Perween Rahman Killed:
Pakistan Activist For Poor Shot Dead In Karachi

KARACHI, Pakistan — Gunmen shot and killed a pioneering Pakistani activist in Karachi who helped bring services like sewer and water to the city's poorest neighborhoods, a police official said Thursday.

The killing was a sign of the escalating chaos that has gripped Pakistan's largest city.

Perween Rahman, the director of the Orangi Pilot Project, was on her way home Wednesday night when she was shot and killed by gunmen on a motorcycle, said senior police officer Javed Odho.

She was struck four times in the chest and neck and died on the way to the hospital, he said. Rahman, 54, was an architect who left private practice early in her career to help the poor.

Through her work, she became one of the authority figures on the ever-expanding Karachi and the struggles of millions of poor people who try to eke out a living in some of the most neglected neighborhoods. Friends and colleagues were devastated by her death.

"Anyone trying to understand Karachi would go to her," said Zora Yusuf, who heads the Pakistan Human Rights Commission. "It is very, very depressing, very disturbing."

The Orangi Pilot Project operated in the squatter slums that make up a huge part of Karachi. The innovative project, started in the 1980s, helped residents of those poor communities build their own sewer and water systems.

The port city is a sprawling metropolis of roughly 18 million people.

It is made up of a mish-mash of essentially illegal land settlements where poor people purchased land from developers and built their homes. Few of these settlements have basic services like sewage lines or running water, let alone access to hospitals or schools.

Often the same people that sell the land then sell services like water delivery, and residents have no option but to buy them.

"The government itself has failed in these areas," said Yusuf.

The Orangi project worked with residents to build services. The organization would couple its technical expertise with labor from residents in the affected community to build things like sewer lines and would lobby the government to build a main sewer line that all the other neighborhoods could connect with.

NPR correspondent Steve Inskeep wrote extensively about Rahman and the Orangi project in his book on Karachi, "Instant City: Life and Death in Karachi."

In the book, he described Rahman as a thin, raven-haired woman "with a musical way of talking." He said she was educated as an architect but quickly left the firm she was working at because she wanted to do something that would help local residents.

There was no claim of responsibility for the shooting but Rahman's work had sometimes put her in the middle of dangerous situations in a city where the security situation is deteriorating swiftly. Inskeep described in his book how armed men at one point burst into the project's office.

Rahman had not received any specific threats recently, said Abdul Waheed Khan, a senior program manager at the OPP. But he said the nature of their work often involved challenging various criminal groups – referred to as mafias in Karachi – that control the land or water delivery in these poor areas.
Land and access to it is big business in the city, which has mushroomed from 1947, when its population was 435,000, to at least 18 million now.

With the chaotic growth came an often deadly fight for control of the city's land, because anyone who controls it can make a fortune subdividing and reselling it.

(Publish on Huffington Post, 14/03/2013)

**Pakistan mourns murdered aid worker Parveen Rehman**

Parveen Rehman may have been targeted because of her work in exposing land grabbing

The funeral of one of Pakistan's top development workers - shot dead on Wednesday - has been held in Karachi.

Parveen Rehman was killed by four gunmen while travelling in her car near the western Orangi area of the city.

It is believed to be one of the largest squatter settlements in Asia.

Ms Rehman was head of the Orangi Pilot Project, one of Pakistan's most successful non-profit programmes, which helps local communities escape from poverty.

Scores of people attended the funeral, including relatives, friends and members of civil society.

The BBC's M Ilyas Khan in Pakistan says her death reflects the increased level of violence in the country's largest city, where scores of people this year have been killed in ethnic, sectarian and criminal violence.

Ms Rehman had been documenting land use around Karachi, which some believe may have antagonised the city's powerful land-grabbing criminal syndicates.

Ms Rehman was shot after she left her office in Orangi. She was hit twice in the neck and taken to hospital, but doctors could not revive her.

No militant group has said it carried out the attack which has devastated many residents of Orangi.

"She was a great help for us. She was just like an elder sister to whom we would go whenever a problem struck us," a resident told local media.

Ms Rehman's associates say that while she had no enemies, her work on land grabbing and illegal water hydrants in and around Karachi may have angered elements involved in the illegal multi-million rupee business.

The provincial parliament of Sindh, of which Karachi is the capital, offered a vote of condolence for her on Thursday.

In a statement the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan - an independent watchdog - called on those who "believe in freedom, justice and human rights" to stand up to the "enemy who wants to eliminate all symbols of hope".

Ms Rehman has complained in the past that she has received death threats. At one point some armed men stormed her offices and ordered her staff to leave.
In 1999 she became head of the Orangi Pilot Project (OPP), founded by development expert Akhtar Hameed Khan.

The project encourages communities to maintain their own systems for sanitation, health, housing and micro-finance.

(BBC News, 14/03/2013)

Orangi NGO chief Parveen shot dead

KARACHI, March 13: Parveen Rehman, the Director of the Orangi Pilot Project, was shot dead in Orangi Town when she was returning home on Wednesday evening.

The city’s leading social worker, who worked for Orangi Town, said to be Asia’s largest slum project, was attacked near the office of the research and training institute of the project located in the Qasba Colony, reportedly by four gunmen who started firing when her car had slowed down at a speed-breaker. Hearing gunshots the car of the deputy director which was ahead of Ms Rehman's car sped away.

When called by the driver, the car returned and then drove her to a private hospital in North Nazimabad where doctors expressed their inability to treat Ms Rehman because her wounds were too serious. They advised that she should be taken to a larger hospital. She was rushed to the Abbasi Shaheed Hospital where she was pronounced dead.

(Dawn, 14/03/2013)

Murder of social worker ‘who quietly served people’ slammed

The murder of Orangi Pilot Project director Parveen Rehman, who served as a social worker for 25 years, was widely condemned on Wednesday.

Elahi Bux, the Karachi project manager of the Strengthening Participatory Organisation, said Rehman was an institution in herself.

“She was one of those rare individuals who avoided the mainstream NGO-culture,” he said.

“People in the sector often couldn’t find her at social gatherings. She was mostly found at the annual Dr Hameed Khan forum and sometimes in special Urban Resource Centre (URC) programmes. She was media-shy and one of those persons who quietly served the poor. She will be missed. The future generation of architects and social activists have been deprived of her expertise, which will cost the city a great deal. She always talked about progress of the city and her models have been used across the country. But her work was not a threat to anyone.”

Abdul Waheed, who worked with Rehman for 18 years, called her his mentor. “She has trained hundreds of social activists and her work has touched millions of people in Karachi and beyond. She can never die. She was so brave that she used to move around the city during the 1992 curfews. If she was being threatened by anyone, she never disclosed it to anyone since it was the norm due to her work. She has forever changed the way people perceive Karachi.”

URC official Zahid Farooq said: “I knew her for the past two decades and she played a vital role in training me. She used to work for sanitation, low-cost housing and leasing of goths. She took an initiative to build an archive of maps of various areas of the city, often unavailable at government offices. Her
organisation worked as a pressure group for mapping of villages within the city. She had dedicated her life to the development of the poor.” An MQM leader said people believed the Taliban might be behind Parveen's murder because terrorists could have targeted her for some of the projects she was working on.
(By Ammar Shahbazi, The News, 14th March 2013)

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Continue reading the main story
Parveen Rehman - ‘fighter for the poor’

- Born in Dhaka in 1957, then the capital of East Pakistan, and received her early education there.
- Trained as an architect but soon moved into aid and sanitation work
- Made famous by Steve Inskeep in his book about the Orangi project called Instant City: Life and Death in Karachi
- He described her as a "thin, raven-haired woman with a musical way of talking".
- Taught architecture to students in Karachi
- No militant group has said it carried out the attack which has devastated many residents of Orangi.

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(PBC News 14 March 2013)

**Pakistani activist for poor shot dead in Karachi**

In this Wednesday, March 13, 2013, photo, friends of of Pakistani activist Perween Rahman, who was shot by gunmen on Wednesday night, mourn her death, at a hospital in Karachi, Pakistan.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

The port city is a sprawling metropolis of roughly 18 million people

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Smiles in Cracked Ice – Dedicated to Parveen Rehman (architect, selfless humanitarian and social scientist who lost her life in a brutal target killing on 13/03/2013 in Karachi, Pakistan)

(The brutal and cold blooded murder of architect Parveen Rehman today has most of us in a state of shock. That smiling face and graceful aura is gone forever and in what a way! From earliest days as a child listening to her discussion of her work with my father to later days seeing her as a spirited, animated individual exuding her usual warmth and smiling demeanour... she was... undoubtedly a model of selfless determination. Death is inevitable but when it is the result of violence it hits emotionally and it hits hard. I feel completely stunned and angry at the murder of a lady who gave her whole life quite literally for the welfare of the poor, the needy and the helpless. Today we look on – each of us as helpless and as poor as the ones she worked for – as we watch yet another humane soul succumb to the madness that surrounds this once peaceful city of Karachi. May Allah raise her to her heavenly abode where she truly belongs and bring her killers to justice. Parveen aunty, you stood up for what you believed in and brought light to the lives of several who were a part of the Orangi Pilot Project. I can hardly bring myself to believe that such efforts, tremendous as they are, go in vain in the end – the light, hope and courage along with selfless determination must and shall live on in other forms come what may. You will truly be missed. Inna lilah e wa inna ilaehe raajeoon.)

