion Protocol

High School Senior (Female)

The Merit and Needs Based Scholarship Program (MNBSB) offered by USAID/Pakistan through Higher Education Commission (HEC) seeks to provide assistance toward completion of a degree program at a Pakistani university. The scholarship is offered to students who are economically marginalized, but academically qualified. USAID/Pakistan is conducting a special study through its contractor Management Systems International (MSI). The study will assess the perceptions and beliefs regarding academic and professional constraints and opportunities for women among past and potential female MNBSB scholarship recipients and key member of their circle of influence (e.g., parents).

As potential candidates for the scholarship program, your insights are critically important to this study and will be invaluable in improving the program.

With your permission we would like to proceed with the discussion. [Oral Consent]

Discussion Questions:

Questions	Prompts
1. Having made it into high school, you are already in a minority in the country, whether for boys or girls. Can you explain how you made it this far?	– What/Who is in you or your environment that helped?
2. What kinds of problems or barriers did you face in reaching this place in your life?	– Social/cultural/family traditions – Economic; infrastructure/ facilities in relation to access
3. Could you tell us how you overcame them? – or adapted to them if you didn’t overcome them.	
4. What are your actual expectations/hopes for your future?	– What would enable you to achieve this goal? What would prevent you from achieving it
5. How could a university degree help you reach this goal?	–
6. Are you interested in pursuing [or do you intend to pursue] a university degree? Why/why not?	
7. What kinds of supports would you need in order to go to university? a. Tell us what kind of support do you think young women generally need to attend university?	– Economic – Family – Personal – Other
8. What concerns or fears do you have about going on to university?	
9. What paid jobs are women like you most likely to be able to get?	– What are the most desirable among these, and why? – What are the least desirable among these, and why?
Mapping exercise: Have girls make charts of possible jobs for women. They should create scales of ‘traditional jobs on one side and non-traditional on the other; informal to formal. Ask them to explain which jobs are open to girls and how they get one. Is it through	

Questions	Prompts
<p>connection or ability? Which jobs are most prestigious for you/your family/your community? Which jobs are acceptable for single women, married women, and mothers?</p> <p>Traditional Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ low education, low investment, low return, high risk, high dependency on middle-person ○ Manufacturing and trading (perfume mixing, cloth-making, handicrafts, market sales). ○ Primary school teachers, <p>Non- Traditional Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ better-educated, business oriented, higher capital investment <p>Use of advanced information + communication techniques in more modern economic activities.</p> <p>Examples: (Banking, Social development sector (NGOs, UN), Consultancy work, setting up own business, private sector)</p>	
10. What kind of degrees do most women like you usually pursue if they go to university?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What degrees are the most useful to achieving your goal, if any? – What degrees are the least useful to achieving your goal, if any?
11. What field of study needs more women/women should be better represented? Explain.	
12. Are there any fields of study that your family may support? Object to?	
13.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Social – Economic – Institutional (i.e. University?) – Other
14. How would a young woman obtain support for university, and where would she go to get it? Give examples. (a) Are these means of support accessible for most young women?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – People (male/ female) – Organizations – Other – Accessibility (physical and financially)
15. Who or what would be the main obstacles preventing young women from being able to obtain a university degree?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Social/People (Male/ Female) – Economic – Institutional
16. What could a young woman do to minimize these constraints?	
17. What kind of support would the young woman need to have a job?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Social – Economic – Institutional – Educational – Other
18. How would this young woman obtain that support, and where would she go to get it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – People (Male/Female) – Organizations – Other
19. Who or what would be the main obstacles preventing the young woman from being able to get a job?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Social/People (Male and Female) – Economic – Institutional/Structural/Patriarchal – Lack of credit access – Sexual harassment/gender biases – Other

20. What could a young woman like you do to work within or work around those obstacles?	
21. What needs to be changed to enable young women to achieve their full professional potential?	– Job market/workplace, professional career counseling at university

“Thank you for your time and efforts to provide us with the information we need for our study.”

Merit and Needs Based Scholarship Program (MNBSBP)

A Special Study

Focus Group Discussion Protocol

Parents (Mothers and Fathers) /Guardians Potential MNBSBP Recipients

The Merit and Needs Based Scholarship Program (MNBSBP) offered by USAID/Pakistan through Higher Education Commission (HEC) seeks to provide assistance toward completion of a degree program at a Pakistani university. The scholarship is offered to students who are economically marginalized, but academically qualified. USAID/Pakistan is conducting a special study through its contractor Management Systems International (MSI). The study will assess the perceptions and beliefs regarding academic and professional constraints and opportunities for women among past and potential female MNBSBP scholarship recipients and key member of their circle of influence (e.g., parents).

