



NEWSLETTER

February 2019



About the Common Man Initiative

Common Man Initiative is a non-profit organization which aims to highlight the issues of the common man. Our goal is to understand why and how the needs of the common man are not being catered to due to a lack of efficient governance, policy implementation and a sound legal and judicial system.

The organization aims to provide a platform to the common man where they can voice the issues that they face; issues which are often dismissed by the State, amidst personal political and social motives. Issues which need to be brought forward, voices which need to be incorporated in the governance and policy

dialogue of the State and, the common man, who needs representation in order to reshape the relevant public policy narrative.

CMI's overarching goal is to present policy alternatives for a secure and prosperous Pakistan. To this end, CMI shall identify and highlight fundamental governance issues affecting the common man, in order to restructure pertinent State policies. Particularly, through a series of publications, outreach programs, academic collaborations and institutional alliances, CMI intends to present actionable ideas for implementation by private and public institutions.

Editor's Note

Dear Readers,

I am pleased to share the latest edition of our newsletter that highlights the work being done towards catering the needs of the common man of Pakistan. To this end, our team has collaborated with various NGO's and drafted content for our third publication that sheds light on critical issues that need to be addressed.

For this edition, we interviewed two NGO's that are doing exceptional work and proactively working towards helping the common man of our country. We are proud to present this work to you; the NGOs featured, 'Rizq' and NGP (Next Generation Pakistan),

shared their work with us, the challenges that they face and the steps that can be taken to facilitate their efforts.

I am also excited to give you a glimpse of our upcoming publication that presents significant issues affecting the common man of Pakistan in a critical light. CMI has drafted four papers on varying issues with an in-depth analysis and relevant recommendations.

I hope you enjoy reading this edition. If you have any questions or queries, please feel free to reach out to us.

Falak Akhtar Wahla

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Upcoming Publications

Common Man Initiative fundamentally works towards publishing academic papers which focus on issues concerning the common man of Pakistan. These papers aim to shed light on significant problems, analyze their causes and limitations and provide policy alternatives and recommendations from experts.

Our upcoming publication entails four papers which cover various subjects. These consist of the following:

1) Street Begging in Pakistan

Street begging is a persistent issue in Pakistan which has, unfortunately, continued to grow over the years. Disabled persons, transgender, women, old-aged people, children and even seemingly healthy men, are seen on the streets asking for money. This trend continues to evolve; beggars have been observed trying to employ different techniques and methods to coerce money out of the passengers at traffic signals, some are stationed near commercial areas such as shopping markets, food joints and even mosques or shrines. Street begging is both: a cause and a result, of a lot of crimes as well. Abduction of children, physical abuse, drug abuse, robberies, street crimes form the salient features of the culture of begging in Pakistan. Despite the fact that begging has been declared illegal, it is an activity that continues to grow and has even shaped into a profession. According to 'investigations' street begging is encouraged by mafia and their extreme influence makes the implementation of law against begging difficult. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the issues that result in an increase in street begging, investigate the causes that fuel this growing trend and why hasn't the state taken the necessary steps to eliminate these problems. The paper also aims to provide recommendations that can be employed to tackle the issue.

2) Inter-provincial and Inter-City migrant workers in Pakistan

Since Pakistan's inception, the attitude of various governments and the legislature has been oscillating between superficial and fleeting concerns for labor rights, the same translates into a complete deficit of attention for this pressing issue. In light of the notion of prevention of migrant worker exploitation and repercussions on

urbanization in the context of a great void of legal guarantees protecting the rights of inter-provincial and inter-city migrant workers in Pakistan, this paper will explore the possibility of extrapolating the rights guaranteed to such migrant workers in the Indian jurisdiction and international law and applying them to Pakistan. The paper will propose policy and legal recommendations that if implemented would ensure better regulations, documentation and treatment of inter-provincial migrant workers and their families.

3) Establishing Dowry as a Hybrid Form of Violence against Women in Pakistan

Dowry has been a predominant social issue in Pakistan, which has for decades been one of the primary and leading causes of violence against women in the country. The paper explores the social and cultural aspect of the phenomenon vis-à-vis the legal regime of Pakistan upon the subject. The goal is two-fold: to understand the reasons for the continued practice of dowry and to assess whether Pakistan's law has recognized it for the evil that it is. The paper proposes recommendations for not just policy-makers on how to strengthen the legal regime against such harmful practices, but also places the common man of Pakistan at the front and center of this fight against dowry.

