

# CELEBRATING WOMEN'S RESILIENCE



CHALLENGING, INSPIRING, EMPOWERING

**GOAL**

**GO-WOMAN!  
ALLIANCE CIC**



## CONTENTS

Introduction .....	2
Atia Rani .....	3
Azmat Ara .....	4
Dilwara Khanam .....	5
Dosti Group .....	6
Forida Akhtar .....	7
Gul Jabeen .....	8
Hawarun Nessa Begum .....	9
Ishrat Ali .....	10
Kalsoom Ali .....	11
Latifa Mohammed .....	12
Mariah Mariah.....	13
Maryam Kauser.....	14
Monwara Begum .....	15
Nadia Shah .....	16
Nargis Karim .....	17
Rabia Bi .....	18
Saima Ali .....	19
Sameena Newah .....	20
Sofia Siddique .....	22
Tahira Parveen .....	24
Tazeem Begum .....	25
Zakia Begum .....	26

## INTRODUCTION

Women have the power to make a difference. This booklet consists of short stories of individuals that have inspired women of our time.

Their strength, skills and sheer perseverance have encouraged and will continue to encourage women and young girls for time to come developing future ambassadors.

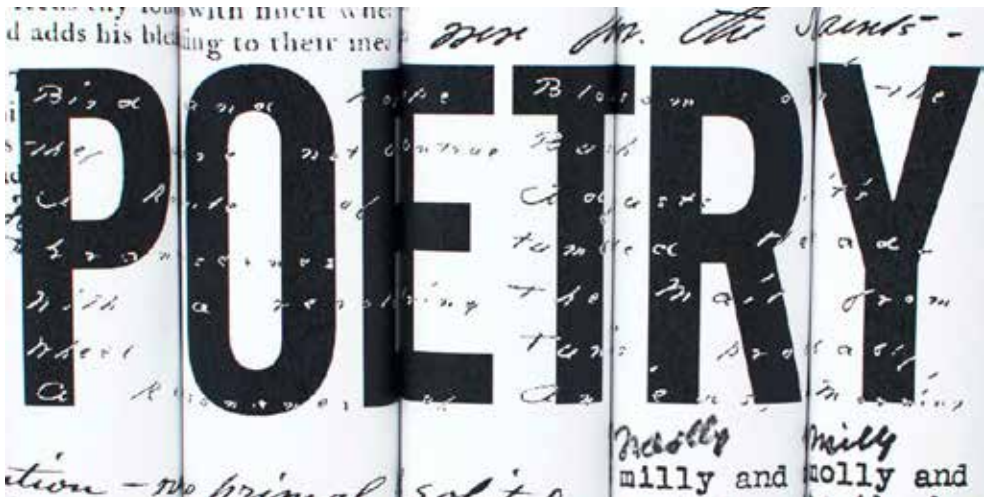
These stories show the power women have, to empower others to take charge of defining their own destiny.

These stories were written by learners developing their English language at pre-entry level and were part of a mini-exhibition held at Adderley Children Centre developed by Go-Woman! Alliance CIC in conjunction with our learners to celebrate International Women's Day and the English My Way programme ([www.englishmyway.co.uk](http://www.englishmyway.co.uk)) in March 2018.

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## ATIA RANI

When I was young, my surrounding really impressed me, such as the weather, nature and I used to have lots of thoughts and this triggered me to compose poetry.

When I was in year 10, I wrote a poem about the "Subah Ki Chandni" which all my teachers and class fellows really appreciated, and they made me present my poetry in assembly and I won an award. That was when my life changed, and I started to write a lot of poetry during college times and this is what inspired me.

Though my poetry I can convert my thoughts in my own words. During college, I wrote lots of poetry for the college magazines and today after 18 years I started to write poetry again. The honor I received at the Pakistani Consulate on "6th September" when I presented my poetry, where I got really appreciated and applauded.

Now my poetry is published in newspapers. I also write articles and political news. This is the most beautiful time of my life. I feel like Allah has given women lots of qualities, if she like she can take care of her goals and her family dream.



## AZMAT ARA

Many years ago, my sister-in-law used to sew for me. I secretly wished that I could do it myself but there was no one to teach me, so I started using odd pieces of material lying around the house to practice cutting.

I used small pieces of material to make things that could be used around the house. I then started making handkerchiefs and gave them out as presents to family members who were always very happy with them.

One day I bought some lace from the market and made the handkerchiefs more beautiful. Due to my eyesight deteriorated I do less and less these days but I always feel so proud when someone pays a compliment about my work.