Blood buckets to wash the road
the earth to sketch the sky
eyes that tearless stare
and bullets endless supply.

It was another city in that lifeless book
where roses blooming grew
now the red velvet drapes luscious dew
on selfless souls. The look
still haunts – that glassy stare
of wide eyed wonder evermore
and destiny weaves its untold plot
while we all count the score.
One, two, a thousand pleading eyes
beseech through tomorrow’s door
but drool frames what it loves the best,
Greed’s open corridor.

Love to mask the hate
soft voices to dim the noise
irony moves the cattle herd
and idiocy rules the wise.

(By Kiran Bashir Ahmed, http://kiranba.wordpress.com/14/03/2013)
Eyewitnesses said those who gathered in the hospital and outside her home, where she was living alone with her octogenarian mother, included dozens of residents of Orangi who were mourning her death.

“She was a great help for us. She was just like an elder sister to whom we would go whenever a problem struck us,” said a middle-aged man who identified himself as Azmat Ali.

Arif Pervez, development professional and a friend of hers, said Ms Rehman had been receiving death threats for a long time, apparently from the mafia involved in grabbing precious land on the fringes of the city.

“She had been receiving threats on her life for a long time. We had discussed this several times but every time I advised her to take care of herself, she smiled, waved her hand and said what will they do, I have to work a lot and that too in the middle of the people,” Mr Pervez said.

Ms Rehman was an ardent compiler of the record of precious lands, which were on the fringes of the city in shape of villages but were speedily vanishing into its vastness because of ever-increasing demand by thousands of families who were shifting to Karachi every year from across the country.

She said on record that around 1,500 goths (villages) had been merged into the city since 15 years. Land-grabbers subdivided them into plots and earned billions by their sale.

“She documented everything about the lands that have been grabbed. Another sin of her was to help those whose lands had been grabbed. Yet, she never hesitated to go to the area where her life was constantly under threat,” Mr Pervez said.

“Many people certainly have lost their elder sister,” he said.

Noman Ahmed of NED University said Ms Rehman’s great achievement was to get involved and empower communities in development work.

“She involved communities in development work and her cautious endeavour was to empower people and lessen their sense of deprivation. Her motto was way forward. She saw it as a defeat to terrorists by not changing her routine to help people,” Mr Ahmed said.

Besides her mother, Ms Rehman is survived by her two brothers and a sister, living abroad.

(Daily Dawn, 15 March 2013)

**Pakistan condemns assassination of Parveen Rehman**

As the country mourns her death and condemns extremism, police suspect the TTP of attacking yet another activist.

KARACHI – Karachi police are investigating the March 13 killing of Pakistani social activist Parveen Rehman, the long-time director of the Orangi Pilot Project (OPP). The OPP works on sanitation, healthcare, education and microfinancing in poor Karachi neighbourhoods.
Two men on a motorcycle opened fire on Rehman's car on Manghopir Road, eyewitnesses said. She died en route to the hospital, senior police officer Javed Odho told Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.

Nobody has taken responsibility, but police suspect Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militants of being behind the killing and identified alleged TTP member Qari Bilal as a suspect, officials said.

A resident of South Waziristan, Bilal reportedly belongs to the TTP's Sher Khan faction. Informers have identified him as the deputy commander of the banned TTP's Manghopir chapter.

Police on March 15 conducted an operation in which they were trying to capture or kill Bilal, Ashfaq Baloch, station house officer at the Manghopir police station, said. At least one militant killed in the operation, but details about who was killed could not be confirmed.

Although Rehman had no known enemies, her fight against land grabs and rampant water theft from pumping stations in and around Karachi might have angered those involved in those multi-million-rupee rackets, some of her colleagues said.

Scores of mourners from various NGOs, trade unions and civil society attended her funeral prayer March 14 in Gulistan-e-Jauhar.

Attacks 'senseless and barbaric'

Outrage and grief followed her killing.

Civil society activists and Karachi University students March 14 protested outside the Karachi Press Club, where they held placards condemning extremist violence and chanted slogans like "Down with terrorism."

"Rehman's killing is a serious attempt to demoralise the forces of peace and development in the country," said Zahid Farooq, a representative of the Urban Resource Centre, a Karachi-based civil society organisation.

Pakistani officials and civil society groups publicly condemned the act as "senseless and barbaric."

Calling it "inhuman," Sindh Governor Dr. Ishrat-ul-Ebad ordered Sindh Police Chief Ghulam Shabbir Shaikh to submit an incident report and to have law enforcement agencies examine all security camera video footage of entry and exit points near the crime scene.

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan condemned the killing of Rehman in a statement that urged the public to "stand up against those who are destroying the symbols of hope."

"Her assassination was a cruel blow to the country's civil society and a great loss to the nation," it read.

Devoted to helping Pakistan's poor

Rehman devoted her life to the development of impoverished neighbourhoods across the country, to civil society and to development, her friends told Central Asia Online.
She threw herself into promoting low-cost housing plans, rehabilitating refugees from floods in rural Sindh and monitoring developers' encroachment on scarce land in crowded Karachi, according to Farooq. The organisation she ran, the OPP, is one of Asia's largest slum improvement projects.

Trained as an architect, she moved into aid and sanitation work and in the 1990s helped to build a sanitation system that others replicated across Pakistan, said Abdul Waheed, head of the Bright Educational Society, a Karachi-based NGO.

She never married and remained committed to her work, he added.

Militant attacks on activists a 'crucial' concern

Rehman's killing highlights Pakistan's alarming trend of militant attacks on activists and aid workers.

In 2012, Pakistan and South Sudan tied as the second most dangerous country for aid workers with 15 attacks each, behind only Afghanistan (44 attacks), according to the Aid Workers Security Database (AWSD). Somalia and Syria rounded out the five most dangerous countries.

In 2011, aid workers in Pakistan suffered 12 attacks, according to the AWSD. Before 2009, three or fewer attacks occurred annually.

NGOs and aid organisations are seen as promoting secular values and modern norms, which the Taliban vehemently oppose because of their extremist view of Islam, said Raees Ahmed, a Karachi-based security analyst. Consequently, many aid organisations have ordered their staff to restrict nighttime travel and avoid high-risk areas.

Unfortunately, the attacks are compelling some humanitarian groups to suspend their activities in the country altogether – leaving the needy to suffer, Waheed told Central Asia Online.

"Violence against aid workers is one of the most crucial humanitarian issues today," he said.

(By Zia-ur-Rehman, http://centralasiaonline.com, 15/03/2013)

Parveen Rehman's death has left me heartbroken

An impish smile, one that reached her eyes and made them twinkle; the way she'd intertwine her arm with yours, like school girls do; her intelligent conversations; her wry humour that was always interspersed with shortles of laughter – there was a sort of joie de vivre about Parveen Rehman that suggested a new lightness of being. She exuded warmth and a gentleness that is hard to find these days.

So why was her life snuffed out in that terrible manner?

Was it because she was a messiah for the poor or was it due to her attempts to make people understand what development meant in poor settlements?

Did they hate her for finding joy in simple things?

Parveen Rehman was an architect by qualification and she headed the well-known Orangi Pilot Project-Research and Training Institute (OPP-RTI), in Karachi's Orangi area.
“I am an optimist. The maximum I can remain depressed for is ten minutes!” she told me in an interview I was conducting back in 2009, for a book “Women Managing Water” published in India for which was collecting inspiring stories of women from around South Asia.

And then she added,

Maybe it has to do with what happened to us in East Pakistan.

In her own words,

I was in class nine, in 1971, when Pakistan lost its eastern half (present Bangladesh). I was spoilt and pampered, being the youngest among four siblings and was like any teenager, obsessed with music, friends and partying.”

Transported back in time, she said life then for her was a never-ending joyride till the day the Mukti Bahini came to Mirpur, in Dhaka, where they lived and she finally saw men becoming animals.

Every night, she said, soldiers would pick a few women from among them.

I remember my mother telling me and my sister that if somebody dragged us out, we should kill ourselves.

Strangely, her harrowing experience back in 1971 did not turn her into a bitter person. She told me in an interview to Dawn in 2000,

All issues, in my opinion deal with society as a whole and women cannot be separated; you have to see the situation in its totality.

When she talked about the 18 years she spent with Dr Akhtar Hameed Khan, it brought a glow on her face.

