



Feminist *Figures*

presents:

AYESHA AMIN

sexual reproductive health and rights advocate - founder of Baithak: Challenging Taboos

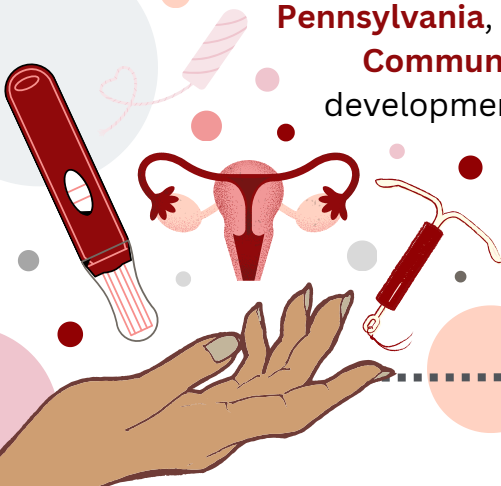
Ayesha Amin is a **feminist activist** in **Pakistan** and an advocate for **sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)**. She brings a decade of experience in spearheading social impact initiatives.

She is the founder of a grassroots feminist organization called **BaithHer** focus lies in addressing **social taboos** impacting women's health, including issues such as access to **menstrual hygiene products**, preventing **gender-based violence**, addressing the intersection of **climate** and **gender**, and making education on **SRHR** more accessible and inclusive.

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A Fulbright Scholar with a master's in social policy from the **University of Pennsylvania**, Ayesha is also an **Acumen Fellow** and a specialist in the **Community Engagement Exchange Program**, an IREX leadership development initiative. Her noteworthy contributions have earned recognition from international organizations like **IREX**, the **U.S. Department of State**, the **Asia Foundation**, **Westerwelle Foundation**, and **DKG International**.



Baithak

challenging taboos

Founded by Ayesha, **Baithak - Challenging Taboos** is a non-governmental organization working towards **sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR)** in **Pakistan** which recently won the prestigious **Gender Justice Climate Solutions Award** at **COP28**.

In one of their recent efforts, Baithak developed an **advocacy campaign** on the **intersectionality** of **climate**, **gender** and **SRHR**. Under the **Young Oman project**, they were able to mobilize volunteers in communities on the outskirts of **Karachi** who engaged with young girls, women of reproductive age and mothers in order to understand the **challenges** they face in regard to **SRHR**, especially following the **2022 floods** in **Pakistan**.

Baithak is thus challenging the **historical taboo** surrounding sexual and reproductive health, which has perpetuated a **lack of awareness** among women about their own bodies, hindering their **bodily autonomy** and suppressing their broader **agency**.

Without **access to information**, women are unable to make informed decisions about their reproductive health. This is further exacerbated by **stigma**, **mobility restrictions**, and **limited resources**. Baithak's **inclusive** approach has allowed them to reach communities, such as the one pictured above, which are often **excluded** from such conversations. Baithak have taken their efforts even further by tapping into **FemTech**.



Above and below: Baithak's volunteers talking to young girls, women and mothers in Pakistan. Source: Baithak LinkedIn.



Gender justice & FemTech



FemTech, aimed at supporting women's health through technology, has the potential to break down existing barriers in gender justice.

However, the current **digital landscape** tends to favor socially and economically privileged individuals, leaving behind those who need it most. **Rural communities**, **digitally illiterate individuals**, and those with **insufficient income** face obstacles in accessing digital tools such as crucial health services, even through **alternative avenues** like subscription-based apps. These issues are exacerbated for **women**.

Efforts to close the **gender gap** in digital access inadvertently leave **marginalized women** further behind, creating a "**gap within the gap.**" Ayesha emphasizes the urgent need for **inclusive technological solutions** that can be localized to benefit girls and women in marginalized communities.

In an **exclusive interview** with **Politics4Her**, Ayesha stated:



Ayesha Amin presenting Gul by Baithak at Rally's Social Enterprise Accelerator.
Source: Ayesha Amin LinkedIn

"Digital spaces are not inclusive, they're not inclusive at all, especially in the communities I work with. [...] Even if [women] are existing in the digital space, it doesn't mean they have access, or they have the agency to participate in those digital spaces."

She added how these issues are further exacerbated by **misogyny**, **hate-speech** and **online gender-based violence** which often discourage women from fully participating. Yet, to Ayesha's belief

"We can make these spaces more inclusive, especially for women in grassroots communities."