## DILWARA KHANAM

When I was living in Bangladesh in my 30's, my best friend Fortinga also my neighbour gifted me a beautiful hand-held spinner fan made from tree bark.

I was always interested in making handmade items but never got the opportunity to learn. I got my friend to teach me. Soon I became skilled at this craft and was gifting them to my family and friends.

At a time in my life when financial resources were limited, craft provided the perfect opportunity to give gifts from the heart without putting pressure on me economically.

My friend Fortinga passed away but she and the fans remain my inspiration which enable me to make people happy without having to spend a lot of money and I am grateful for her patient for teaching me the craft.

This fan is made by her and it reminds me of her and our time in Bangladesh.



## DOSTI GROUP

This baby blanket has been put together with help of our wonderful ladies who attend the DOSTI Group every Wednesday afternoon at Adderley Children Centre, Birmingham.

The inspiration behind this blanket was the passion to learn how to knit small patches.

Beginning with a simple knit. Once knitting was established, small square patches were knitted and then joined together to create a blanket.

Following completion, the alphabet was stitched onto the blanket using chain stitch. The edges were finished off with blanket stitch.

In just a few short few weeks, thanks to our lovely ladies in DOSTI Group we have created a baby blanket which will now be donated to a reputable charity.

Thank you DOSTI Group for your inspiration for knitting and creating this beautiful baby blanket.





## FORIDA AKHTAR

When I went to college in Bangladesh, my best friend wore a dress which she had hand printed flowers on it, embroidered by her. I loved the flowers and gave her my kameez (top) so she can do it for me.

The following week she brought her thread and needles to show me. She taught me in college on how to do the stitching.

My friend was my inspiration. She taught me how to design the patterns and stitch my clothes.

I started making my own clothes and began to have a passion for it. I used to make dresses for my nieces and then started making table cloths and bedspreads.

I will always be grateful to my friend as she taught me a talent that became my hobby.



## GUL JABEEN

The person I am inspired by is my mother. She made me want to be the best person I can be.

She brought me, my sisters and brothers up, all by herself. She taught me how to talk, how to walk amongst many other things.

She also taught me how to cook, how to sew as well as how to crochet. Crochet is one of the things I am most proud of as I can now make many things like shoes, scarves, hats, flowers amongst many other things.

My mother is my hero and my inspiration. I am proud to be her daughter. I can't imagine my life without her and I wish I can be even a little like her.

I wish one day I can make her proud of me and that I will be able to see her again.



## HAWARUN NESSA BEGUM

In Bangladesh when I was 10 years old, I used to watch my own mother and my sister make hand fans using different materials, doing hand stitched patterns and flowers using wood bark to weave different patterns.

I used to enjoy watching them make them to pass their leisurely time. I started helping them. I learnt different stitches and weaves and began to start making different things.

When I came to England at the age of 23, I was stuck at home and started doing it to pass time. Today I still do it to help me with my depression, to keep active and my mind working on something.

If I need any materials that I can't get hold of, my sister sends them from Bangladesh.

My mum has passed away, but she remains my inspiration to learning.



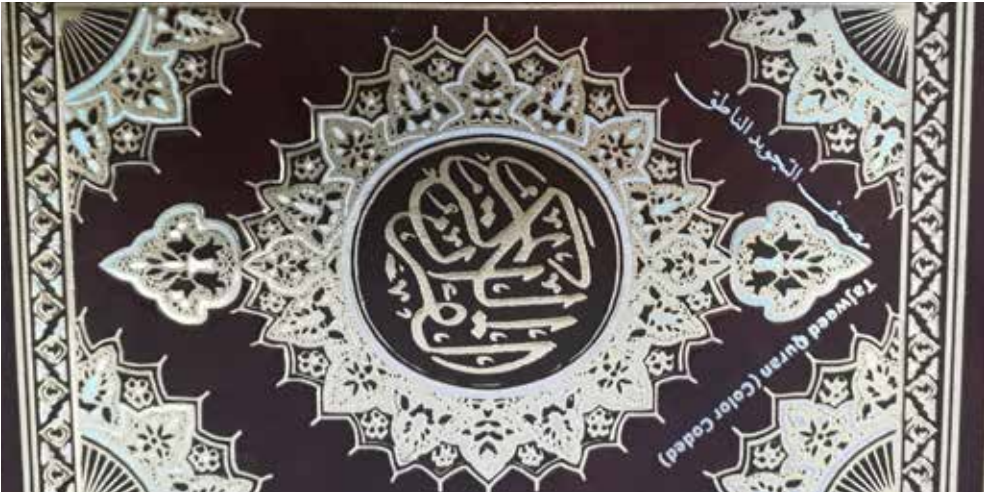
## ISHRAT ALI

When I was little in Pakistan, my mum used to sew, knit and crochet. I then grew a passion to do it myself. At the age of 12, I started sewing and the passion grew.

