

# WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES

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**Roshaneh Zafar**  
Managing Director

## Kashf Foundation

### Kashf Foundation

Country: Pakistan  
Employees: 1001-5000  
Industry: Micro-Finance

Website  
<https://kashf.org/>



### Empowering Women through Microfinance

Founded by Roshaneh Zafar in 1996, Kashf Foundation seeks to import successful microfinance models to Pakistan to service low-income households and empower women. As the first specialized microfinance institution in Pakistan, Kashf Foundation has progressed from its humble beginnings as a Grameen Bank replicator to now ranking as 34 among the Top 50 MFIs of the World by Forbes in 2008. Most recently, Kashf became the first MFI of Pakistan to win a European Microfinance Award for Microfinance and Access to Education in 2016.

Over the past two decades, Kashf Foundation has successfully carved out a distinct niche in the microfinance sector both in Pakistan and abroad. Kashf offers appraisal of backed individual lending to its clients along with other non-financial services to create an impact at the household level. The main spheres of intervention include (1) Financial Services, (2) Insurance and Safety Nets, (3) Capacity Building Trainings, and (4) Social Advocacy Interventions.

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*During these extraordinary and unprecedented circumstances, Kashf Foundation undertook a holistic approach to rehabilitate women micro entrepreneurs in the country.*

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## COVID-19 Action and Impact

The novel COVID-19 virus has wreaked havoc across the world and has disproportionately impacted marginalized women. In Pakistan, women risk losing their livelihood at a faster rate than men as women are more vulnerable to economic disruptions. In a client assessment undertaken by Kashf Foundation (2020), the study underlined the extent to which women's micro-entrepreneurs have been impacted by the pandemic. According to the study, 55% of the respondents reported their businesses have completely shut down, 23% reported they have irregular business activity, 19% have regular limited activity, while 3% are operating at pre-COVID-19 levels. Across various sectors including fabric trade, dairy, beauty, and stitching, etc., the respondents reported an overall 76% decrease in their income.



*Watch the testimonial video to learn more!*

During the initial stages of the pandemic, Kashf Foundation focused on creating an enabling environment for women micro-entrepreneurs through its suite of holistic financial and non-financial products and services. The organization's strategy involved a multi-pronged economic rehabilitation program to support women across Pakistan. As part of the initiative, the organization pivoted its model to cater to the most immediate business needs of women micro-entrepreneurs in the country. For instance, Kashf Foundation was one of first organizations in Pakistan to defer loan repayments by one month to ensure that women micro-entrepreneurs had the necessary cash flows to help them make their day-to-day expenses.

In addition, Kashf Foundation identified the most vulnerable households in their network and provided women micro-entrepreneurs with ration packages to support their families. As a part of the organization's long-term response, Kashf Foundation worked towards designing and rolling out products and services to assist its clients in dire straits. This included designing a back-to-business loan and launching a business continuity training program to build the business acumen of women micro-entrepreneurs and help them restore their enterprises.

Collaboration played a key role in Kashf Foundation's activation of resources. The organization closely worked with various local and international organizations (including UNDP, Philip Morris, and FMO) who share similar goals of supporting women during the pandemic, particularly through deployment of resources.

## Delivering Results and Ensuring Sustainability

The success of the program was dependent on clear indicators that would measure Kashf Foundation's progress toward supporting women micro-entrepreneurs during the pandemic. As of 2020, more than 490,000 women micro-entrepreneurs were given customized loan rescheduling options and more than 7,000 women-led households had received a ration package.



Moving toward their long-term response, the organization has defined the modalities of the back-to-business loan and their business continuity training is in the process of rolling out. As of 2020, 100 women have received training, and the rollout of the back-to-business loan in October 2020 is expected to reach at least 50,000 women micro-entrepreneurs in the first quarter of 2021.

The coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated the economic and social status of women from low-income households. More than ever, the priority is to invest in devising policies that benefit women. Hence, to scale the economic rehabilitation program in the future, Kashf Foundation will work with various local and international stakeholders. The organization does not only plan to scale up their current interventions but also to re-align the scope of its initiatives to help its women beneficiaries cope with the negative impacts of the coronavirus pandemic. In the upcoming years, Kashf Foundation is determined to ensure that the necessary financial products are available and at least 50% of its clients are trained and supported to cope with potential pandemics in the future.

“ *The organization focused on providing economic relief, offering recapitalization loan options and undertaking business continuity trainings to bring more than 500,000 women micro entrepreneurs on the road to economic recovery.* ”

### Women’s Empowerment Principles



High-Level Corporate Leadership



Treat all Women and Men Fairly at Work without Discrimination



Employee Health, Well-Being and Safety



Education and Training for Career Advancement



Enterprise Development, Supply Chain and Marketing Practices



Community Initiatives and Advocacy



Measurement and Reporting

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