

Cartier

WOMEN'S INITIATIVE



2019 FINALIST FOR SOUTH ASIA & OCEANIA

FARIEL SALAHUDDIN

UpTrade - PAKISTAN

www.uptrade.org

“Without electricity to pump water, women can spend up to four hours a day fetching water from distant wells.”

For rural communities in Pakistan, access to electricity is still frequently out of reach. “Pakistan faces a huge energy crisis, with over 40% of the population living off the grid, primarily in rural areas” confirms Fariel Salahuddin. “Without lights in their homes and electricity to pump water, families are left in the dark at night and women can spend up to four hours a day fetching water from distant wells.”

It was the water issue that first struck Fariel when she visited rural communities in Sindh province a few years ago. Water pumps are an expense these cash-strained communities cannot afford. And even for those who do have a pump, most function on diesel and can cost up to \$400 a month to run. An energy specialist and former World Bank consultant who seemed set on a corporate career path, in 2017, Fariel founded her business to offer these communities an innovative yet down-to-earth solution: to exchange their livestock for solar water pumps.

BARTERING GOATS

In this case the livestock are goats. Small farmers and the landless poor use them for milk, to help clear fields and as a potential source of income. But selling their few goats is not enough to purchase a solar water pump, costing between \$4,000 and \$6,000. “Our surveys found villages own on average 2,000 goats,” says Fariel. “Depending on water table depth, population needs and the time of year, 20 to 60 goats would be enough to purchase a solar pump.” Communities group together to make the purchase. “I believe we are the only enterprise in the world using goats to unlock non-cash liquidity for struggling communities.”

CITY LIMITS

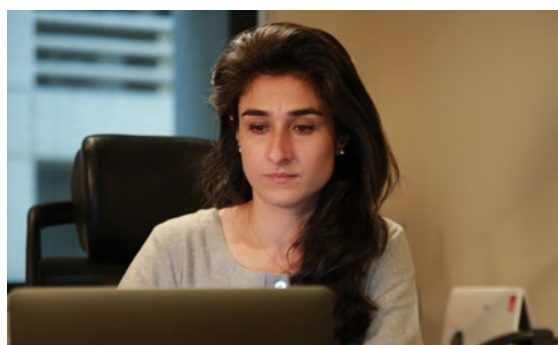
Initially trading under the name Goats for Water, the company forms a three-party-agreement between communities and an energy partner who supplies the water pump, installation and maintenance options, cutting out the livestock middlemen and their hefty margins. The company vets all the animals then takes the goats and sells them on its digital platform directly to meat companies, restaurants and large stores. Here “takes the goats” really can be meant literally! In the early days, Fariel sold her first goats by posting a notice on her social network feed during the Eid festival, when goats are in high demand. Whenever a goat was purchased, she would use Careem, Pakistan’s Uber equivalent, to deliver it by van in Karachi. “It was fun but hard work!” she remembers. “I had a small goat farm on an empty plot outside my house!”

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Today Fariel is building an electronic marketplace designed to enable goat owners to trade directly via app. Prices for a goat range from \$50 to \$100, but rise to between \$125 to \$335 during the Eid festival, leveraging more solar power for villagers. The company is also opening up to other types of livestock to be exchanged for other assets, such as solar home systems or farm inputs, hence its new, broader name, UpTrade.

Community spirit plays a large part in bringing villages on board: those villagers who have no goats to put forward still enjoy all the benefits of the pump. And these are manifold. Returning to a village that now has a pump, Fariel sees life, laughter and activity among women who were once traipsing to and from the well. She shares this sense of emancipation on her own level. “Being an entrepreneur is extremely liberating! It offers a much bigger canvas to create and build a system to bring about impact.”

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