



A Silent Revolution

By Zubeida Mustafa

How does one profile a woman who has the academic qualifications and 19-year work experience of a financial journalist, but is not attracted by the aura of glamour many lesser media people like to create around themselves? Her commitment lies with the rural community in her ancestral village in Sindh, but she modestly refuses to describe herself as an expert in development work. "I am still learning on the job," she tells me.

Meet Naweena A. Mangi, the Pakistan Bureau Chief of the New York-based Bloomberg News since 2006. She may be a novice – albeit a devoted one – in development, but in financial journalism, her expertise and experience are unmatched. She has the intricacies of the stock market at her finger tips and is well-versed in the ups and downs of the corporate sector in the country. She works diligently, planning coverage, filing important stories when she is required to and training and managing younger journalists – a job she excels in by virtue of her considerable experience in launching news organisations, working on the lay-out and injecting new ideas in old publications.

Mangi began her professional life in 1995 with the *Pakistan & Gulf Economist* and rose to the position of senior editor in which capacity she was managing the editorial team. Two



Woman on a mission: Naweena A. Mangi



Well-versed in the ups and downs of the corporate world, financial journalist Naween Mangi helps the poverty-stricken villagers of Khairo Daro turn their lives around through development work on a self-help basis.

years later, Mangi went on to work with Pakistan Business Update, the nation's first privately-produced business news show, which was aired weekly on Pakistan Television. Here she hosted programmes focusing on the economy, then followed a series of prestigious assignments with CNBC Asia, *The Friday Times*, *The Herald*, the Bangkok-based *Asia Times*, and *Business India* magazine that ultimately took her to New York in 1999 to work as a staff editor at *Bloomberg Businessweek*. In 2001, she was back again in Pakistan to become national business editor of *Daily Times* at the time of its launch. The year 2005 found Mangi contributing stories for *Dawn's* weekly Economic & Business Review section and for *Forbes* magazine. It is Bloomberg where she reached new professional heights.

Yet Naween Mangi is too shy to dwell on her impressive career record. What she prefers to talk about, eloquently, are the problems of the children and women of Khairo Dero (District Larkana) and how they are learning to resolve them. She has more to say on the virtues of compassion and how her village has become Karen Armstrong's Charter of Compassion Partner, than how bank rates can help you make money.

One may well ask how she managed

to combine the two roles that seem to be poles apart. Mangi has travelled a long way in journalism after a highly successful academic life. With a Bachelor's degree in economics from the London School of Economics and a Master's in financial journalism from New York University, with a specialisation in business and economic reporting, Mangi was best qualified to apply her knowledge and training to explore

It was in 2004, when Mangi undertook a tour of the province and spent time in her ancestral village, Khairo Dero, that she saw the face of poverty from very close quarters. She had never felt so touched. It was here that the knowledge of an economist and the passion of a caring woman combined. She felt a strong urge to show the people of her village how to lift themselves out of poverty and despair.

the rural economy. Which other place could be expected to attract her most but her native province of Sindh? She had been feeling a strange kind of restlessness that she could not explain. It was 2004, when she undertook a tour of the province and spent some time in her ancestral village. In Khairo Dero, she saw the face of poverty from very close quarters. She had never felt so touched. It was here that the knowledge of an economist and the passion of a caring woman combined. She felt a strong urge to show the people of her village how to lift themselves out of poverty and despair. It could be done, she was convinced.

It took time for the passion to be translated into something concrete. Since she knew that poverty can be alleviated by adopting low cost methods, she did not opt for ambitious schemes. A family trust, the Ali Hasan Mangi Memorial Trust (AHMMT), was set up and registered with the government in 2008. It was in memory of her grandfather, who rose from humble beginnings to become a legislator in the Sindh Assembly in which position he felt he could serve his people best. He was a popular figure and he did what he could for the people of his constituency.

Ali Hasan's granddaughter has inherited his compulsive compassion. She has, however, chosen a different route – that of

self-help, rather than charity. Her strategy has been to involve the community in the projects she initiates for them. They have to do things for themselves, with a helping hand from her of course. And this approach is working. Her goal is to set up a model village in Khairo Dero and bring about a 'silent revolution' in the lives of her people.