“He taught me a way of life,” she said.

I am lucky to have worked with the best. At the OPP (Orangi Pilot Project) you learn as you grow. It teaches you that you can have a good life even in simplicity.

She described the OPP in various ways during the course of the interview – as “a way of life”; an “attitude”, a “catalyst”, a “great people’s work”, an “urban phenomenon”, a “movement”, but not a project.

The one piece of advice from Khan sahib that stayed with her always was,

“First acknowledge what you lack, try and see who has those skills and then stick to them like a leech and pick their brains!”

She believed it was important for men and women to work together as that way women learn to be assertive and men become gentler, she’d say.

My mind is still too numbed and my heart seems in physical pain; I cannot think beyond the fact that it’s the biggest loss for our country. I felt something akin to the way I felt when Benazir Bhutto was shot and killed.

I keep wondering what she felt when the bullets hit her. She was slightly built and didn’t stand a chance, so it’s ironic that she once said,

“Physical strength really does not matter; it’s all about what you have up here” and she’d pointed to her temple.
Back in 2000, just a year after Khan sahib had passed away I had asked her if she felt his absence and she’d said,

There is no vacuum, neither is there the pain of his departure. He lived a full life. I enjoyed being with him, now his thoughts are there to guide me.

I’m not sure I can say the same for Parveen’s hasty departure, but then I’m not so magnanimous, I had not learnt enough from her. Images and her words are all that remain.

(By Zofeen T. Ebrahim, Express Tribune, 15/03/2013)

SDI Mourns Colleague & Mentor Parween Rehman

SDI was deeply shocked to learn of the murder of colleague and mentor Parween Rehman, director of the Orangi Pilot Project in Karachi Pakistan, in what appeared to be a targeted attack on Wednesday.

The murder has been covered by various news sources. National Public Radio reporter Steve Inskeep, who spent quite a bit of time with Parween in Karachi while writing his book Instant City: Life and Death in Karachi shared the following remembrance of Parweeen on Thursday.

Upon learning of this tragedy, our partners at the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) shared the following:

"Perween was director of the Orangi Pilot Project Research and Training Institute, a Karachi-based NGO that works with the city’s poorest communities to improve their neighbourhoods. She was an architect-turned-activist who devoted her life to improving the lives of people in Karachi’s poorest neighbourhoods. Since the 1980s, the Orangi Pilot Project has provided thousands of people with improved water, sanitation and housing. The project is famous worldwide for both its success and its distinctive approach.

Perween was murdered by masked men who shot at her car as she travelled home from work on the afternoon of 13 March. Recently she had had been documenting land-use around Karachi, and this may have antagonised the city’s powerful land-grabbing criminals.

IIED researchers who have long worked with Perween have described her today as: "A very, very remarkable person and a wonderful friend, colleague and teacher." (Dr David Satterthwaite), and: "A brilliant, beautiful and principled person" (Dr Gordon McGranahan). IIED’s thoughts are with Perween’s family and friends and with everyone at the Orangi Pilot Project at this most difficult of times."

In reflecting on Parween’s life and work, Dr. Diana Mitlin shared the following:

"...I last saw her just two weeks ago at a meeting of the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights in Bangkok. She had brought a team of six or seven community leaders from Pakistan to share their work on planning and mapping the land around Karachi, and the contribution of young people to Pakistan’s future. She spoke with such excitement about the savings groups they had recently formed and the ways in which they were making women see new opportunities and have a new energy and creativity. She also talked about the power of the network they had established across Pakistan – many community organizations now able to manage their own sanitation programmes – and the network coming together each quarter to share experiences, problems, success. We also discussed a forthcoming visit she was willing to make to Uganda and Malawi to support improved sanitation strategies there. Because despite all I have written here about knowledge and power and land, Perween was a sanitation expert with an incredible skill to think through options and opportunities. She believed both in the essential contribution of expert professionals to improve infrastructure systems (designs, operational realities) – and the equally essential importance of recognising the modest nature of
that contribution. She would be the first to say that while professional contribution is significant and important – it needs to be integrated within a broader programme driven by the energy and knowledge of those living in informal settlements.”
We at SDI will honor Parween’s great contribution and dedication by replicating her work throughout the slums in our global network.
(SDInet.org, 15/03/2013)

Parveen Rehman and the growing might of Land Mafia

No militants, no ethnic drama, Parveen Rehman’s death was a consequence of the land mafia politics that has consumed Karachi to the core. Parveen, an architect by profession, switched her field under the guidance of her mentor since, Akhter Hameed Khan, the founder of Orangi Pilot Project. Since 1982 Rehman had worked her way up the ladder at OPP, uplifting slum communities using microfinance, minimizing the need for World Bank loans building bridges between the government and the community.

The nature of violence in Pakistan, and especially Karachi has been labeled ethnic and political one after the other. According to Parveen Rehman the bloodshed was not ethnic, but land related. A bold social worker, though media shy, she openly criticized the establishment, and the police forces for being party to the land mafia. Drug mafia armed the people. The news of a pathan firing spreads like fire in the media, but seldom do people ask: who armed them? The drug mafia disappears when they sniff an operation and ambiguous claims of ethnic and sectarian differences fill the empty spaces.

When it comes to land, everyone is a stakeholder. From the political party workers, to the local police, their seniors, and the drug mafia: what makes land ‘gold’ in this desert is its fluctuating value and ability to make millions overnight. Money is power, and land in a country where little infrastructure has been developed is the most precious commodity. In a nutshell, land and land related transaction is the most prime motive for killing. Lack of institutions has escalated this battle in Karachi, coupled with political strife. It is safe to say that there is no functional government; rather government representatives are thugs on the local level, collecting extortion money, building alliances with the local police, and instilling fear in the people. Karachites are living in a perpetual state of terror.

When political parties are seen battling with each other the thugs, drug dealers and land mafia become stronger, they are able to camouflage themselves easily amidst the ongoing drama and bloodshed, with parties ready to finance them against each other. The city’s failing infrastructure, inability of KSE to deliver for instance, plays a crucial role, by keeping citizens on the edge, making them vulnerable, on the streets, protesting and one gunshot spurs commotion of soaring magnitude. Demonstrations become violent and depending on whose blood is spilled first, blame is asserted, and a new ground for a fresh battle between the ethnically aligned political parties begins.

When the ANP came into power in 2008 they started threatening OPP workers shortly after the organization disallowed them from using their premises for ‘karate’ practices. When the threats escalated to the point of occupying their office “You can kill us, that’s all you can do” was Rehman’s response. “To save ourselves we’ve even had to go to bigger thugs” she joked in an interview from a year ago. But the passion that drove Rehman and her colleagues changed the lives of thousands of families living in the slums of Karachi, without loans or any external help.

Death threats were a norm at the OPP office, and months were spent working outside the office, when political representatives made operations difficult for them. What kept them effective and their work going was lack of fear. By keeping strong ties within the community and not showing any signs of fear the OPP became invincible for the many enemies it had created, by empowering these communities. OPP founder, Akhter Hameed, believed in mobilizing women, because women were in charge of the finances in
the house. They do the budgeting, and therefore convincing them will automatically generate funds for the community to build water pipes, metaled roads, and whatever else they require to uplift them.

Violence is controlled when there is political harmony, and when there is conflict between the political parties the hostility on the lower level gets aggravated. Thugs can get away with occupying land getting extortion money. The police and thugs support each other, partaking in illegal activity, everyone responsible to maintain law and order has become a stakeholder.

The magnitude of the land industry is highly underestimated, because most of it is done under the table. Land transaction has annually a turnover of 30 billion rupees according to conservative estimates. Karachi is the hub for this activity because the institutions have been finished, where is the government? They are all the mafia. And the fear factor in the city has made them stronger.

While Parveen Rehman time and again emphasized on the role of political parties and a growing land mafia in Karachi, the recent Joseph colony incident in Lahore which was labeled as religiously motivated, and the Quetta bombings that killed more than 100 Hazaras (labeled as Sectarian in nature) were also economically motivated. It has become common in Pakistan to ascribe bloodshed, killing, aggression and hate to ambiguity, and to notions that cannot be eliminated. Few question the motivation behind such acts. The masterminds planning these incidents have a plan. They are arming masses, or evacuating neighborhoods, not for some reward in the afterlife, but for power and money.

This realization is the first step, but who has the motivation to point out the actual culprits? The government is weak and dependent, if not a variable in this equation. It is safe for the small town gangsters to ally themselves with the bigger thugs, and secure a share in the pie, because there are no rules that govern the distribution of resources, just a show of might. Politicians, by exhibiting shallow thoughts and narrow mindedness give rise to these conflicts. They have to co-exist rather than by-pass each other. Complete blindness and arrogance on their part makes them pawns for the land and drug mafia to meet their ends.