My mum used to sew for so many people in the village. At the age of 13 or 14 my mum past away. My brothers and sister were small, so I started sewing for people and knitting, making suits, jumpers and cardigan. We were a poor family, so I did this to help my family.

I felt so proud of my mum as she has passed her talent to me. When I came to the UK I started to sew and knit for people. Now I look on YouTube and I can pick up any stitch when sewing and knitting.

When I came to the UK as a single parent, I manged to work and support myself and my son and for that reason I am grateful to my mother. She passed away 29 years ago but now I think of her every day when I sew, knit or crochet. She was a talented lady. She taught me many things. She is my biggest inspiration in life.



## KALSOOM ALI

Whenever I feel sad or alone, I recite the holy Quran, as I feel very relaxed and happy in my heart. The Quran gives solutions to my problem and if I get into problems in the future. I am inspired by Quran not because it is holy book, but I feel inspired by it because it gives me guidance from Allah and prophet Muhammad (SAW). And when our guide is someone who loves us, how could they be wrong.



## LATIFA MOHAMMED

My journey of inspirations is patience. I learned to be patient through someone special. I learned to live with hardest company. I learned to respect each and everyone around me because the person I learnt from never complaint. I have never seen or heard her complain.

Regardless of some of her difficult times, the only face I can remember is the face of hope.

This person is my sweet mum. She is my inspiration and will always be.

Patience is a virtue and those who know how to be patient will experience great joy in life and many other wonderful things that come from being patient.

Good things come to those who believe. Better things come to those who are patient and the best things come to those who don't give up.



## MARIAH MARIAH

I have a large family in Bangladesh. We always met each other, mum, aunties, grandma at weddings. As I was growing up I used to see everyone making decorative 'Paan' trays. I used to stand there and watch them. I had passion for it.

As I got older, I started helping them and eventually was making my own decorative 'Paan' trays. Everyone started liking my designs.

Then when everyone in the community had weddings, they would come and ask me to make the trays for them.

When I came to England I felt there was a greater demand for these gifts and I was constantly asked to make them.

I have a passion and really enjoy doing this. My mum and aunties have inspired me so much and it is because of them I am able to create such fantastic gifts which I hope can help me in the future to earn money.



## MARYAM KAUSER

When I came to England 8 years ago I could not speak English at all. When I joined English classes I could not understand anything.

In the past 3 years I have been attending Adderley Nursery to learn English.

Now I can explain my problems to my doctor. I started to work in a shop. I can now count, read prices and talk to customers. I can sign in when I see my GP on the computer system.

I didn't know how to travel by bus but now I can catch a bus and go to the city center on my own and do shopping.

I can read a book with my children. I can do all of this, thanks to all my teachers, especially my teacher Farzana Amin above.





## MONWARA BEGUM

The frame was a gift from my grandson when he was 8 years old for my birthday. The frame and him are a source of inspiration for me. When he gifted me the frame he said, nani (nan) I bought you this religious frame for you to put up in your house to keep you safe and for you to know that I will always protect you and look after you.

He has never failed to ensure that I am always happy. Whenever he visits, as soon as he sees me he has a huge smile on his face which lights up my day.

When I'm at home and not feeling good about myself, I just take a glimpse of the frame and my troubles go away.



## NADIA SHAH

I have been living in Birmingham for one year. I started English classes in September 2017 at Adderley Nursery. I was made to feel very welcome in my English class. I was very nervous because I thought my teacher was going to be very strict. My teacher was very kind and helpful.

The teaching methods that were used in the classroom were better than my country Pakistan. My teacher asked me to go to London with her to meet a Lord in the House of Lords to discuss my English classes and how important they are for me.

I went to London for the first time. I travelled on the train and I was fascinated with the many historical buildings that I saw there.

When I spoke to the Lord I was very hesitant at first, but he made me feel very relaxed and comfortable.

I feel I need to improve my English because I could have had a longer conversation.



## NARGIS KARIM

My mother taught me how to sew clothes when I was sixteen. She said to me *“If ever any hardship falls on you, at least you will have a skill through which you can earn an income”*.

At that time, I didn't understand what my mum meant and how important it was.

Now I'm very grateful to my mum, as I sew all my clothes myself, different design's using different methods. If I had to go to a tailor, I wouldn't be able to afford it as the costs are too high these days.



