

THE CITIZENS FOUNDATION

By: Alauddin Hemraj

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world"--- *Nelson Mandela*

**"Educate a boy, and you educate an individual. Educate a girl and you educate a community" ---
- *Adelaide Hoodless***

"One of the energizing forces that makes a quality civil society possible, of course, is the readiness of its citizens to contribute their talents and energies to the social good"--- *His Highness Prince Karim Agakhan*

The Citizens Foundation – Pakistan - fully meets all the criteria set above by eminent personalities of our world. It was started by like-minded citizens in 1995, seeing the dismal state of educational institutions and gender inequality, then prevailing in the schools throughout Pakistan. They were disturbed to note that 3 out of 10 children within the age group 5 to 9 years were not attending schools. Also that the proportion of male and female students was well out of place, and there was abnormal absenteeism of teachers in most schools. To redress these state of affairs, they started boldly with construction of 5 fully equipped and fully staffed schools and initially set a target of 1000 such schools throughout Pakistan with the passage of time and with the support of donors willing to contribute for this highly noble cause.

The Citizens Foundation was registered as a non-profit organisation in 1995 under Section 42 of The Companies Ordinance 1984 and their audited accounts are available annually for public scrutiny. It is heartening to note that TCF was awarded # 3 prize in the world for transparency by United Nations Charity Watch.

The primary vision of TCF was to bring about a confirmed change in educational standards and ensuring that female students joined schools in larger numbers to redress the balance vis-a-vis their male counterparts. To this end, they employed female teachers and provided them with pre-service qualitative training. Furthermore they employed two women from each community where the school was located specifically to convince parents of the need and importance of sending their children to schools, especially the girls. These moves proved very successful and today TCF can proudly boast of 1000 solidly constructed schools with 145,000 students - male and female in equal ratio- and a staff of over 11,400 including 6700 female teachers.

Furthermore the concept of continuing education is well kept in mind, and every year additional training is provided to teachers per the changed curriculum and modern effective methods of qualitative education.

For any charitable organisation, it is important to have a transparent accountable structure, where donors may be able to probe the productive outcome of their valued contributions. TCF, in this regard has a clean slate. They are particular about the management of their funds. More

than 95% of these are utilised in building and running schools, providing equipment and fixtures, libraries and science laboratories, children uniforms and snacks. The remaining 5% only is utilised on administrative costs. In Pakistan 60% of funds are obtained locally from charitable donations, which are tax deductible. The remaining 40% of funds are obtained from its supporters scattered around the world.

The Citizens Foundation, Canada is one of the independent chapters of TCF Pakistan and is a registered charity in Canada, all donations being tax deductible, others being TCF USA, TCF Australia, TCF Italy, TCF UAE, TCF UK. In Canada there are TCF chapters in Toronto, Montreal, Calgary, Windsor and Regina. More Chapters are being established in Winnipeg, Vancouver and Ottawa. TCF Canada organises its annual Walkathon every year and Gala Dinners, as part of fund raising campaigns. In 2013 TCF Canada started dialogue with Canadian Government on building partnerships. The success of TCF Canada can be measured from the fact that it helped build 54 of the 1000 schools in Pakistan, met the costs of 7,736 students, raised \$ 1,121,937 in 2013 alone, and that the targeted donations up to 2018 are expected to reach an average of 2 million dollars per year. They plan to achieve these by such novel means as establishing new Chapters, Developing Brand Image, enhance awareness, engaging youth with online campaign of DRIVE TO SEE THEM THRIVE and SMS donation of \$5 by dialing 20222 and writing word EDUCATE.

Ultimately what we learn from the successes of The Citizens Foundation is this “Where there is a Will there is a Way.” Such Foundations and other NGO's can play pivotal role in collaborating with underdeveloped countries to bring Hope and quantifiable progress by their expertise and intelligence, ensuring ultimately a more peaceful and vibrant world. The Agakhan Foundation, has for years, pioneered such efforts and The Citizens Foundation is having similar commendable goals, which other NGOs may well emulate, to further better conditions prevailing in the world today.