4) Report on the governance of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI)

Following Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf's (PTI) victory in the 2018 General Elections of Pakistan with a clear majority, the entire nation has directed its focus upon the newly-elected government and its policies. Throughout the election campaign as well as the post-election declarations/manifesto (easily accessible at <http://pmo.gov.pk/documents/manifesto-pti.pdf>), PTI has repeatedly stressed upon "transforming" education, healthcare, economy, sports, agriculture, environment, and "strengthening" of the Federation by eradicating corruption as well as reforming local government and justice system. Moreover, PTI has promised to introduce policies that focus on women empowerment and employment, the challenges faced by the minorities, bureaucracy as well as ensure national security. As such, this report analyses the progress and governance of PTI in the aforementioned areas, till date.

Interview with Rizq Foundation

Rizq Foundation is a people-powered movement. A social startup dedicated to eradicating poverty and hunger, the Foundation has been operating for four years in Pakistan's major cities. It has been systematically fighting hunger, empowering the youth and is dedicated to creating an eco-system based on empathy and compassion for all human beings. The Common Man Initiative (CMI) interviewed the leaders of Rizq Foundation, as part of its campaign on highlighting those entities and individuals within Pakistan, which are working selflessly for the welfare of the State. The interview was an enlightening experience for CMI, as we received an opportunity to learn about the mechanics of Rizq Foundation and their meticulous approach to curb hunger and poverty.



Huzaifa, Co-founder, Rizq Foundation:

My mother had been running a 'Dastarkhwan' for quite some time, and we had a lot of different people coming in for food, however due to certain obvious constraints we couldn't reach out to a majority of the people in need without an organized distribution system in place.

During my time at LUMS, a glaring discrepancy became evident to me. On the one side, a huge quantity of food was being wasted on campus, in weddings and restaurants, and on the other hand hundreds and thousands of people were going to bed hungry each night. So, we decided to channelize this wasted food towards the needs, so as to bridge the gap between these two ends. 'Rizq' was my brain-child; I shared the idea of this initiative with two of my friends, and together we decided to set up a

Facebook Page under the same name. April 2015 marked the informal beginnings of this initiative, which we later turned into an organization, as it stands now. At the time of its inception, it was just something that we did apart from our studies at the university. We started off by picking up food individually and distributing it to those in need, and eventually it expanded into what we now call 'Rizq Foundation.'

The one factor contributing towards poverty and hunger specifically, that we have recognized and acknowledged over the years, is a lack of compassion amongst the people. That never-ending need to consume more, eventually leading to a wastage of food has contributed immensely to Pakistan's persistent problems of hunger and poverty. We believe that when you lack compassion and empathy, you are governed by your selfish needs. Which is why, the goal of our youth-led program is to foster feelings of compassion and empathy amongst the people of Pakistan.

Our short term goals are capacity-building and raising awareness amongst the general public to help us bring these issues to an end. This is a slow process that requires a lot of time and resources, so we're building our team as we go and collaborating with different entities. The long term vision is to build an institution that creates an impact in eradicating hunger, which we hope would reach enough people globally, that international support would flow towards the Government of Pakistan and assist them in their efforts on this front as well.

To reiterate, our primary goal is to eradicate hunger. So, our work is primarily divided into three basic services, under the names, '**Rizq Ration**', '**Rizq Daig**' and '**Rizq Khana**'.

Rizq Ration is primarily a service catering to food-insecure families, through systematic identification and classification. Our organization has offices in various parts of the cities that we are based in. Those offices generate a poverty alleviation form, wherein each family is to set out their information, which helps us identify whether they qualify as food insecure. Those forms are then attested

with a stamp, that is again, generated in our offices. Following the submission of this form, our teams visit these families to ensure whether they qualify for our services, and we term this prong of the project, 'verification'. Once a family has been verified, they are registered with our food centers, which then take charge of providing these families with basic food items as needed. Additionally, this project also focuses on health, education and shelter as a long term goal, however our primary focus here is to help food-insecure families to bring them out of the clutches of this problem.



Rizq Daig is simply a much more effective way of distributing a daig. The practice of giving away a certain quantity of food, as part of various events including weddings or funerals, is deeply ingrained with the Pakistani culture and society. However, we have made this process a bit structured to ensure that the food distributed in this form, is reaching out to those actually in need. Making use of technological advancements, we are working on launching a smart-phone application, where the user can place an order for a daig, which will be distributed through our offices in places that we would have already identified and marked.