## RABIA BI

Stress and struggles I have grown up with, problems I have always faced. Being brought up in a family of eight was never easy. Me being the eldest, I've always had the responsibility to care and lead my younger siblings. My father didn't work, not because he couldn't but because he didn't want to. My mother had to earn to provide for all of us. She would sew clothes for others, knit for others and make pottery to sell to others. We struggled to make ends meet. I used to help my mother with knitting and pottery making, to ease her of her worries.

I remember, we travelled by foot to the mountains to get mud one day. I carried it on my head, back to our cottage in the village and made pottery from the mud. It was a tiring day.

My father used to always cause us grief, swearing and picking a fight when he felt like it. He had a gambling addiction, always losing money instead of winning money, whilst me, my siblings and my mum always stuck together, we always made things work.

My mother's strength and her determination has guided me, and I live my life with the determination and positive mindset.



## SAIMA ALI

I was only able to attend school up until junior class 5 in Pakistan. There was no senior school nearby and my parents were unable to take me to the city due to cultural issues. It was very rare in our village for girls to be educated further and I accepted this fate for me.

After coming to England and having my children, I realised how important education is. School appointments and shopping were very difficult for me to manage when my children were younger. I then became determined that my children did not have the same outcome as me.

I always ensured that my children's attendance and punctuality at school was 100% and consistently push them towards further education.

My children in turn realised my struggles and when they were old enough to understand they pushed me to take English classes. They knew I had a desire to better myself and not having to rely on others for help with English.

Therefore, after encouragement from my children and my longing to stand on my own two feet, I have been attending English class for the last 2 years.

My children are my inspiration. They are always happy to help me with my homework, which encourages me to continue with the classes, however hard they may be.

Now I realised that I can achieve anything I want, and I am hoping to go one step further and take driving lessons, which my children are very happy about.

Had it not been for them I don't think I would have pushed myself as much and probably would have continued to accept my fate as I did in Pakistan.



## SAMEENA NEWAH

My three daughters are my inspiration. My eldest is 25 and she is a radiographer. My second daughter is 24 and she is a beautician. My third daughter is 17 and she is going to college and I am encouraging her to be a nurse. My husband wanted my daughters to get married. My mother-in-law wanted my daughters to get married young. I didn't let them get married young.

Even now we still don't agree, and it always comes up at home. My husband says you should get your daughters married young. We sometimes argue. He says he doesn't want them to wear western clothes / uniforms. They have grown to be independent young women and he doesn't like it. They buy their own clothes. They are taking their dad on holiday and they take him to restaurants. They have a social life.

My eldest daughter drives and she wants to get married to an educated person. I wish I got educated, so I could have had a life like my daughters. My younger daughter is amazing at art. She doesn't waste her free time at home. She draws, and I help her.

I am happy that my daughters are all independent, so they don't have to rely on anyone else.



## SOFIA SIDDIQUE

Today I am going to talk about a very brave woman, who faced many problems in her life. This event took place in 1946. She lived in a time of war, terror and she belonged to a 'Chandial' family.

She was affected by the partition between India and Pakistan when fighting broke out between Muslim and Hindus (India and Pakistan). She got married and didn't have any children at that time, so her husband decided to move to Pakistan. It was a very hard decision for her because she had to choose between her parents, relatives or her husband.

They arrived in Pakistan after a long journey, mainly on foot. On the way, they saw many tragedies, women and children being killed. The reason for the big decision to move to Pakistan came after tragedy of their own. One day whilst in India, she went out with her husband to get some food for her in-laws. When they returned, her in-laws were killed. She and her husband were the only survivors, so her husband decided to move to Pakistan. It was very difficult for them to survive. That period was very hard for them. During that time, they had eight children and it was very difficult for them to educate them because they had low income.



Her husband was a vet and his duty were in 'Kotli' that time. He would return home once a month.

She fed the buffalos and cows. She wore a burqa (long dress) with a cap and brought the grass from the fields which was hard work. She sold milk, butter and homemade yoghurt to make enough money to educate her children. She crocheted sweaters because she knew how to make wool. She crocheted bedsheets and many other things for her daughter's wedding (dowry).

When she came from India she wore embroidered dresses from her wedding and these dresses had original silver embedded in them. During the journey, the dresses were ripped but she kept them safe. Now her children were well educated. She had three daughters and five sons.

One of the son was an excise duty officer. One son is a bank manager, one is a doctor and the fourth one was an engineer. Her husband died after two of her children got married.

