

STORIES OF INSPIRATION



**Mr. Ali Monnoo and Buksh
Foundation join hands for the LaML
project to light up more lives.**

Buksh Foundation is a non-profit, impact driven microfinance organization, registered under the company's ordinance section 42, setup with the vision of scaling microfinance in Pakistan with a particular focus on access to women, use of the technology and rural markets. Buksh Foundation sees a huge opportunity to fill the present gap in the microfinance industry by providing quality, cost effective and financially sustainable services to the poor. ***Buksh Foundation is pioneering microfinance projects like clean energy, successful projects like "Lighting a Million Lives" which have ensured electricity provision to around 75 villages.***

Lighting a Million Lives (LaML) is an initiative to provide solar energy access to rural, un-electrified villages of Pakistan. Buksh Foundation has partnered with TERI (Technical and Energy Research Institute) India to expand on its project of Lighting a Billion Lives, which is currently running in South Africa, Uganda and Bangladesh. The project aims to light up the lives of a million people in Pakistan (LaML). In addition, it will generate permanent sources of income for the entrepreneurs. The project plans to reach out to 4,000 villages with a total of 1 million lives lightened by the end of 2017.



A young girl relieved and hopeful

In 2013, the Buksh Foundation collaborated with Mr. Ali Monnoo, Director, Samira Fabrics (Pvt) Ltd. The company was established in 1969 and became a limited concern in 1973. It is a composite textile mill which specializes in the manufacturing and export of institutional textiles to leading hotel chains, hospitals, and laundries in EU, USA, UK, Middle East, and Far East. ***It is fully accredited and holds ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 from UKAS for quality and environmental management respectively.***

The company was amongst the first in the textile industry to adopt modern effluent treatment technology and all waste-water being drained from the mills is treated to conform to internationally acceptable environmental standards.

The company is socially and ethically responsible and hence forth also holds Oekotex Class 1 certification which means that all products produced by them are safe for use by babies. ***It is also SA 8000 certified which is the leading certification for social accountability and is only held by selective organizations in Pakistan.*** Samira Fabrics Pvt. Ltd. is an active member of WWF and Better Cotton Initiative (which helps improve the living standards of cotton farmers in Pakistan as well as reduce the environmental impact of cotton production).

The company helps support a vocational training school for poor children in Gulberg Lahore, by the name of "Mera Ghar", which is being run by Mrs. Iram Kamal (wife of CEO, Mr. Kamal Monnoo). Educational scholarships and Hajj facilitation schemes are also available to employees.

Mr. Ali Monnoo, Director of the company and son of the CEO of Samira Fabrics Pvt. Ltd, Mr. Kamal Monnoo, completed his O and A levels from Aitchison College, Lahore in 2004 and 2006 respectively. He then pursued his B.Sc. (with Honours) in Economics from the University of Warwick (2006-2009) and M.Sc. (with Merit) in Finance from Imperial College London (2009-2010). He worked briefly in asset management in Morgan Stanley, London and also did an eye-opening summer internship at Kashf Foundation, Lahore during his undergraduate studies.



The Buksh Foundation team with the villagers

CHINIOT

The Monnoo family hails from Chiniot, Punjab which is famous for producing some of the most famous entrepreneurs in Pakistan. From a very young age, Mr. Ali Monnoo was exposed to fascinating stories of how his elders had achieved success by following their entrepreneurial instincts which in some cases meant investing their entire life savings in an idea. Many Chinioti sons had grown up hearing the phrase "business runs in our blood" so it was a natural step for him to join the family business soon after completing his studies abroad. Upon joining the business, it quickly became clear that the most serious threat to the business was the severe energy crisis prevalent in the country. Mr. Ali Monnoo was put in charge of leading the energy efficiency and independence initiative of the company. Within 2 years, they shifted to a mix of bio-fuels and coal for all steam, heat, and power requirements. This was made possible with the support of his father and the exceptional efforts of the technical staff of the company.



Solar panels installed by Buksh Foundation, Courtesy: Mr. Ali Monnoo

Being well-aware of the disastrous effects of energy shortages on the business and the exorbitant investment required to mitigate them, the company wanted to focus all CSR efforts and funding towards playing a positive role in doing the same for the marginalized members of the society, who did not have the luxury of owning generators or UPS's. Mr. Ali Monnoo then came across Buksh Foundation's project **"Lighting a Million Lives"** in Pakistan via solar energy systems.

"For us, it has been an immensely inspirational journey of partnering with Buksh Foundation to play a small but meaningful role in lighting up a small community of poor farmers in Chiniot district. The entire team at Samira wishes them God Speed!" says Mr. Ali Monnoo.



The villagers rejoice as their lives are lit up, both literally and metaphorically

This collaboration and a generous sponsorship by Mr. Ali Monnoo is definitely a story for the Buksh Foundation to tell and definitely inspires other young entrepreneurs to be active philanthropists like Mr. Ali Monnoo himself.

Undertaking the LaML project, the Buksh Foundation set up a village in Muslim Shaikh Khan Saloolky Dakkhana Sanghra, Tehsil Chiniot. **The village is around 70 years old and comprises of 350 locals by the name of "Muslim Sheikhs". The villagers have no source of income whatsoever and the only means of earning comes from an occasional labor job on the land owned by the "Zamindaars" or "Wadairas" aka landlords when need be.** This is a sporadic and irregular employment opportunity without which they have no other means for survival. There was no electricity, no access to higher education and no health care facility either. Many families had been stricken by Polio. The females also indulge in manual labor here, for instance working on the fields etc to contribute.

These families have kids who go to schools and seek education. **No mode of transportation is available or affordable to this community and with a measly occasional employment and no other means, it is an excruciating challenge for these villagers to pay the Rs20 /month fee at the government schools their kids are enrolled at which for higher classes rises to Rs 100/month.** One heartbreaking example of a difficult living is a student named Mudassar who studied all the way upto matriculation and yet due to lack of awareness and employment opportunities ended up doing manual labor on the land like most villagers.

In such a bleak situation Mr. Ali Monnoo in unison with Buksh Foundation gave people a beacon of hope. **They identified a family with a Muslim Sheikh Sarfaraz and his wife Farzana, who had 5 school going kids; 4 daughters and a son. The daughters and Farzana also contributed by doing field labor like all other females of the community.**



A beacon of light, a beacon of hope. The Buksh Foundation team lights Solar Lanterns with the villagers

The 12 year old son was given technical training and solar lanterns set up at their house. This technical training was not just a means of employment for him but instilling of skills for him to enable him to fend for himself and his family during his parents' old age. This young boy was the designated field technician. Every day his mother would charge these lanterns during the day and rent them out at night.

These peoples' lives changed. They had electricity, they could cook, work and their kids could study. The particular family had also found means of employment. They were ecstatic and prayers and praises for Mr. Ali Monnoo for his generosity and the Buksh Foundation for its stupendous philanthropic efforts. The entire community actively helped with the set up of the solar equipment and could not have hoped for a better solution to their miseries.

The lives of these people had been transformed; they had been lit up by a mere initiative based on humane causes. Buksh Foundation still continues its journey with the recently launched project **"Drop of Sun"** under which solar water filtration plants are being set up in Rural Punjab.

Facts

Roshna Bibi	Mrs. Farzana
Village	Muslim Shaikh Khan Saloolky Dak khana Sanghra, Tehsil Chiniot
Lives Impacted	350



