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## Attiqa

Sometimes, confidence means taking big leaps of faith. Attiqa found her confidence and used it to change her own life and that of her family. Attiqa is one of the most remarkable students of U.S Pakistan Center for Advance Studies in Water (USPCAS-W), in a sense that she challenged all the stereotypes of the society to prove that education and hard work can change one's life for good. Coming from a small village called Mallhan (District Badin), Attiqa is no less than an extraordinary girl as she had been among the very few girls in the entire community who stepped out of their homes and went to the only school of the village where only boys went. Her journey of education remained full of challenges but she always knew that it was worth it!



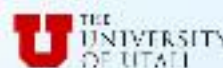
Attiqa's father had remained unemployed for the most of his life. Her mother, a school teacher, ran a little shop inside the village. She had a dream to see her kids attaining quality education. Attiqa, being the eldest daughter, knew that she had to work hard and help her parents out. She has succeeded to a greater extent as she has been using her masters' stipend to bear educational expenses of two of her younger siblings, who are also university students. She dedicates this achievement to USPCAS-W and USAID by saying:

*"I couldn't have achieved all this if didn't get this scholarship. I could never even think of doing masters from an institute like this but this scholarship proved me wrong".*

After finishing bachelors in Plant Sciences Department of University of Sindh, Attiqa knew that she could not go for further education due to poor financial conditions of the family. However, getting a fully funded scholarship came as a blessing for her. She has been continuing masters in Water sanitation, and Health Science (WaSH), one of the disciplines at the water center. While sharing her views on the provisions provided by the center, she says that she was highly astonished to see facilities available at campus and at hostel. Not only this, Attiqa finds the center highly distinct from other institutes because of high quality labs which are full of equipment needed to polish the skills of the learners. She further elaborates:

*"Behaviors of teachers are quite different from other institutes that I have attended. Teachers are very kind and helping. Equality of all is also one of the best things about the center. We can talk to our teachers any time, even with the director of center. At canteens, we all sit together and it boosts up my confidence. It makes us feel that we all are equal here with just different roles. I feel like I, as an individual, also matter".*

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Visiting USA was also a part of Attiqa's achievements at the center. While talking about the exchange journey, Attiqa shares that those were the months of learning, exposure, and practice of skills. She shares,

*"Because of my positive experience at USPCAS-W, I already had high hopes about people of UTAH. The visit not only polished my field related skills, but also improved my English speaking and presentation skills".*

She is very happy with the gender equity policy of the center. While talking about it, she quotes, 'zero discrimination of gender has made us more determined and we have found our worth in male dominant society due to value that we get here'. She further maintains:

*"Here, they train us all to treat both the genders equally. It has enhanced my self-reliance and I have become socially more active. We are not made to feel guilty for being girls (like my prior experiences). I participate in sports activities,*

*conference organizations, etc. Everywhere else, we girls are made to feel that we are inferior because we are girls and that negatively affects our experiences. At USPCAS-W, we get respect, opportunities, and value that we girls deserve and it empowers us to achieve more and more success in life".*



*With the goal of serving her homeland, Attiqa has been working enthusiastically on drinking water purification (removing arsenic from drinking water) using different organic waste. She also dreams to use this idea for her future business as she wants to provide this organic product to local communities, says:*

*"Through NGOs and public sectors, I want to make sure that local people at grass-root levels can get access to the organic product and use it for purification of water".*

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