She was a very wise and hard-working woman. In order to wed her other children, she burnt her precious silver dresses to extract the silver from them. She made two necklace sets for her daughters-in-law to gift them on their wedding. She was heart and blood pressure patient for forty years. Despite her illness, she was a very brave lady with great will power.



In 2009, after sixty years she returned to India with her younger son, by a train. She was excited about visiting all those places which she once knew very well and to meet her relatives. Her mom, dad, two brothers and sisters had passed away.

When she returned to India, it was a big surprise for her remaining brothers and sisters. This picture shows her when she went to her brother's house. People carried her on their shoulders from one place to another. It was a great honour for her as this traditional seat was traditionally used only for their daughters, sisters and mothers.

She remained in India for a month before returning to Pakistan. She was very upset. She was always very quiet because she missed her relatives and she felt very sick.

In the meanwhile, her second son suddenly passed away from a heart attack. She couldn't bear the loss of her youngest son's death. She had suffered so much in her life. She worked hard all her life. She fell very ill and towards the end she was paralysed for a year.

In 2013 her health deteriorated, and she was admitted in hospital. She fell into coma. Her two sons were living in Europe. They travelled to Pakistan to meet their mother, but she couldn't speak because she was very weak. She wanted to speak to her children, but she couldn't. She lived all her life for her children and made many sacrifices.

She passed away on 6th April 2013, without talking to her children at the age of 83. Her name was Rasool Bibi. She was part of my family. She was no normal lady. She was very brave, hardworking and an intelligent woman.

I'm proud off her courage and sacrifices. She was an extraordinary old lady who endured a lot during her life.

She was my mother-in-law. She was buried in Bhimber in A.K. She was born in India and died in Pakistan.



## TAHIRA PARVEEN

When my daughter gave me the mothers' day card at the age of 8, she had especially made for me, I was truly inspired by it. I could see the love and affection and the effort she put into it, to create the beautiful card for me.

The heart touching message she had written in the card made my eyes sparkle with joy as the love was so real. She made this card 10 years ago and I have kept it ever since. It has a special place in my heart as it really touched me. May this love of ours remain eternal. She will always remain my little princess!

Every summer, my daughter sits down and creates a piece of calligraphy. The first time she created a design I was so proud. It was so beautifully done, and she had put a lot of effort into it to create such a stunning piece of art. I was really inspired by it and had a go at doing it myself. She had this lovely hidden talent which I'm so glad she has discovered.



## TAZEEM BEGUM

I don't have any special attachment to this Abaya. It is only an item of clothing but the emotion, inspiration and the story behind it, is what makes me feel proud of achievements in my life.

When I was growing up in Pakistan, I did not attend school or have any education. We were taught housework and skills for life.

When I got married and came to England, even before I had my children, my greatest wish was that when I have my family I would ensure that they had the best education and even go on to higher education.

This abaya was a recent gift from my youngest daughter who lives in Dubai, whom I visited in November 2017.

Visiting her made me feel so proud of everything that she had achieved and seeing her living her life, out in Dubai made me feel proud, as I had fulfilled all my aspirations that I had for my children.

She did her college degree and became a college lecturer. She married a solicitor and they both moved to Dubai to live, work and bring up their children. They have an amazing home and life there and it fills my heart with joy to see them settled with a good life.

All my children are my inspiration, especially my youngest daughter. This has pushed me to learn English, just so I can keep up with them at a simple level.



## ZAKIA BEGUM

My inspiration is my sewing teacher. She taught me everything about sewing from setting up a machine, using it and making dresses for myself and my daughter. I can also sew sofa covers and duvet and pillow cases.

She taught me for a year. I practiced and practiced, to advance my skills.

I am happy I don't have to rely on someone else to sew my clothes. I can sew and wear my clothes on the same day. It keeps my mind active.

My teacher is my friend, we keep in touch. I am grateful and happy she taught me.

## SUPPORTED BY:



Go-Woman! Alliance CIC (GOAL) is a social enterprise. It strives to work with individuals, to provide provisions in both formal and informal learning opportunities throughout their lives, in order to foster the continuous development and improvement of the knowledge and skills needed for employment / self-employment and personal fulfilment.



Good Things Foundation is a social change charity that supports socially excluded people to improve their lives through digital.

# CELEBRATING WOMEN'S RESILIENCE

Developed as part of International Women's Day 2018 celebration. These stories will be a great aid for adults who are learning English as a second language. Each story is short, inspiring and brings many cultures together.

The stories will help learners to develop their vocabulary and help to improve their reading skills.



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