

THEME 1**WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING HELPS UNLOCK PROGRESS**

- A** Sharifa Bhatt migrated to Delhi from Kashmir in 1995, when her family was forced to run away due to communal riots. Suddenly, everything changed. She had no idea what the future had in store for her. She was torn between whether to stay in Delhi or to return home. She was greatly worried about her children's well being. Things took a turn for the worse when her husband lost his business and they were pushed into poverty, with not enough to eat and no permanent home to live in. While she was struggling with the uncertainty that lay ahead of them, she came across CEQUIN's GRC. In 2009 she enrolled herself in CEQUIN's vocational training course for cutting and tailoring. She worked diligently to make the most of her learning opportunity. While coming to the Centre she was exposed to ideas of women's capability and the opportunities available. She was determined to hone her skills and make a living out of them. Today, she successfully runs a boutique and production centre, organising exhibitions all over Delhi. Her eldest daughter is now a doctor and is soon planning to shift to Canada, while her son is an engineer and her youngest daughter is an English Literature student. A woman who started this journey penniless, Sharifa, now has annual savings of above Rs. 2 lakhs. She also prides herself for being an employer of women, both in Kashmir and in Okhla, Delhi, inspiring them to stand on their own feet, so that they are never faced with what she lived through.
- B** Asma had been facing domestic abuse for the past few years but never shared her story with others. She was introduced to CEQUIN's Mahila Panchayat programme and got co-opted as a member three years ago. As a member of Mahila Panchayat she underwent intensive training sessions on leadership and women's rights, understanding gender based violence, the relevant laws and key stakeholders in her area. She took a keen interest in the training and emerged a proactive member of the Panchayat, taking up local cases for informal resolution or providing referrals. She has developed her individual leadership along the way, resolving cases like convincing an eloped couple's parents to get them married, helping a poor mother get her daughter married and liaising with the local Councilor to get dustbins installed in her area. She has been actively mobilizing women especially widows to apply for pensions. Helping and enabling community members gave her the confidence to stand up against violence her was facing and she threw her abusive husband out of the house. She's become an inspiration to other women in the locality who now directly approach her with their problems.