Bizarre how after dedicating her life to work against the reality of violence, and removing the misconception that violence is ethnic or religious, her murder has been attributed to ‘militants’; a blanket term that implies case closed.

For most who have hear of her death this is good news, and we will all go back to our daily routine, not questioning who the actual culprits were. Who did her words and efforts actually harm? This is the drama we are all party to, simply by virtue of ignorance.

(By Sahrish Jamali, on March 15th, 2013)

RIP Parveen Rehman

The murder on Wednesday evening of the Karachi-based social worker Parveen Rehman is a bitter blow to the development community at large and, more specifically, the poor people of Orangi and those who benefited from the work of the Orangi Pilot Project, of which she was director. She was just 56 and had devoted her life to the uplift and care of poor urban communities in Karachi. She never sought the limelight and was rarely interviewed but her work had international recognition – she won the UN Habitat Award in 2001. It appears that she was aware of the threats to her life and had been so for years, probably because her work impinged on the activities of assorted land mafias and others who exploited the poor.

Thus Pakistan loses another brave, devoted and resourceful person who gave her life freely in the service of the poor. Under her leadership, the OPP had managed to avoid the taint of corruption that dogs the
steps of so many NGOs. Within minutes of her murder, tributes were pouring in on various social media networks from not just Pakistan but across the world. But tributes, honour and respect are no shield against a gunman’s bullet. The evil forces that killed Parveen Rehman have free range in this country, ruled as we are by the corrupt at every level who are bent on self-interest rather than the uplift of a population that is mostly poverty-stricken, has inadequate sanitation and poor drinking water supplies – all issues addressed by the OPP and Parveen Rehman. Whoever killed her, whether it was a ‘banned organisation’ or thugs working for land mafias and encroachers, is unlikely ever to be caught, much less punished. The culture of impunity that has grown on the cancer of corruption ensures protection for even those committing the most heinous of crimes. Rest in peace, Parveen Rehman – your country is the poorer for your passing but it will only be the poor and your fellow-workers who will keep your memory alive.

(The News, March 15, 2013)

Parween Rahman: The Legend Lives On

Slender, almost frail, with her hair down to her waist, her captivating smile and melodious voice, Parween Rahman was a legend in her lifetime. An assailant’s bullets took her life on Wednesday 13 March, 2013 as she was being driven home from work. The target killer snuffed out her life but the legend that she was will live forever. She was 56 years old.

Parween’s father hailed from Patna and her mother hails from Hyderabad Deccan. Her parents’ families moved to East Pakistan (then East Bengal) after the Partition. During the upheaval leading to the creation of Bangladesh, Parween’s family suffered immensely, as some of its members got separated from one another. They finally moved to present day Pakistan and Parween studied to become an architect at Dawood College of Engineering and Technology. She also obtained a post graduate diploma in housing, building and urban planning from the Institute of Housing Studies in Rotterdam.

The now renowned Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) was launched by Akhtar Hameed Khan in 1980 and Parween joined the organisation in December 1981, remaining with it for the rest of her life. She learnt at the feet of Akhtar Hameed Khan and Arif Hasan whom she always addressed as “guru”. Instinctively, she empathized with Akhtar Hameed Khan’s vision and took to the work of OPP like fish does to water. But as she worked with the communities in Orangi, considered the largest squatter settlement in the region, she did not hesitate to stand up to her mentors, young as she was, on issues on which she held her own opinion.

OPP’s core focus was to facilitate communities by providing them technical assistance to lay down sewerage lines on a self-help basis. For the poor people of Orangi, like most marginalised people, sanitation as an instrument leading to development, was a low priority. In the early days, as OPP mobilised them and broke down social barriers, they used to call Parween “gutter baji” affectionately. She became a specialist on sanitation and water issues and her expertise was sought at home as well as by forums across the world. She could easily have landed a job with any international finance institution or international development network and become a multi-millionaire like so many development consultants and experts, but she never waivered in her loyalty to OPP.

As it is structured today, OPP consists of several institutions. Parween was the director of OPP’s Research and Training Institute which facilitates communities in education, water and sanitation, and relief and rehabilitation. OPP’s Rural Development Trust and the Orangi Charitable Trust are headed by her colleague and close associate, Anwar Rashid. The model developed by OPP has been replicated in many developing countries and is studied in academia throughout the world. In Sindh alone, OPP provides technical assistance to 150 organisations. Inevitably, OPP’s programmes have captured the urge for change among the people, facilitated in providing livilihood, drawn women into the workforce and loosened the hold of the patriarchal system.
Working from her base in Orangi, which is inhabited by members of several ethnic communities, Parween came face to face with the problems of the Karachi. She was part of the alliance of organisations which opposed people-unfriendly development projects such as the Lyari Expressway, elevated mass transit through MA Jinnah Road and the luxurious multi-billion beach development project which would not only have deprived the people of Karachi of access to the beach but also involved massive foreign funds. OPP’s documentation of the sewerage system became the foundation of the S3 sewerage plan for Karachi, based on self-financing, without any foreign aid.

Parween’s remarkable contribution was with respect to the use and misuse of land as an asset in Karachi. Sensitive, professionally meticulous and committed as she was, she mapped the changing patterns of land ownership, an issue which was taboo to many vested interests in the city. She identified the goths where land snatching was taking place, gave their inhabitants the information they required to get themselves regularised and handed them self-financing packages for water and sanitation which remain the basis of OPP’s development approach.

Parween worked fearlessly in the tension-ridden atmosphere in Karachi. Her work brought to the fore her consensus building abilities and while she was wise in the interest of her programmes, she never compromised on ethics. True to the OPP philosophy, she believed that she could never be effective as a development facilitator if there was a great difference between her financial status and that of the members of the community whom she sought to motivate. Therefore, after so many years of service, she drew a monthly salary of only Rs. 32,000/- and the “perks” given to her were a car and a driver, perhaps also the use of a cell phone. How different was her dedication and, therefore, the impact she made from the longing of development doyens who cannot function without drawing hundreds of thousands in monthly salary and whose contribution is full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.

As her colleagues, followers and admirers came in their hundreds to mourn for her to her modest apartment in Gulistan-e-Jauhar, which was too small to accommodate them, they waited in the pathways of the apartment block and asked the question, who will carry her work forward? I found them as determined to continue that work as Arif Hasan, Anwar Rashid and Parween Rahman had been when Akhtar Hameed Khan passed away in October 1999. She used to say, in her own quiet way, that some people live in palaces, others live on the streets. Our mission should be to raise the quality of life of those who live on the streets.

(By Dr. Masooma Hasan, http://pakistanhorizon.wordpress.com, 15/03/2013)

**OPP director changed lives**

When the news of Parveen Rehman’s murder started running on news channels, Safdar Haleem Khan’s thoughts went back 20 years – when the poor neighbourhoods in Orangi Town had no working sanitation system, people paid a sweeper almost every day to unclog sewers and waste water overflowed on to the streets and into their homes.

“I didn't know Rehman but I knew of her work. I will not forget all the work the Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) did for us back then,” recalls Khan, a resident of Orangi from 1992 to 2008. “It was the only organisation, which came to our help.”

Rehman, who preferred to stay behind the scenes, remained the driving force behind the OPP for years after joining them in 1983.

From the project’s office, she directed and coordinated work which spanned from low-cost housing schemes, rehabilitation of people displaced by floods in rural Sindh to recording encroachment of land in Karachi. The work that OPP carried out in the 1990s for the squatters, helping people build sanitation system, has been replicated across the country.
“This is something done entirely by the people,” Rehman had told The Express Tribune a few months ago. “No one from the government came forward to help them.”

Residents too remember the open conduits which carried sewerage before the OPP offered their help. “Filth used to be everywhere. Illnesses caused by contamination were common,” recalled Khan.

Most people couldn’t afford the construction of even a seven-foot-long pipeline to carry waste water from their homes to the gutter lines. “We had bought land from the government for just Rs20 per square yard. The homes were simple bare-bricked structures,” he said. “Now that I look back at all the work the Orangi Pilot Project did for us, I can tell you how people such as Rehman have played an important role for us.”

Empowering people with knowledge

The first sewerage system was built in Hanifabad in Orangi No. 1. “It took us six months to help build the sewerage system in just one lane. But gradually, the replication started,” said M Javed Ali, a manager at the OPP.

“At first we used to help the residents with everything – conducting surveys, making designs, tools, laying out cost estimates, technical assistance and supervision. But then people started doing it all by themselves, leaving us just the task of technical advice,” he elaborated. “We had imparted training to masons and labour workers from the area which helped everyone in the coming years.”

The real impact of the model started to emerge after four years as people started taking decisions themselves.

For basic facilities, such as sanitation and water, residents relied on local government institutions and union councils. The government remained, however, short on cash when it came to the development of colonies and settlements.

OPP’s initiative to motivate people to construct proper sanitation system on self-finance basis has been a success as more than a hundred settlements and areas have adopted it in Karachi with the help of the NGO’s technical experts.

