

Upliftment of Women is the Main Pillar of Our Philanthropic Work, Says Shabana Faizal, Co-founder, Faizal & Shabana Foundation

by [Triparna Ray](#) — February 26, 2018

In a quick conversation with Higher Education Plus, Co-founder and Vice-President of Faizal & Shabana Foundation talks about the importance of giving back to society, uplift of women in rural areas, and importance of hygiene in rural areas.

Why did you choose Government Vocational Higher Secondary School for Girls(GVHSS) as your flagship project?

My husband Faizal wanted to engage in some philanthropic work in Kerala since he is from Kerala. We came across Pradeep Kumar at this juncture. He was a local M.L.A of Kerala, who was involved in PRISM (Promoting Regional Schools to International Standards through Multiple Interventions) project in hand. Therefore, we found a committed and open-minded individual and we agreed to join hands with him for this project. After nine months of collaboration between the Government and Faizal & Shabana Foundation, the school has now become one of the top three government schools in India. It went through a holistic re-modeling and now has world class multimedia classrooms, good scientific labs, clean toilets, well-equipped sports facilities, large kitchen, and proper library condition.

In what ways does Faizal & Shabana Foundation continue to assist in the finished projects?

The foundation always plan for a sustainable model of a school. So that, after five years the school should be able to run by itself. During these five years, an appointed individual from Faizal & Shabana Foundation works as an integral part of the school management team along with members of the PTA, student representatives, head-masters and faculty body. Every month the school authority, the local MLA, resident's association and members of the foundation meet to discuss the progress of the school and the future roadmap.

Is there any plan to expand this 'sustainable model' to other parts of our country?

One of the main aims of Faizal & Shabana Foundation is to create a large impact in everything that we propose and intend to do. Hence, we have made this 'sustainable model' and wish to spread it in every state in India and also all across the world. The Commonwealth has also shown interest in our work. Hence, we are now focusing on crafting a 'sustainable model' which has an international appeal. Our strategy is to develop a basic model and customize it according to local requirements.

In what ways Faizal & Shabana Foundation endorse women empowerment through their work?

The Faizal & Shabana Foundation considers upliftment of women to be one of the main pillars of our philanthropic work. Women empowerment essentially is a part of our village development program. We have adopted eight villages where we have been working from the grass-root level. Initially, we conduct a need assessment program locating areas where we find it significant to intervene such as in sanitation, agriculture, and skill development for women. There, we teach women various skills such as stitching, knitting, and other works by which they can earn money and sustain themselves. Krishnagiri in Tamil Nadu is an example of such a place. For young students, we conduct regular training in career guidance, and coaching for entrance exams where we call career advisors, and IAS officers. They serve as role models guiding them and helping them to prepare for what they wish to achieve in their lives.

In what respect is Faizal & Shabana Foundation is different from other NGOs?

One of the reasons that we firmly believe in is that we want to create a model that is replicable and can be recreated so that the impact can be bigger. In this way, people can actually reap the benefits of it at larger level. We are there to support them and not many foundations would be doing that.

How is your experience while working with government bodies?

The work of Faizal & Shabana Foundation is not limited to government schools but government bodies have actively supported our work. It would have been very difficult to create such a large impact without them. Such sort of initiative is taken for the first time in India. It gives me great joy to tell that 67 schools actually came forward and asked for remodeling. The government ensured that no teachers were transferred in less than three years. The pro-active and pro-development attitude of the government acted as a catalyst for the workers of Faizal & Shabana Foundation.

What are other projects that Faizal & Shabana Foundation is involved in besides working for schools?

Faizal & Shabana Foundation considers all developing countries as a place to work for humanitarian help. We have initiated programmes like 'Light a Billion Lives' by providing solar lamps to 16,000 families in villages of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa. We have also come up with programmes in healthcare and wellness; education and youth; art and culture; and community outreach sectors. We have also conducted fund research for breast cancer and Alzheimer's disease. In addition to this, we have provided merit based scholarships to students in American University of Sharjah.