Rizq Khana is a low-cost restaurant for families, where they are provided with meals that they can enjoy, without compromising their dignity or respect. Our overarching goal here is that, each individual should have easy access to food, which in turn is of good quality and affordable. This is the key to becoming a food-secure nation, and we hope that our services under Rizq Khana will take Pakistan a step closer to the same. We believe in inculcating a feeling of certainty amongst individuals that they will not go to bed hungry, which we feel would be a load off their shoulders, leaving them with ample time to focus on more productive activities rather

than worrying about the means of achieving the next meal. Additionally, under the umbrella of Rizq Khana, we also provide lunch boxes in schools for the under privileged. As of right now, this is only happening at a very small-scale to ensure that our free-of-cost lunch boxes reach out to those individuals within these institutions that are needy and food-insecure.

The road to this point has not been easy. We have come face-to-face with countless challenges and, we believe that there are certainly many more to come. The task that we took upon ourselves, of educating the masses and inculcating empathy in them, was perhaps the hardest part of our work. It is still an on-going process which we believe, will take us quite a lot of time to complete. Finding the right team that is passionate and as driven as you is a challenge in itself. Capacity building, for a private entity left at its own mercy, is difficult without state support. We believe that the Government can help us by enacting the necessary regulations and policies that would stop food wastage across Pakistan, and resultantly bridge the gaps that exist within our society.

The common man in Pakistan still strives for four basic necessities that are still unfortunately not being provided to him: food, clothing, shelter and justice. In my opinion, people are so busy fighting for food, clothing and shelter, that they have no time to spend on finding justice. In effect, they remain stuck in a vicious poverty cycle, which fuels their antagonism towards the system of the State. Social Welfare is the mandate of the State, but when the State refuses to step up, people like us need to take matters into their own hands. My appeal to the common man is to be empathetic towards the population that is in need: the hungry, the homeless, and the undignified. If we will not help our fellow men in need then who will?

For queries and donations

Helpline: 0321-1117497

Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/Rizq.Sharefood/>

Web:
<https://sharerizq.com/en>

Interviewing Next Generation Pakistan

Next Generation Pakistan (NGP) has the distinctive quality of being the largest youth-led non-governmental organization in the State. Their work is geared towards confronting tabooed topics, resolving social issues, eradicating hunger and empowering women. The Common Man Initiative (CMI) met with the leaders of this organization to gain an insight into the workings of their projects, which we found to be incredibly awe-inspiring and worth being acknowledged.

In 2010, a massive flood claimed the lives and belongings of many individuals within Pakistan. In such turbulent times, a group of students from Aitchison College, Lahore decided to collect donations for the victims. After spending an entire day and having collected absolutely nothing, the students decided to simply give up, when a 14-year-old boy came up to them and donated the 20 rupees that he had earned as a top for his services at a tea-stall. This singular donation became the driving force behind their rigorous efforts to collect donations for the flood victims, and in a matter of weeks the students had collected a few lakhs, and to top it all off, had even found international donors to provide relief to the victims. Eventually, this group of students began teaching at schools and conducted summer course to collaborate with other like-minded, driven and passionate individuals. Soon, they ended up building an organization which is entirely youth-led and is working every day to bring down religious and cultural divides within Pakistan.