Its model has been replicated in different neighbourhoods, such as Baloch Colony, alSadaf, Mominabad, Abro Colony, Khuda ki Basti, Korangi, Qazba and SITE. “At the start of the project in the 1990s, the system was being built for Rs625 per house. Now it costs Rs2,500 per house. A government agency will, however, build the same thing for 10 times more,” said an OPP employee.

(By Saad Hasan, The Express Tribune, March 15th, 2013)

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**Prominent social worker gunned down in Karachi**

Rehan Siddiqui / 15 March 2013

KARACHI - A prominent social worker of Karachi, Parveen Akhtar, was shot dead late on Wednesday night by unknown gunmen riding on motorbikes in the jurisdiction of Pirabad police station.

Parveen, 56, an architect by profession, was known for her selfless work in impoverished neighbourhoods and her independent organisation, the Orangi Pilot Project, won a UN-Habitat award in 2001.

Parveen was a pioneering activist in Karachi who helped bring services like sewer and water to the city's poorest neighbourhoods, a police official said on Thursday.
Parveen, the director of the Orangi Pilot Project, was on her way home on Wednesday night when she was shot and killed by gunmen on a motorcycle, said senior police officer Javed Odho.

She was struck four times in the chest and neck and died on the way to the hospital, he said. Parveen was an architect who left private practice early in her career to help the poor.

The Orangi Pilot Project operated in the squatter slums that make up a huge part of Karachi. The innovative project, started in the 1980s, helped residents of those poor communities build their own sewer and water systems. The port city is a sprawling metropolis of roughly 18 million people.

It is made up of a mish-mash of essentially illegal land settlements where poor people purchased land from developers and built their homes. Few of these settlements have basic services like sewage lines or running water, let alone access to hospitals or schools.

The Orangi project worked with residents in these areas to build services. It would use their technical expertise to help local residents build things like sewer lines and would lobby the government to build a main sewer line that all the other neighbourhoods could connect with.

NPR correspondent Steve Inskeep wrote extensively about Parveen and the Orangi project in his book on Karachi called Instant City: Life and Death in Karachi.

In the book he described Parveen as thin, raven-haired woman “with a musical way of talking.” He said she was educated as an architect but quickly left the firm she was working at because she wanted to do something that would help local residents.

news@khaleejtimes.com
(By Rehan Siddiqui, Khaleejtimes, 15/03/2013)

**NGO chief murder suspect killed in ‘encounter’**

A suspected militant, said to be involved in the Wednesday killing of the city’s leading social worker Parween Rahman, was killed in a police encounter in the Manghopir locality on Thursday, police said.

A police team signalled a Toyota Platz car in the Manghopir area to stop, police said, adding that the occupants of the vehicle opened fire on the police and tried to speed away. However, the police returned fire and the bullets hit one of the men in the car, the police said.

They said that in the meantime some aides of the suspects opened fire on the police from the Manghopir hillocks and one man in the vehicle managed to escape on foot. However, the wounded suspect died before he could be shifted to hospital.

The police said that the deceased was identified through a police informer as Qari Bilal. He was the deputy chief of the proscribed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan’s Manghopir chapter, they added.

SSP-West Asif Ajaz Shaikh told Dawn that some evidence recovered from the possession of the suspect suggested that he could have been involved in the killing of Ms Rahman, the director of the Orangi Pilot Project.

He said that the Platz car had been snatched from Mohammad Asif on Wednesday night before the attack on Ms Rahman and the same car was also spotted at the place where Ms Rahman was targeted.

“We have recovered a 9mm pistol from the possession of Qari Bilal. A similar pistol was also used in the killing of Ms Rahman,” he said. “The recovered pistol has been sent for a forensic examination along with the spent bullet casings collected from the crime scene.”
The body of suspect Bilal, whose CNIC was also recovered, was taken to the Abbasi Shaheed Hospital for medico-legal formalities.

Speaking to reporters at the Abbasi Shaheed Hospital in the early hours of Thursday, DIG Javed Odho said that the police had reason to believe that the same group was also involved in the attacks on polio teams.

A case (FIR 86/2013) was registered under Sections 353 (assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty),

324 (attempted murder), 186 (obstructing public servant in discharge of public functions), 435 (mischief by fire or explosive substance with intent to cause damage) and 34 (common intention) of the Pakistan Penal Code at the Manghopir police station.

Ms Rehman was killed on Wednesday in Orangi Town's Qasba Colony. A case (FIR 104/2013) was registered against unknown persons under Sections 302 (premeditated murder) and 34 (common intention) of the PPC on a complaint of Wali Dad, the driver of the slain Rehman, at the Pirabad police station.

(Dawn-15,15/03/2013)

**Police claim killing Parveen Rehman’s suspected murderer**

A suspect involved in the murder of Orangi Pilot Project director Parveen Rehman was killed in an encounter in Manghopir on Thursday, police said.

Qari Bilal, 35, of the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) was killed in a raid at a house in the Manghopir police limits. Weapons, ammunition and a Toyota Corolla car (ARY-186) were also seized in the raid.

Social activist Rehman was shot dead by some motorcyclists in her car near the Banaras flyover in Orangi Town on March 13.

The police were informed that one of the suspects was hiding in a house in Sultanabad, DIG West Javed Alam Odho told The News. Acting on the tip-of, the police raided a hideout. Bilal was killed after a brief encounter. The militant hailed from Waziristan.

Lawmakers concerned

The Sindh Assembly lawmakers expressed serious concern over the murder of Parveen Rehman.

MQM legislator Zareen Majid recalled she had worked with Rehman in the 1980s in the Orangi Pilot Project, when it was founded by Akhter Hameed Khan.

PML-F’s Nusrat Saher Abbasi said even a woman social worker was not safe in Karachi these days, adding that the government needed “to do something to curb this”.  

Civil society seeks action

Leading civil society organisations on Thursday expressed shock and grief over the murder of Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) director Parveen Rehman.
Condemning the murder through a joint statement, they said the social activist had dedicated her life to empowering marginalised communities in the slum areas, particularly Orangi Town, which is considered one of the largest slums of Asia.

The organisations that released the joint statement included the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research, the South Asia Partnership-Pakistan, the Strengthening Participatory Organisation, the Sungi Development Foundation, the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum, and the Pakistan Peace Coalition.

They said that after the demise of OPP founder Dr Akhtar Hameed Khan in 1999, Rehman steered the mission of the organisation, expanding one of the world’s largest and pioneering low-cost sanitation and basic services programmes that went on to change the lives of the downtrodden rural population.

She was a relentless social activist who was highly respected for her innovative work for the slum communities, which went beyond merely facilitating low-cost services.

She sought to empower those unattended by the state through education, skill-development and provision for microfinance facilities.

It was this work of hers that was targeted by the powerful mafias, because they saw that as a threat to their existence.

Her brutal killing in the middle of a crowded road is an indication of the backing of powerful forces for her murder.

It has been reported in the press that she had been receiving threats from the local mafias for a long time. Her murder is a symbol of the state’s failure to protect its citizens.

The civil society demanded the government to order a judicial inquiry into Rehman’s killing to expose the killers’ actual masters.

The state must stand up to protect sane voices and peaceful forces of the country that continue to be targeted by non-state actors. Her murder is a serious act for demoralising the forces of peace and development in the country.

They resolved that they would not bow under pressure and that the state must take responsibility for protecting the citizens.

They expressed solidarity with the OPP team, which Rehman was heading. They resolved to work together to carry forward her mission of empowering the marginalised, stressing that no terrorists or mafias should have the power to stop peace and development.

JI demands arrest of Parveen Rehman’s killers

The Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) on Thursday demanded of the government to arrest the killers of noted social activist Parveen Rehman, who was dead in Peerabad area a day earlier.

In a statement, the JI city chief Muhammad Hussain Mahenti strongly condemned the murder of Rehman, who was the director of the Orangi Pilot Project.

He held the government responsible of the deteriorating law and order situation, saying that the law enforcement agencies failed to restore peace to the city.

“The PPP politics has snatched the right to live from the innocent people, and its government has given them the gifts of inflation, target killings, lawlessness and extortion in its five-year tenure.”
Mahenti appealed to the people to play their due role to restore peace to the city by using their power of vote. “The people should hold the rulers accountable through their power of vote.”
(The News-13,15/03/2013)

‘Parveen Rehman was Karachi’s mother’

The students who protested on Thursday against Parveen Rehman’s killing a day earlier referred to her as the mother of Karachi – a befitting title for a woman who dedicated her life to not only alleviating the problems of those residing in katchi abadis, but affectionately teaching them how to tackle with their own problems.

Karachi University students arranged the protest outside the press club. The university is now a place where students of the Orangi Pilot Project’s long-term director have gone on to become teachers, passing on her message to the next generation. At the protest, the students were joined by several civil society organisations, including Shirkatgah, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Awami Workers Party and Home-Based Women Workers Federation.