As parents/guardian of potential candidates for the scholarship programs, your insights are critically important to this study and will be invaluable in improving the program. With your permission we would like to proceed with the discussion. [Oral Consent]

Discussion Questions:

Questions	Prompts
1. Your daughter is in grade 12. Could you explain what support you provided for her schooling? Examples?	–
2. Your daughter/sister is doing very well in school. How do you feel about this? a. Are you proud, concerned....?	–
3. Could you explain what in her environment has helped her to succeed in school?	Examples Parenting style Fewer household chores Space to study Family/ friends for coaching Other
4. Do you think girls should have the same opportunities as boys (e.g. university education, jobs, sports? Explain.	
5. What hopes or expectations do you have for your daughter's/sister's future?	- Academically - Economic prospects - Family prospects
6. Would higher education support or hinder these expectations?	–
7. If scholarships were available for young women like your daughter to attend university, would you encourage her to apply? Explain.	Examples how this support will be provided such as negotiating with family
8. What additional financial assistance, academic and social support, or other conditions would need to be in place for you to allow her to go? Details.	Examples of support Transportation cost for student and her escort
9. What future career would you like to see her engaged in? Explain.	
10. How do you personally feel about girls' education? Why is it important or not important? Explain	Why it is important for the parent/guardian, family, community or country

Questions	Prompts
11. What do you think women’s contribution is (or should be) to the wellbeing of their family, community and nation? How does higher education factor into that?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decision makers - Policy makers - Working / Employment - Other
12. What are some of the common or influential views in your community about educating women and girls? Who holds these views?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Family/ community elders (male and female)
13. If she does attend university, do you have a preference for what field of study she should follow? How do you view your role in guiding her academic choices?	
14. What worries or concerns would you have if she were to go to university?	
15. Would people in this community see her and this family differently IF she were to attend university? Explain both the positive and negative views.	
16. If she was offered an opportunity to study at university, but her brothers/future husband did not, could this be a problem for her? Explain.	
17. How could you face these potential difficulties/benefits?	–
18. Are there role models of successful women in this family/community? Who? Explain.	–
19. How do you view your role in guiding her after she completes her education, in terms of personal/family life and work? What kinds of work would you NOT want her to have? What kind of work would you most prefer she do?	–
20. How would you respond if your daughter expressed an interest in starting her own business??	
21. What challenges/constraints do you think young women face to achieve their full potential in society?	
22. How would your expectations for your daughter’s life change after she’s married?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Work • Responsibilities
23. How these challenges can be addressed?	
24. What kind of woman did your son(s) marry/(If you had a son), what kind of woman would you want your son(s) to marry?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education level • Work experience • Duration of work • Family responsibilities

“Thank you for your time and efforts to provide us with the information we need for our study.”

