

September 2023

# Pathways

**Building Climate  
Resilience**



**PATHFINDER**

## A global commitment, a local approach

Last month, the U.S. government released its first strategy responding to the effects of climate change on women. In Pakistan, the country's first-ever National Adaptation Plan was approved by the federal cabinet to enhance the nation's resilience against adverse impacts of climate change. Next month, the 28th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) will convene to discuss the biggest challenges facing the global community, working to build a roadmap that leaves no one behind as we invest in climate change mitigation and adaptation.

At Pathfinder, we have been working on the frontlines of climate change for years. Over the past few, we have recognized the importance of having our approach to climate resilience consider the impacts of climate change on gender, understanding that women and girls suffer disproportionately, yet continue to be underrepresented in developing policies and solutions to address the climate crisis. We know that climate change leads to denial of sexual and reproductive health services and rights, increases food and water insecurity, impacts livelihoods and economic security, and worsens existing inequities—in every country where Pathfinder works.

Climate change interrupts health service delivery and increases health risks, particularly among already climate-vulnerable communities. The 2022 floods in Pakistan led to health facilities being destroyed, and health services unable to reach those that needed immediate care and services; at that time the UNFPA had estimated close to 650,000 pregnant women in the flood-affected areas would be without maternal health care services.

At Pathfinder, we are strengthening the capacity of health systems to be resilient in the face of climate shocks, while supporting communities to develop local, contextually relevant solutions that enable them to adapt to these shocks. Our work reflects our vision of seeing locally led development and local leadership at the heart of climate change solutions and strengthening the nexus between gender equality and climate change solutions.

Pathfinder's climate resilience work recognizes that investments in women generate durable improvements to health outcomes, help ensure

sustainability of essential services and programs, and ultimately lead to communities that are more equitable, healthy, and sustainable. Pathfinder's approach encompasses the following:

- **Strengthening the capacity of health systems to prepare for and manage health risks due to climate change.**
- **Helping to meet unmet demand for sexual and reproductive health care and services essential to women's and girls' agency in communities affected by the climate crisis.**
- **Tailoring our programs to each community's distinct needs and assets.**
- **Supporting women's engagement and leadership in local resilience planning and implementation, and implementing livelihood interventions.**



Through our integrated approach, we take care to avoid shifting the burden of developing climate solutions onto women. To ensure we are responding to the greatest challenges faced by women, our programs incorporate women's economic empowerment, the prevention and response to gender-based violence related to climate impacts, and advocacy and awareness campaigns that include a mix of health and climate messaging.

In this issue of *Pathways*, you will read about women in Pakistan and Tanzania who are leading the charge to protect their families and communities from climate shocks. They are powerful, and I am proud to walk beside them as they work to build resilience, and a better future, in the communities where they live.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tabinda".

**Dr. Tabinda Sarosh,**  
President, South Asia,  
Middle East, and North Africa

## In Tanzania, economic empowerment and climate resilience go hand-in-hand.

***“This is a wooden fence that we’ve put around the house to protect the goats from being eaten by wild animals.”***

In Felister Gidion’s community, this is a reality—hyenas, lions, leopards, and other predators are real day-to-day threats to her livelihood. But Felister’s fence, as well as the installation of “living walls” in communities like hers, mean safer livestock and, ultimately, better livelihoods.

Felister is part of USAID’s MOMENTUM Integrated Health Resilience, which works in the Greater Mahale Ecosystem (GME), the Northern Tanzania Rangelands (NTR), and the Ruaha Rungwa Ecosystem (RRE), areas where extreme poverty, climate change, and geographic isolation threaten people’s health and environment. The project implements an integrated approach with partners—The Nature Conservancy, the Southern Tanzania Elephant Programme, and the Government of Tanzania—and strengthens health resilience, allowing communities to carry on health activities in the face of shocks and stressors.

Felister lives in a “model boma,” a household that has volunteered to model positive health and environmental practices, including building hand-washing stations (tippy taps), using energy-saving stoves, upgrading latrines, using climate-smart agriculture, practicing positive sexual and reproductive health and rights attitudes and behaviors, and ensuring boys and girls go to school. Through the project, 70% of households in the Northern Tanzania Rangelands have access to upgraded latrines, and 84% of community members have improved water sources through public taps and piped water.

***What’s a living wall?*** In addition to the inner ring of acacia thorns, living walls are built by using native trees that act as fence posts, which are then covered with chain-link fencing that makes it impossible for predators to squeeze through. Living walls also serve the purpose of separating animals and their caretakers—previously, some Maasai people lived with their animals in the same spaces.

The project aims for 75% of households to be enrolled in the model household program.