The participants chanted slogans against law enforcement agencies as well as terrorist. Condemning Rehman’s killing, they said that various institutions of the state had failed to do their jobs properly, handing over the control of the city to criminals and militants.

“The militants think social activists are working for foreign interests and that’s why they are targeting social workers,” said Sheerin Aijaz, Aurat Foundation’s regional director. Andleeb Rizvi, a teacher at Karachi University and one of Rehman’s students, fondly remembered the lectures during which the OPP director spoke passionately about a life of philanthropy. “She used to say ‘do not call a katchi abadi a slum.’ She always showed unbounded love for the people residing in such areas.”

Nasir Mehmood of the National Trade Union Federation said, “She was Karachi’s mother. She strived hard to improve the city’s water supply, education and sanitation. But she cared about other places too.” Khurram Ali, another one of Rehman’s students, was dejected. “It seems as if we don’t want to go on the way to progress. The killing of innocent people must be stopped. Enough is enough!”
(The Express Tribune,15/03/2013)

Motorcycle gunmen kill slum activist in Karachi

By ADIL JAWAD
Published on 15/03/2013 01:23
Gunmen have shot and killed a Pakistani activist who helped bring water and sanitation services to Karachi’s poorest districts.

Perween Rahman, director of the Orangi Pilot Project, was on her way home on Wednesday night when shot and killed by gunmen on a motorcycle, said police.

She was struck four times in the chest and neck and died later on the way to hospital.

Ms Rahman, 54, was an architect who devoted her life to helping the poor. She became an authority on Karachi and the struggles of millions of poor people who try to eke out a living in some of the most neglected districts.

Friends and colleagues were devastated by her death.
“Anyone trying to understand Karachi would go to her,” said Zora Yusuf, who heads the Pakistan Human Rights Commission. “It is very, very depressing.”

The Orangi Pilot Project operated in the slums that make up a huge part of Karachi. The innovative project, started in the 1980s, helped residents build their own sewer and water systems.

The port city is a sprawling metropolis of roughly 18 million people made up of a mish-mash of shantytowns, which lack basic services. Often the people who sell the land to the shanty dwellers, who then erect their own homes, then sell services like water delivery, and residents have no option but to buy them.

“The government itself has failed in these areas,” said Ms Yusuf.

Ms Rahman had not received any specific threats recently, said Abdul Waheed Khan, a senior manager at the OPP. But he said their work often involved challenging various criminal groups – referred to as mafias in Karachi – that control the land or water delivery in poor areas.

(By Adil Jawad, The Scotsman, 15/03/2013)

Pakistan condemns assassination of Parveen Rehman

As the country mourns her death and condemns extremism, police suspect the TTP of attacking yet another activist.

Karachi police are investigating the March 13 killing of Pakistani social activist Parveen Rehman, the long-time director of the Orangi Pilot Project (OPP). The OPP works on sanitation, healthcare, education and microfinancing in poor Karachi neighbourhoods.

Two men on a motorcycle opened fire on Rehman’s car on Manghopir Road, eyewitnesses said. She died en route to the hospital, senior police officer Javed Odho told Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.

Nobody has taken responsibility, but police suspect Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militants of being behind the killing and identified alleged TTP member Qari Bilal as a suspect, officials said.

A resident of South Waziristan, Bilal reportedly belongs to the TTP's Sher Khan faction. Informers have identified him as the deputy commander of the banned TTP's Manghopir chapter.

Police on March 15 conducted an operation in which they were trying to capture or kill Bilal, Ashfaq Baloch, station house officer at the Manghopir police station, said. At least one militant was killed in the operation, but details about who was killed could not be confirmed.

Although Rehman had no known enemies, her fight against land grabs and rampant water theft from pumping stations in and around Karachi might have angered those involved in those multi-million-rupee rackets, some of her colleagues said.

Scores of mourners from various NGOs, trade unions and civil society attended her funeral prayer March 14 in Gulistan-e-Jauhar.

Attacks 'senseless and barbaric'

Outrage and grief followed her killing.

Civil society activists and Karachi University students March 14 protested outside the Karachi Press Club, where they held placards condemning extremist violence and chanted slogans like “Down with terrorism.”
"Rehman's killing is a serious attempt to demoralise the forces of peace and development in the country," said Zahid Farooq, a representative of the Urban Resource Centre, a Karachi-based civil society organisation.

Pakistani officials and civil society groups publicly condemned the act as "senseless and barbaric."

Calling it "inhuman," Sindh Governor Dr. Ishrat-ul-Ebad ordered Sindh Police Chief Ghulam Shabbir Shaikh to submit an incident report and to have law enforcement agencies examine all security camera video footage of entry and exit points near the crime scene.

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan condemned the killing of Rehman in a statement that urged the public to "stand up against those who are destroying the symbols of hope."

"Her assassination was a cruel blow to the country's civil society and a great loss to the nation," it read.

Devoted to helping Pakistan's poor

Rehman devoted her life to the development of impoverished neighbourhoods across the country, to civil society and to development, her friends told Central Asia Online.

She threw herself into promoting low-cost housing plans, rehabilitating refugees from floods in rural Sindh and monitoring developers' encroachment on scarce land in crowded Karachi, according to Farooq. The organisation she ran, the OPP, is one of Asia's largest slum improvement projects.

Trained as an architect, she moved into aid and sanitation work and in the 1990s helped to build a sanitation system that others replicated across Pakistan, said Abdul Waheed, head of the Bright Educational Society, a Karachi-based NGO.

She never married and remained committed to her work, he added.

Militant attacks on activists a 'crucial' concern

Rehman's killing highlights Pakistan's alarming trend of militant attacks on activists and aid workers.

In 2012, Pakistan and South Sudan tied as the second most dangerous country for aid workers with 15 attacks each, behind only Afghanistan (44 attacks), according to the Aid Workers Security Database (AWSD). Somalia and Syria rounded out the five most dangerous countries.

In 2011, aid workers in Pakistan suffered 12 attacks, according to the AWSD. Before 2009, three or fewer attacks occurred annually.

NGOs and aid organisations are seen as promoting secular values and modern norms, which the Taliban vehemently oppose because of their extremist view of Islam, said Raees Ahmed, a Karachi-based security analyst. Consequently, many aid organisations have ordered their staff to restrict nighttime travel and avoid high-risk areas.

Unfortunately, the attacks are compelling some humanitarian groups to suspend their activities in the country altogether – leaving the needy to suffer, Waheed told Central Asia Online.

"Violence against aid workers is one of the most crucial humanitarian issues today," he said.

(By Zia-ur-Rahman, 15/03/2013)

**Hero of the Week award: March 15, Perveen Rahman**
This week’s hero is a sad example of how great work often goes unnoticed until it is eclipsed by tragedy. Perween Rahman was a Pakistani architect. She left her potentially lucrative career at a young age to join the Orangi Pilot Project, a group founded in the 1980s to address sanitation, health, and housing issues in Karachi.

The largest city in Pakistan, Karachi has boomed from under 500,000 to over 18 MILLION people in five decades. Much of that insane growth has been the rise of slums and squatter villages. Unscrupulous developers, capitalizing on the rising value of property, would sell small plots to poor families. This land had no structures and no connection to basic infrastructure. As a result, most of the city lives in horrific conditions—thank you, neoliberalism.

The Orangi Pilot was established as a local power program, using microfinance and local organizing to get residents to create innovative solutions to their own problems—good social work. It has been enormously successful in raising the standard of living for hundreds of thousands of Pakistanis. Over time, it has expanded to apply its model to rural health and sanitation and other research and application projects. After several years of work with Orangi, Perween Rahman became its director.

Sadly, this great humanitarian work ran against powerful developer interests and crime cartels that profited from property turnover and sales scams. Rahman and her colleagues frequently received threats but carried on for the greater good. On March 13, at the age of 54, Perween Rahman was shot four times in the chest and neck; she died on the way to the hospital. This woman dedicated her life—literally—to improving conditions for others against great odds. We should all celebrate her work and honor her sacrifice, taking it as an inspiration in our lives.

Parveen Rehman-A True Martyr

Parveen Rehman’s crime was to fight on behalf of some of the poorest citizens in our country.