For this reason, **Baithak** have been working on developing an **AI-powered voice assistant** for **reproductive health - Gul**. The app champions a new level of **accessibility** and **inclusivity** by being available in **local languages** and allowing users to send questions and receive answers in **voice-note form**.

ENGAGING MEN AND EMPOWERING WOMEN

Gul's gender neutral name was selected on purpose. Ayesha emphasizes that the app is not only for women - **"we feel like engaging men is so important"**. Accessing information on SRHR is even more stigmatized when it comes to men, because these are considered **"women's issues"**. The general stigma around such topics cannot be resolved and women's access to SRHR education cannot be improved without addressing men.

Ayesha's **dismantling of the patriarchy** consistently happens on a more personal level, too. She told us the significance behind her name - **Amin** - which is a family name, only used by the **men** in the family, due to the **traditional patriarchal idea**, especially prominent in her native Pakistan, that men carry on the family's legacy.

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“I started using Amin with my name in college as an act of resistance against the patriarchy and ever since it has become my identity. So my legal name is different, which is Mehmood, my father's name [...] but people just know me as Ayesha Amin and I take a lot of pride in it.”

Ayesha's decision to carry her family name is a brave show of her lifelong commitment to **combat traditional patriarchal norms** and fight for a level of **agency** which women are often denied:

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“In most traditional families, women are not allowed to dream. [...] And as a child, I loved dreaming. I think this was also an act of resistance for me. For example, I used to tell my dad that one day I'd run away from home and travel the world. My dad is a very calm person. Despite being so calm, he would say. He'd say 'No, good girls don't do that'.”

Ayesha did, in fact, end up traveling the world. Aged only **21**, she left for an exchange program in the **United States**, a decision **opposed** by the entirety of her family, except her **mother**, who, in Ayesha's own words “fought with the entire family to let [her] go”.



This experience was a seminal contribution not only to Ayesha's **recognition of her own capabilities**, but to her conviction that the **alternate reality** she had dreamed of was, indeed, possible.

From leveraging **technology** for **inclusivity**, challenging the dominant and oppressive roles of men in **digital spaces**, to countering patriarchal traditions by **reclaiming her family name** and taking control of her own **agency** as a woman, Ayesha shows that advancements towards gender justice lie not only in global movements, but **daily acts** of girls and women all over the world.

AYESHA'S ADVICE TO YOUNG WOMEN

ON DREAMING AND FINDING YOUR COMMUNITY

1 Don't give up on dreaming.

"That is the **biggest strength** you have. Dream of the **world** that you envision, dream of the **life** that you envision. So many times we **limit** people, **especially women**, and their dreams - dreams are not supposed to be practical or logical. **Dream however you want.**"

2 Find spaces of solidarity.

"It's a very challenging world that we are living in, every single day can be very **isolating**. There will be moments of hopelessness, sometimes there will be moments of hope. So it is important to find **solidarity** and with **women** I have seen this one thing - I feel like **the way we love each other**, it is so amazing. The way we **pull each other up**, the way we **celebrate** each other. That is so, so beautiful, I think it is so important to have that around you."

To learn more about **Ayesha Amin** and the work of **Baithak**, visit the links below:



[Baithak.co](https://baithak.co)



[baithak.pak](https://www.instagram.com/baithak.pak)



[BaithakPak](https://twitter.com/BaithakPak)



[Baithak.pak](https://www.facebook.com/Baithak.pak)



We would like to sincerely thank Ayesha Amin for taking the time to talk to us and for providing us with an impactful and sincere interview.

At **Politics4Her**, we find resonance in the principles championed by Ayesha Amin: dedication to **challenging patriarchal norms**, advocating for **bodily autonomy**, championing **SRHR** and advocating for inclusivity towards **communities in global majority countries**.

Recognizing the global nature of patriarchy, we emphasize the **collective effort** required to advance gender equality. A collective effort towards breaking barriers that must be made both **online and offline**, in enabling women to **reclaim the public space** they've been denied, impacting their lives and their possibility to **choose their future** in spite of **social expectations**.

Our commitment extends to creating **safe** and **inclusive digital spaces**, acknowledging the challenges women encounter online, and empowering them. We strive towards fostering a world where every young woman and girl can **thrive, challenge stereotypes**, and **dream on her own terms**.

Who inspires you?

If you would like to nominate a young feminist changemaker to be highlighted in our monthly volume, **[fill out this form](#)**.

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