Yet, this courageous woman has taken the first step in the journey of a thousand miles. A community centre has been created to serve as a nucleus of the programme. Since the structure is non-hierarchical, it was important to give a focus to the 16-member team by having a central meeting point. There is a park adjoining it. It pro-

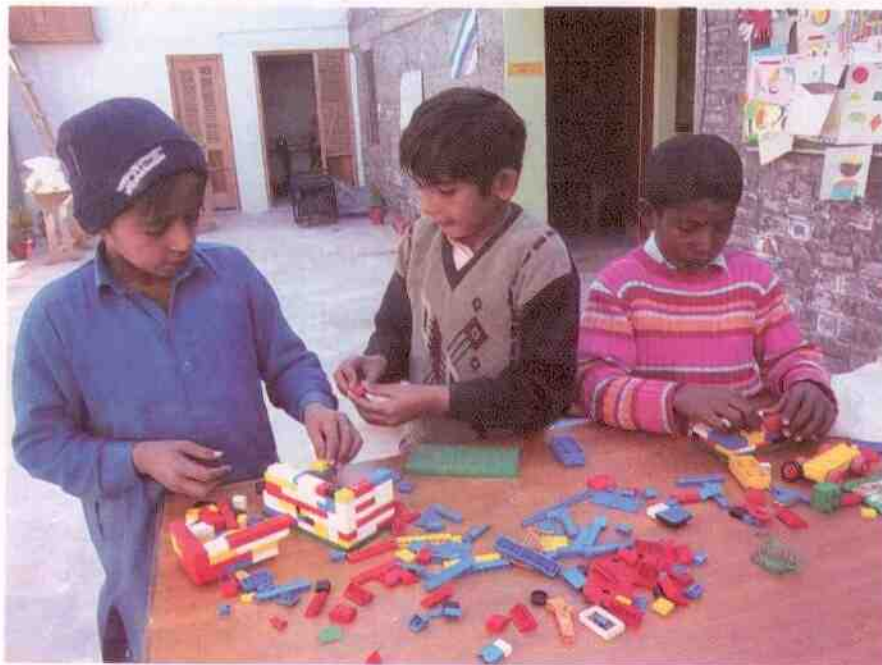
park became the venue for the sports day held in March. The sporting spirit displayed by the young athletes would have done any Olympian gold medallist proud.

Mangi may not have any expertise nor experience in development work, but she certainly understands people and her knowledge of economics is solid. These two qualities make her strategy soundly pragmatic. No ambitious goals characterise her approach, but what is important is that her projects are moving in the right direction. Beginning with the basic principle that each and every one matters, Mangi focuses on the personal development of the people. That is why the strongest components of her programme are education, healthcare, income generation, housing, sanitation and the empowerment of women.

Khairo Dero now has a primary school, administered by The Citizens Foundation (TCF), with another one coming up in its vicinity. The government's middle school has been adopted – read transformed – by the AHMMT which is expanding it to a high school. The impact of education is being felt in the younger generation. The health clinic has a doctor coming in twice a week, which at least makes medical facilities, even though of a rudimentary sort, accessible to the people of Khairo Dero and the neighbouring villages as well.

A housing programme provides loans for house-building and a micro-credit scheme enables people to generate an income for themselves by starting small home-based industries. Water pumps have been installed in households and a sewerage system has been launched. Of course, this is just the beginning.

But hope has been ignited. Mangi says that she has seen despondency and despair change into hope. She now finds people who were leaving the village for 'greener pastures,' that are actually not so green, returning home in the hope of a better future. It is this strategy of giving hope to her compatriots in Khairo Dero that is Mangi's key achievement. Visit this down-trodden hamlet in Larkana district and feel the winds of change, as I did some weeks ago, and you will see the real Pakistan. ■



Her goal is to set up a model village in Khairo Dero and bring about a 'silent revolution' in the lives of her people. The idea is to take care of every aspect of people's life – educational, health, social, cultural and also economic, where possible. A community centre has been created to serve as a nucleus of the programme. It provides space for the workers and volunteers to get together to plan their activities and put on ground the programmes they are constantly innovating. Recently, nearly a hundred children who did not go to school have been mobilised and classes are held for them in the community centre till a school building is erected next door.

What does she envisage there? The idea is to take care of every aspect of people's life – educational, health, social, cultural and also economic, where possible. This is a tall order for a 3,700-member underprivileged community which is socially backwards and economically disempowered.

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