Parveen Rehman worked as director of the Orangi Pilot Project (OPP), serving one of the largest slum communities in the world, and for this work she was murdered in cold blood. Her crime, punishable by a drive-by shooting, was to fight on behalf of some of the poorest citizens in our country against those who would illegally grab their land. She built the essentials of urban living, like drainage, and sought to bring dignity to the lives of those who had been abandoned by the state. Her selfless, tireless work was rewarded not by government awards but by bullets. This is the ultimate fate awaiting those who dare take on the powerful. It is not known yet who killed Ms Rehman but the nature of the shooting suggests that she was specifically targeted, most probably because of her work. One would like to suggest that the police and the government should immediately take action and find the murderers of one of Karachi’s, and indeed Pakistan’s, most valuable citizens but we have to be realistic here. There are elements in just about every political party in the city which are involved in the land-grabbing business, either by directly seizing land or through a willingness to accept money and patronage from the land mafia. Expecting those responsible for creating the conditions in which Ms Rehman could be killed to solve her murder is unrealistic. Instead, we are likely to get a false show of anger and determination, followed by a few perfunctory arrests before the case is forgotten and mothballed.

(By Weekly Leaks, 16/03/2013)

Keeping altruism alive: ‘We will continue Parveen Rehman’s mission’

Even two days after long-term Orangi Pilot Project director Parveen Rehman was gunned down in Manghopir, civil society members were no less angry than the moment they heard about the incident.
Representatives of civil society organisations gathered at the Pakistan Medical Association House on Friday, to show their support for OPP and also map out a plan of action to bring Rehman's killers to justice. Condemning the incident, they decided that not only will they struggle to continue Rehman's mission but will also use any platform they can to pressure law enforcement agencies to nab those behind her death. The organisations also formed a committee to arrange a massive protest in the city against the tragedy.

Seasoned politician Meraj Muhammad Khan said that without a mass movement which included teachers, students and journalists, the suspects would remain free. "We have to use our efforts wisely. Show how bold you are, but do so with sanity. We also have to protest against the fact that people are being targeted even though government officials claim to be looking out for us," he said.

Karamat Ali, the director of Pakistan Institute of Labour Education Research, said, "We have to start from where she was targeted. We should go to the OPP for at least the next two weeks so that we can deliver a message to the men who targeted such a kind and valiant woman."

Abdul Waheed Khan, the programme manager of OPP's Charitable Trust, said that Rehman had received threats from land grabbers and owners of illegal hydrants. "We have decided to continue her mission. We won’t let her die in our hearts. We’ll keep her mission alive." He also urged people to try to trace out Rehman’s killers by analysing her work over the last three years. "She had no threats from the community because they call her their own mother. Everyone knows who had targeted her but no one is taking the killers’ names," he said.

The speakers heavily criticised the government and its institutions, including the police and intelligence agencies, saying that they had failed to perform their roles.

(The Express Tribune-13, 16/03/2013)

RIP Perween Rehman

Goodbye, Perween Rahman. We will miss you. Your only crime was that for three decades, you devoted yourself to the cause of the poor. You gave them a voice and hope. You helped families better their living conditions, encouraged women to stand on their feet and brought a community spirit into some of Karachi’s most deprived and neglected neighbourhoods. You are my hero.

On 13/3/13, you were shot dead. Possibly because you were upsetting the status quo. You did this by encouraging people to better their lives. They cleaned up their neighbourhoods, built better houses, laid down proper water and sewerage lines and set up schools.

You were an inspiration for others. When I worked at The News, we invited you to give a talk to the paper’s young journalists. On how they should not always expect the government to deliver and how they should take things into their hands to better their future. And most important, on how they should not give up on Pakistan. You knew this because you faced the trauma of separation, when as a teenager, you left Dhaka, your birthplace, and relocated to Karachi.

You were soft-spoken but there was a determination in your voice. For thousands of people, who visited you at the Orangi Pilot Project, you were their only hope. They came to you to solve their problems, to give them encouragement, and show the way. But your work came in conflict with two very powerful entities or systems. First, the city’s oft-talked about mafias. These mafias, which work with the blessings and connivance of the government and its high officials, suck the blood of the poor.

These are the land encroachment mafia, the water tanker mafia, the transport mafia, and other smaller mafias. None of these mafias would last a day if there was no official patronage. But they continue to thrive and grow over the years.
The other more potent enemy that you seem to have challenged, we are told, were the Taliban. They have gradually established themselves in the hills that overlook Karachi. On one side of these hills is Orangi Town. On the other side is ilaqa ghair. Even the police don’t want to go into these parts of the city. But you did not make that distinction and helped communities on both sides. But on the “other side”, there is a different set of rules. We are told that a strict code of conduct, not unlike what we saw in Kabul, under the Taliban and currently are seeing in parts of the tribal areas, is enforced. Schools are boys-only. There is a dress code. Anyone who enters or leaves the area is monitored. The Taliban also ensure law and order. One goes to them for justice, not to the local police.

We are told that it was these people who killed our Perween. In fact, in a rare show of efficiency, within days of your death, the police nabbed what they called a Taliban local leader and shot him dead in an encounter. Case closed. But one can only wonder whether it is as simple as that. We know that in Orangi Town, a number of people have been killed for a variety of reasons. Recently, a local MPA was shot dead. Before that, priests working at a Korean-run seminary were targeted. In between, we saw the killing of polio workers. In fact, hundreds of people have died over the past years, in this area, to shootings.

The city’s mafias have had their share of victims. Nisar Baloch, who worked at freeing encroachments from Gutter Baghicha — a continuous piece of green space which serves as the lungs for old Karachi — was shot dead in 2009. We have never found his killers. Similarly, anyone who was seen as outspoken against land encroachment, a multibillion industry, has been silenced or threatened. This is indeed the Wild West of Karachi.

Over the past five years, encroachment has been taken over by political parties, including activists of our ruling party. Then there are the petty criminals who seem to have captured parts of the city. Both have proliferated. In the recent action being conducted by the Rangers in Orangi Town and its environs, we are nabbing kidnappers, recovering the kidnapped, unearthing a dazzling amount of arms and ammunition that is stored here, and arresting a variety of criminals. And this, without even crossing the hill.

You were a brave woman, Perween Rahman. For three decades, you worked tirelessly against the odds. Maybe your family thinks it would have been best had you continued as a private architect. By now, you would have made millions. Instead, you now live in the hearts of millions. RIP Perween Rahman.

(By Kamal Siddiqi, The Express Tribune, March 17, 2013)

Parveen considered politicians part of problem

Just a day before her assassination, Orangi Pilot Project Director Parveen Rehman called upon politicians to avoid personal attacks and get united for the sake of peace in Karachi.

“Until politicians show largeness of heart, the solution to violence will remain elusive,” Rehman told The News on Tuesday in an exclusive interview – probably her last.

Rehman, 56, was known for her work in impoverished neighbourhoods and her NGO won a UN-Habitat award in 2001. The Orangi Pilot Project started in the 1980s and focused on slums. The project helped residents of poor communities build their own sewer and water systems.

“Politicians need to change their attitude and show political maturity in order to address issues including that of lawlessness, which is having a direct bearing on development.”

During the tenure of the outgoing PPP-led government in Sindh, security remained a big problem for “which everyone is responsible," said the prominent social worker.
Rehman said the government and law enforcement agencies did not take action to restore order. “Peace cannot be restored through Mohalla committees.”

She was of the view that the government’s decision to regularise Karachi’s 1,132 villages of a total of 2,173, with a population of three million, would help ease violence.

Thus far, around 10,000 homes have been leased and the process to lease others is underway, according to survey conducted by the Orangi Pilot Project.

“That step helped end anxiety among hundreds of thousands of residents, particularly youths who showed intense anger when efforts were made to demolish their villages in 2006,” said Rehman, who was born in Dhaka and moved to Karachi as a teenager.

“I do consider it a positive step towards peace and harmony in the city. It was also good decision to grant a 99-year lease instead of a 30-year one.”

Commenting on the authorities’ response to the devastating floods in Sindh in 2001 and 2012, she said some government work was seen during relief and rescue operations. She noted that her NGO was working in 50 flood-hit villages, but the government’s response to rehabilitation was not seen there.

“The floods were a big calamity and the government’s response to rescue and relief was seen to the extent that it saved the Hala city from inundation, but it lacked determination to carry out rehabilitation work.”

Rehman said that naturally disasters affected agriculture and land, increasing poverty. Development works, especially main roads, were seen in Khairpur everywhere, but little was done in Badin.

(By Imtiaz Ali, The News, 17/03/2013)

**Civil society visits OPP office in Qasba Colony**

KARACHI: The representatives of leading civil society organisations on Saturday visited the Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) office in Qasba Colony, to express solidarity with the staff and management team on the assassination of their senior colleague Parveen Rehman. The representatives included Executive Director Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (PILER) Karamat Ali, senior economist Dr Kaiser Bengali, Justice (Retd) Majida Rizvi, Chairperson Panah Trust Anis Haroon of Women’s Action Forum, Programme Director Urban Resource Centre Zahid Farooque, Mir Zulfiqar Ali of NOW Communities; Advocate Rubina Jumani of Aurat Foundation; Prof Dr Riaz of Karachi University. In his remarks, Director OPP Anwar Rashid thanked the civil society of Karachi for their support, and said the OPP staff in a joint meeting decided to work with dedication to fulfil all of Rahman’s unfinished agendas. “This is the way of our protest that we would work four times more than we were doing in her life,” he added. He said OPP has been serving the oppressed and downtrodden people not only in the city but also in other parts of the country. The civil organisations’ representatives offered their full support to the entire team of OPP and it was decided to hold a big condolence reference within the OPP office premises, inviting community people as well. The civil society representatives also visited various sections of OPP and a senior member Abdul Waheed Khan briefed them about various functions of the organisation. The visitors also imprinted their sentiments in the impressions book placed at the entrance of the OPP office.