To promote the adoption of positive health and environmental behaviors among households and the community at large, the project supports community health workers (CHWs) and community champions with stipends and trainings. These champions and CHWs then conduct household and village visits to promote healthy behaviors, including use of latrines, bath shelters, long-lasting insecticidal mosquito nets, and climate-smart agriculture and food security practices. The champions and CHWs also promote the adoption of positive attitudes toward voluntary family planning and respectful, inclusive decision-making between women and men. In the project’s second year, 142 champions have reached 97,569 community members with integrated family planning, health, and conservation messages.



***According to teacher, Aidan Nyigo, the school’s club has provided critical information to students on the intersections between health and the environment.***

### School Clubs for the Next Generation

Partnerships with schools and local education departments have resulted in the formation of school clubs that provide students with reproductive health *continued on back page...*



PHOTOS: Emily Bartels-Bland

As part of MOMENTUM, Pathfinder supports the Maasai Women's Community Conservation Microfinance Group, pictured here.

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and environmental conservation education as well as hands-on activities such as tree planting.

For Aidan Nyigo, a teacher at Naitolia primary school, the club has been invaluable for his students. "Our club has 50 club members, 26 girls and 24 boys," says Aidan. "The club participates in different activities, including planting trees, environmental conservation learning, general environmental and bodily hygiene, and reproductive health and family planning education." In addition, all of the young club members receive education on gender-based violence and violence against children.

friendly businesses such as beekeeping and soap making, provide information on sustainable natural resource management practices, and members are linked with information about sexual and reproductive health and maternal and child health services. Currently, 4,074 people are members of community conservation microfinance groups; 2,877 are women.

In Nafco Village, for example, the project is supporting a Maasai Women's lead Community Conservation Microfinance Group with more than 30 members and a shared value of more than 4 million Tanzanian shillings (roughly \$1,600).

"This group is composed of members who conduct agriculture and livestock activities," says Neema Sirya, who leads the group in Nafco Village. "The group has members who are widowed and depend on agriculture and livestock [for their livelihoods]." Through the group's work, the women have received financial support for health needs, education, and environmental adaptations. In the last year, not a single loan default was reported.

What's next for the project? Ramping up work with community health workers and local champions to enroll more model bomas, and increasing the number of savings and loan groups, while establishing greater access to health services for members.



"All of these things help us to wash the dishes, and kill the bacteria," says Felister.

## Economic Independence

While community conservation and health education and services are critical, livelihoods are also integral to thriving communities. MOMENTUM supports communities to develop savings and loans groups for women and men. These groups support members to diversify their incomes through environmentally

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ON THE COVER: "The trainings and information are crucial to our lives because they enable us to produce a successful harvest. I can now gather fruits and vegetables, shield them from different temperature fluctuations, and feed my family." —Mani Bai PHOTO: Ali Rizvi

# CHAMPIONS OF CHANGE

Meet the women who are leading the charge in building climate resilience —and gender equity— in their communities

It's a phrase we've heard for years—think globally, act locally. But for Ainee Kohli, acting locally isn't a catchphrase—it's her life. An activist and educator in her community, Ainee has brought women in Parodahro Taluka, Pakistan, together and strengthened their knowledge and skills in climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and sexual and reproductive health and rights. Ainee and her husband, Dalpat, are working on everything from recycling water projects to educating young girls... and they are just getting started.

"I am originally from Mirpurkhas," says Ainee, "and I moved to Tharparkar after marriage. Despite all the challenges of living in Tharparkar, I chose to stay here and make a difference for other women and girls living here."

Tharparkar, Pakistan, is in Sindh province, a region where climate change is decreasing access to food and water, and negatively impacting health, agriculture, and livelihoods. In the previous 20 years, rainfall patterns have

shifted dramatically, shrinking the monsoon season and increasing drought.

But Ainee and the women in her community are making a difference. As climate champions, they worked with Pathfinder's project *I am Resilient, I am Change*, (known locally as Dharti Ammar), which has strengthened resilience to climate change and disasters in farming communities of Tharparkar district, Pakistan, through the leadership and engagement of women and girls.

The project worked to transform harmful gender norms and attitudes that perpetuate violence against women. At the same time, it engaged men and boys, community-based organizations, policymakers, and university students to enhance collaboration between climate change, health, and women's rights advocacy groups.

Community members attended trainings and conversations on a range of issues, including climate-adaptive farming solutions; water, sanitation, and hygiene practices; sexual and reproductive health; and gender equity. In addition, the project collaborated with policy makers, helping them understand the links between climate change and sexual and reproductive health and rights. Finally, the project worked with local educational institutions, focusing



Moomal speaks to a group of young girls on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

**“I want to ensure that all girls get an education and are not married off in their childhood. My husband and in-laws have been very supportive; men need to play their part as well for a healthier community.”**

Ainee Kohli with daughter Aneeta.



Ainee with a small solar panel.

## AINEE'S IMPACT

Ainee didn't do it alone. She worked closely with other women for a year and a half to:



Plant trees at 20 households during the rainy season.



