

This is the story of Laeeqa Batool who belongs to a small village of Distt. Okara. I have four brothers. They all are students like me. My father is a farmer, and he wants a great future for me and my brothers. When I completed my two years of MSc economics from the University of Okara, I could not continue my post-graduate at that university. So, I had no option but to come to Lahore and be admitted to a well-known university. My father always motivated me to study, but he was very much worried about my further study expenses. However, financial constraints posed a significant hurdle. Fortunately, I got admission to “**Lahore College for Women University, Lahore**”. And my father took “Qarz e Hasna” from my younger uncle. My Uncle paid my first-semester fee.

My father didn't want to get any financial support from relatives for me. Then my class in-charge told us about the “**USAID-funded Merit and Needs-Based Scholarship Program**”, I applied for this scholarship because I knew that this would make my studies easier. The moment of truth arrived when the scholarship committee announced my name as one of the recipients. It was a surreal experience, a realization of years of hard work and dedication. This scholarship not only alleviated financial burdens but also opened the door for me to a world of opportunities. I was lucky, that I got this scholarship, I feel so proud because I got this scholarship on merit and also need.

With the scholarship in hand, I embarked on a remarkable academic journey at this renowned university. The journey was not challenging, but the resilience cultivated during the scholarship application process served as a guiding force. Beyond the academic sphere, this scholarship empowered me to give back to the community. Now I have completed my MS-Economics degree, and working with an Australian researcher. All credit goes to this university and USAID scholarship program, they made my academic journey easier for me. I would like to extend a huge thank you for awarding me with the USAID scholarship and I am also thankful to HEC.

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