Annex 3: Bibliography

- Akhtar, S., Hoti, G., Khan, I., Jameel, A., and Danish, M. 2012. *Merit and needs-based scholarship program (MNBSP): Evaluation report*. USAID.
- Aslam, M. 2009. Education gender gaps in Pakistan: Is the labor market to blame? *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 57 (4): 747-84.
- Batool, S., Sajid, M., and Shaheen, I. 2013. Gender and higher education in Pakistan. *International Journal of Gender and Women's Studies* 1(1): 15-28.
- Bloom, D. E., Canning, D., Fink, G., and Finlay, J. E. 2009. Fertility, female labor force participation, and the demographic dividend. *Journal of Economic Growth* 14 (2): 79–101.
- Chitraker, R. 2009. *Overcoming barriers to girls' education in South Asia: Deepening the analysis*. Regional Office for South Asia.
- Choudry, M. 2006. *Pakistan: where and who are the world's illiterates?* Background paper prepared for the Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2006 *Literacy for Life*. UNESCO.
- Goel, A. 2004. *Education and socio-economic perspectives of women development and empowerment*. New Delhi: The Flammer.
- Hoodbhoy, P. 2009. Pakistan's higher education system—what went wrong and how to fix it. *The Pakistan Development Review* 48(4) Part II: 581–94.
- Junaidi, I. 2014. 50pc of female doctors never work after graduation. *Dawn*, Oct. 22.
<http://www.dawn.com/news/1139557/>
- Latif, A. 2000. Alarming situation of education in Pakistan. UNESCO. Accessed November 7, 2014.
http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/know_sharing/grassroots_stories/pakistan_2.shtml
- Mukhtar, E. 2011. *Macro trends in financing of education in Pakistan: An analysis of public sector allocations and expenditures*. Pakistan: UNESCO.
- Noureen, G., and Awan, R. 2011. Women's education in Pakistan: Hidden fences on open frontiers. *Asian Social Science* 7(2).
- Pakistan Higher Education Commission Planning Commission (HEC-PC). 2013. *USAID merit and needs based scholarship program, phase II (PC-1)*. Pakistan: HEC.
- Pakistan Ministry of Finance. 2014. *Highlights of Pakistan economic survey 2013-14*. Accessed November 7, 2014. http://finance.gov.pk/survey/chapters_14/Highlights_ES_201314.pdf
- Pakistan National Education Management Information System, Academy of Education Planning and Management. 2013. *Pakistan education statistics 2011-2*. Islamabad: Pakistan Ministry of Education.
- Planning Commission of Pakistan. Ministry of Planning, Development, and Reform. *Pakistan Millennium Development Goals Report 2013*. Islamabad: Planning Commission.
<http://www.pk.undp.org/content/pakistan/en/home/library/mdg/pakistan-mdgs-report-2013/>
- Ramachandran, V. 2011. *Gender equality in education: Looking beyond parity: An IIEP evidence based policy forum*. Paris: UNESCO-IIEP.
- UNESCO. 2013/4. *Education for all global monitoring report*.
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002256/225660e.pdf>

UNESCO Institute for Statistics. 2009. *Global education digest 2009: Comparing educational statistics across the world*. Montreal: UNESCO Institute for Statistics. Accessed November 5, 2014.
<http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/ged09-en.pdf>.

University of the Punjab. 2013. *Fact Book*. Lahore: U. Punjab.

World Bank. 2009. *Literature review on equity and access to tertiary education in the Africa region*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Zaidi, Y. 2013. *Status of women and men in Pakistan 2012*. UN Women Pakistan.

Annex 4: Bios of Team Members

Team Leader – Laine Berman

Laine has more than 20 years' experience as a professor, researcher, project evaluator, writer, and community activist, with a strong background in ethnographic analysis, spoken and visual communication, and community-level activism. Her strengths are primarily in community engagement, public health, adolescent reproductive health and harm reduction, sustainable urban farming, gender advocacy, and working with children and marginal communities. She has published six books and dozens of articles on gender, violence, pop culture, and children's issues. Laine's home base is Indonesia, but she has led research and evaluation teams in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Uganda, Timor Leste, Indonesia, the United States, and Australia.

Education Specialist – Rehana Shaikh

Ms. Rehana Shaikh specializes in public policy, gender, education, monitoring and evaluation, training and facilitation, and management expert. Her public policy and management expert experience is spread over 20 years in social sector development in Pakistan. She has also worked on short-term assignments in Bangladesh and Afghanistan. Her work experience has included interaction with government ministries, departments, local governments, donors, civil society organizations, and communities. She exhibits advanced skills in qualitative research, training, and project management.

Sector Specialist, Women's Workforce Development – Dr. Zehra Yasmin Zaidi

Dr. Zehra Yasmin Zaidi has over 25 years of experience working on gender issues and possesses substantial knowledge of women's workforce issues in Pakistan. She has worked extensively with international and national organizations, and with government agencies for mainstreaming gender into program design, implementation, and policy. She has recently been involved in the design of a women's entrepreneurship training program, and facilitating a series of leadership and issue-specific workshops with women parliamentarians. Her recent research led to the publishing of a comprehensive reference report on the *Status of Women and Men in Pakistan* (UN Women Pakistan) that drew on national surveys and secondary qualitative data on poverty, health, work and wages, and women's empowerment. Her analytical skills are sharpened by her experience and insight on the economic, human resource, gender, and organizational capacity.

Babar Mufti

Mr. Mufti is a Monitoring Coordinator at MSI. He has 7 years of experience in monitoring, evaluation and research, and has worked on UN-, USAID-, and World Bank-funded projects. In his most recent assignment, he managed a USAID-funded monitoring assignment on the Teacher Education Project and was the primary author for 12 monitoring reports. His evaluation work focusses on the education sector and includes a recently concluded evaluation of Science and Technology programs in Pakistan. He holds a Master of Science in Foreign Service (MSFS) and the Certificate in Refugees and Humanitarian Crises from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service.