Assist 10 women with choosing a family planning method.



Tutor 15 young children.



Start kitchen gardens in 15 households, each using recycled water for growing.



Conduct an awareness campaign about preventing early child marriage and develop a related pledge.



Teach community members about composting and restoring additional land for farming, including using natural resources like cow dung for organic farming and mulching.

### Think Globally, Act Locally

I am Resilient, I am Change  
(Dharti Ammar)

ڌرتي امڙ, in Sindhi, meaning  
Mother Earth

PROJECT DATES: 2021-2023

COUNTRY: Pakistan

on advocacy and dialogues on climate change, gender, and health.

Moomal, one of the women reached through the project, is now an active advocate. She held sessions on climate-adaptive farming practices and sexual and reproductive health and rights with young women in her community.

“I have created a space in my house where women from my village gather to engage in discussions and seek guidance,” she says. “These get-togethers are transformative, as women discuss the challenging prevailing myths and stigmas surrounding their lives and roles. With each session, the barriers are gradually eroded, empowering these women to break free from societal constraints and embrace new possibilities for their personal and collective growth.”

Moomal’s husband, Moolchand, is right there beside her. “I believe in providing equal opportunities to both boys and girls for their educations and to pursue their dreams,” he says. “I wholeheartedly support the importance of education for all. I want my daughter to grow into a strong and independent woman.”

## Water—reuse, recycle!

In Ainee’s community, only two wells for drinking water exist. During the summer, the wells run dry. That means villagers walk between 20 to 30 kilometers to get drinking water. During the rainy season, a small pond serves as a second outlet for water, but as the climate shifts, a critical factor in everyone’s daily life is where, and how, to get water.



**Moolchand, Munwar, Bhugwani, and Moomal at their home. Moomal showing some of their most recent harvest.**

PHOTOS: Ali Rizvi

Dharti Ammar focused on recycling water to minimize the reliance on external water sources and develop an agricultural ecosystem. This has helped the community reuse a precious resource and support the growth of crops in this arid land. Says Dalpat, Ainee’s husband, “Our top priority has been recycling water. We are now able to use it for ourselves

and get that water to our crops and other plantation areas. We are developing more effective systems to optimize the use of water for ourselves and also for our crops. These plants wouldn’t survive otherwise.”

With more available water comes two other things: more crops and more time. For the women of the



**Dalpat and Ainee at an area that allows them to use, and reuse, water. Water filters in the back of the platform, feeding plants behind the wall.**

PHOTOS: Ali Rizvi



Dhani making a quilt.

PHOTO: Ali Rizvi

community, they know exactly what to do with both! Mani Bai is one of these women, and she is working hard to grow more resilient crops despite the shifting climate. “These trainings and information are crucial to our lives,” says Mani, “because they enable us to produce a successful harvest. I can now gather fruits and vegetables, shield them from different temperature fluctuations, and feed my family.”

Mani isn't the only one who is improving her harvest. Mukesh, Tai, and Ajoti, members of the next generation, have also gotten into it! Says Tai, “We enjoy watching plants grow and take pride in contributing our efforts to the environment's well-being.” And Ajoti has more to say. “I love learning about growing fruits and vegetables! Gardening is super fun, especially when we get to see the plants grow from tiny seeds into big plants. We even help our parents in the garden, watering the plants and taking care of them. It feels amazing to grow our own food and knowing that we are helping our family and the environment.”

## Resilience means empowerment

Better harvests, more water access, and working alongside men and boys means something else for women: more time for pursuing livelihoods. “Water conservation and recycling techniques that we've learned in the trainings have given us more free time,” says Dhani. “The number of trips to fetch water from the well has been reduced. I now have more time at my disposal to make ‘rallis’ (patchwork quilts) and other items.”

*Dharti Ammar provided training to 100 farming families on the impact of climate change on sexual and reproductive health and climate-smart agriculture. These families then conducted trickle down sessions, reaching 200 farming families. In total, they reached out to approximately 6,390 community members, including women, girls, men, and boys.*

## A LEARNING LAB FOR SCALE

To increase the sustainability and scale of these activities in the long-term, the project is now creating a learning lab, a partnership with universities that will engage students to become voices for change in Tharparkar. Participating students will work on evidence-based climate impact stories, which will then be used for mass media engagement, advocacy and policy work, and broader dissemination. Students will also take a course focusing on the intersection of climate change and health, increasing their capacity to contribute to local climate solutions. The learning lab will then be scaled up in other Pathfinder projects.

Climate change is the most pressing challenge facing communities around the world. No one solution is the solution: it takes all community members—and especially the contributions of women—to make a change. As Mst. Najoo Govind Kolhi, put it: “Life is hard, but (there is) hope also. Village women are hard-working and survive in all tough situations!”