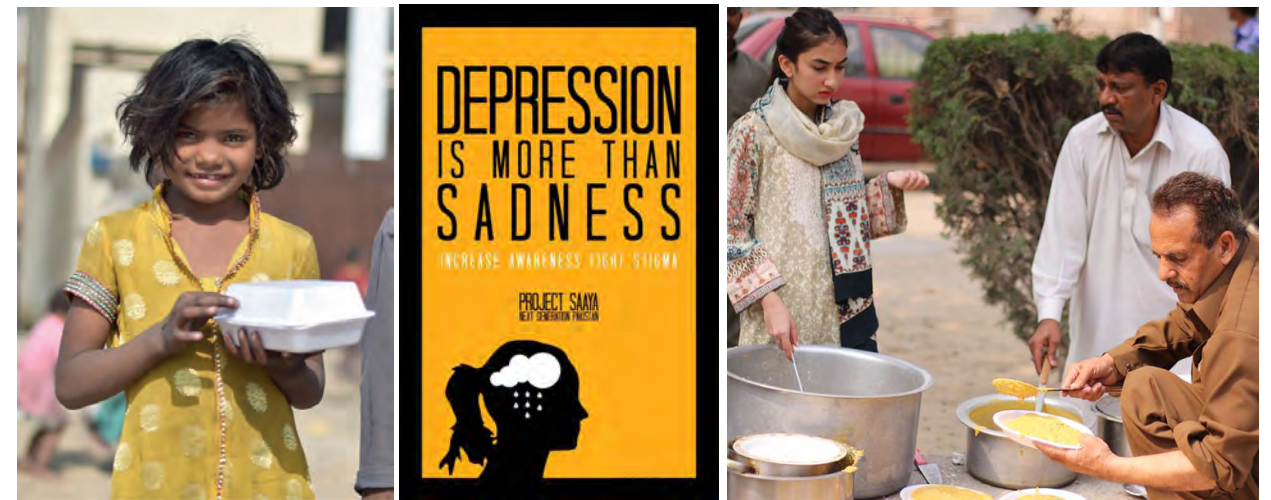


Each year, NGP brings into its circle 130 young applicants, who are interviewed and categorized according to their fields of interest. They are then placed into the organization's on-going projects where they form the team, and some of them are appointed as project-heads. Each project caters to a specific issue, and these may continue for a year or sometimes even more. However, we do initiate one new project each year and in this way, our services keep expanding.



Some of our on-going projects include: **'Pehchan'**, operating for two years and working on empowering the transgender community, both socially and economically. Quite recently, we bought a few stitching machines for the transgender community, in a bid to help them set up their own means of subsistence to take them away from a life of poverty, misery and exclusion. Another one of our projects has been on-going for three years and is focusing on educating street children. Project **'Quwat-e-nisa'** was introduced last year and is based on empowering women.

Our flagship project for this year is called **'I'll be there'**. The idea is to conduct and encourage random acts of kindness. We intend to document these little occasion on our social media, which would include activities such as distributing food in slums, visiting old-age homes or orphanages. Anyone who's a part of NGP's social media family can join in, and the more the merrier. *'I'll be there'* provides a platform for people to interact with the segregated communities and brings down all kinds of religious, social, ethnic divides. In



December we celebrate Christmas in the Christian neighborhood and distribute presents. We celebrated Diwali with the Hindu community in Lahore. We collected a lot of donations in terms of clothes and shoes and different accessories, and held a packing activity where our volunteers helped pack these presents and later went about distributing the same. It is just a simple act of kindness but, the fact it makes such an impact in connecting people from different backgrounds is just overwhelming. That's something we focused on this year and we'd like to continue projects relating inter faith harmony in coming years. Additionally, we have projects such as **'saya'**, focusing in mental health issues, and **'arz-e-Pakistan'** that raises awareness on issues regarding the environment. The common element in all these projects is that they are all interactive in one way or the other.

Under each project there is a directorate of four project heads. They gather other students to carry out the project and the core team oversees the project heads. There are volunteers and interns that work within. We're open to applications on our social media pages and conduct interviews, so anyone who is interested can contact us and work as an intern or a volunteer. The people that have worked previously with NGP either continue working as project heads or recommend more volunteers, so continuously we keep bringing in new talent within our organization.

One major challenge is ensuring that the volunteers will work to fulfill the requirements of the projects that they have been assigned. People, unfortunately, realize really late that the work we do in NGP is

important and has to be taken seriously. Most people approach this as simply an extra-curricular activity and making them see the significance of this work, is perhaps the hardest part of it all. In this regard, the people that have truly experienced what NGP has to offer have changed their lives in one way or the other. The former directors before us are still in contact and they make sure that they're still doing all that they can in terms of donations, or gathering volunteers. Through all this time and energy we're thankful to the core team and all the volunteers for devoting their time and energy, all in the name of empathy and compassion.

Our vision is to teach through experience. It is not just about collecting funds but about conducting acts of kindness as a group of people to experience compassion. We believe it is very important to remind people that they're all human beings, and that one must always hold the other in high regard. These activities help us in eradicating social divides and this teaches us things that no classroom ever can. We've had the most memorable times of our lives with these segregated communities.

NGP's philosophy is based on empathy and interaction between people, the beauty of it is that keeps evolving organically and taking new shape.

For queries and donations:

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