(Daily Times, March 17, 2013)
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(By Imtiaz Ali, The News, 17/03/2013)

Civil society seeks arrest of Rahman’s killers
Members of civil society organisations called for the immediate arrest of Parveen Rahman’s killers while demonstrating near the Quaid’s mausoleum on Sunday.

Ms Rahman, a renowned social worker, was killed on Wednesday in a targeted attack when she was returning from her office in Orangi.

The demonstration was jointly organised by the Pakistan Council of Architects and Town Planners (PCATP), Institute of Architects Pakistan (IAP), and an environmental NGO Shehri. Participants in the demonstration demanded that the killers be caught, booked, tried and punished sternly, according to the law.

A few speakers also named a certain ethnic party and its local leaders, who they accused of extending death threats to Ms Rahman, and demanded that a thorough investigation be carried out into the murder.

The demonstrators said that many other social workers, whose work was affecting various mafias and power groups, were also receiving threats and demanded that protection be provided to them.

According to them, Ms Rahman had said that she had been working on land surrounding the city which was being encroached upon. They said Ms Rahman had probably come too close to the powerful mafia and land grabbers, who fearing exposure, had eventually silenced her. They said the social worker’s cold-blooded murder had shocked the entire civil society and demanded that the government take concrete steps to contain the prevailing sense of insecurity. However, the demonstrators vowed that they would continue their work despite threats for the empowerment of the poor and rule of law.

Paying tribute to the slain social worker, Prof Nauman Ahmed of the NED university said Ms Rahman’s organisation, the Orangi Pilot Project (OPP), had been working at the grass-roots level to turn a major chunk of Orangi Town from a slum into an area with proper infrastructure.

Amber Alibhai of Shehri, an NGO, said that many other social workers, whose community improvement work was affecting various mafias and power groups, were also receiving threats and demanded protection for them.

Sikander Hayat of the PCATP, Mumtaz Jilani of the IAP and others also spoke on the occasion.

The demonstrators carried banners inscribed with their demands and also chanted slogans. A statement condemning Ms Rahman’s murder and demanding her killers’ arrest was also distributed among the participants.

(Dawn-13, 18/03/2013)

‘Parveen Rehman’s killers must be brought to justice’

Tired of the incessant targeted killings in Karachi, the most recent being the murder of Orange Pilot Project’ Parveen Rehman, architects, friends, students and members of the civil society organised a protest on Sunday outside the Mazar-e-Quaid.

More than 100 participants, on the call of the Pakistan Council of Architects and Town Planners, Institute of Architects Pakistan and Shehri, held a walk at Numaish Chowrangi while chanting slogans against the land mafia and terrorists. Similar protests were organised in Lahore, Islamabad and Peshawar.

Condemning the lack of security, the protesters demanded law enforcement agencies to maintain strict law and order to protect citizens of the country.
“This protest is meant to create awareness among the people about all the good work Rehman did. It was not just a murder but a tragedy,” said Dr Noman Ahmed of the NED University. “As a person, she was extremely humble and down to earth. The poor and oppressed have lost one of the most sincere professionals who cared for them and contributed all her energy for their betterment.”

Journalist Ghazi Salahuddin said that Rehman represented hope in the city. “She was committed to her work and was an exemplary figure for the people. It is high time that the law enforcement agencies prove their competence.”

The participants refuted the notion that Rehman had personal enmities. “I knew her for the last 40 years – she had no enemy,” said Tahira Sadia, a teacher of the Karachi University. “Parveen was so simple, straightforward and dedicated to her work. She was full of life.”

Shehri’s Sameer Hamid was of the view that friends, colleagues and students of Rehman can only protest and keep the issue highlighted – but they can’t fight the killers.

“All the participants gathered at Numaish Chowrangi today have the same approach as Rehman did. We are all well aware of the situation in the city. The most we can do is keep condemning Rehman’s murder and try to create as much awareness as we can among the people.”

Unlike the other participants who knew Rehman personally or had worked with her, architect Tariq Rind had met her only for 10 minutes a few months before her murder. “I can’t explain her personality in words and I can’t even express my sorrow over her untimely departure,” he told The Express Tribune.

“The city has been burning for the last 20 years, yet we are still silent,” said one protestor. “Sadly, we don’t have the power to counter mafias or their supporting political parties,” a student argued. “We can’t afford enmity with them.”

(The Express Tribune-14,18/03/2013)

Who will dare to be Parveen Rehman?

That is the question that the NGO world, still reeling from the shock of Parveen’s target killing in Orangi Township in Karachi, is now asking itself. At a memorial meeting held in Islamabad this week, NGO workers spoke of the “growing hostile environment for community service in Pakistan”. Parents are now telling their children not to enter into this field, because clearly, “community service is becoming dangerous”. The NGO officials from established organisations like Plan International, Aurat Foundation, the Akhter Hameed Khan Resource Center and the Imran Khan Foundation called for increased accountability and a minimum standard of protection for social workers. A call was given out to “respect, promote and support community service in Pakistan”.

“Parveen Rehman knew of the risks and yet, she willingly continued with her work. She chose to do this”, pointed out Dr Rakshinda Parveen of the Society for Advancement of Community, Health Education and Training (SACHET). There is no doubt that Parween Rehman was an extraordinarily brave woman. A trained architect who could have lived a comfortable life in Karachi’s up-market Defense or Clifton areas, she instead chose to dedicate her life to the poor of the squatter settlements of Orangi Town. She was the dearly departed Dr Akhter Hameed Khan’s (a development guru) brightest and as it turned out, bravest, student and with good reason he chose her to continue with his pioneering work in Orangi.

Parveen had been working at a private architecture firm before being recruited by Dr Akhter Hameed Khan to become Joint Director of the Orangi Pilot Project back in the early 1980s. She was put in charge of managing the housing and sanitation programmes. In 1988, OPP was split into four organisations, and Parveen Rahman became director of the OPP-RTI (Orangi Pilot Project – Research and Training Institute), managing programmes in education, youth training, water supply and secure housing. In 1999, Dr Akhter Hameed Khan passed away and Parveen remained steadfast in carrying the torch.
She would often describe Orangi's population of 1.5 million people as “a great example of self-help initiatives”. The people of Orangi on a self-help basis (and with technical guidance from the OPP) established modern underground sewer lines and built latrines in their homes. The government only contributed by building the main sewers or nallahs. In Orangi, the people and the government became partners in development. The people of Orangi set up 650 private schools and opened 700 medical clinics, while establishing 40,000 small enterprises in various homes. Around 60 per cent became self-employed. Orangi consists of 113 settlements inhabited by various ethnic groups: Pathans, Balochis, Muhajirs, Biharis, Punjabis etc. It was set up in the 1960s by the government but it expanded very fast in 1981-82 when refugees from former East Pakistan began to settle there.

“Parveen’s community work with the OPP was lessening the differences between the various ethnic groups. The people of the area don’t really have issues with each other – the land and water mafias affiliated to various political groups like the PPP, ANP and MQM are the ones causing all the problems,” explained Aurangzeb from the Al Falah Development Foundation based in Rawalpindi. Although much older than her in years, Aurangzeb considered Parveen to be his teacher and worked closely with her in the last few years. He attended her funeral in Karachi and said that thousands of people in Orangi are mourning her death. “She was very compassionate and it is a personal loss to all of us who work with the poor. For the people of Orangi, she was like a mother who cared for everyone and brought people together in the township”.

Parveen was murdered by masked men who shot at her car on Banaras Pul in Orangi (near the ANP controlled area). She was on her way home from work in the afternoon. Recently, she had had been documenting land-use around Karachi, and this may have upset the city’s powerful land-grabbing criminals. She was also opposed to the “tanker mafia” who were stealing tube-well/piped water from low-income communities and then selling it back to them in water tankers. Parveen investigated the water shortage in the area and actually discovered that a crucial piece of pipe was missing and had it replaced.

According to Aurangzeb, these mafias have the patronage of politicians and have become even more powerful in recent years. “The situation has deteriorated since the PPP government came to power. These mafias have actually occupied various areas of Karachi and forcibly take bhatta (extortion money) from the local residents who live in fear of them. They are gangsters who are looting the public and really if the local people were given protection by the police or Rangers they would evict these criminals themselves. They are so fed up of them”.

Although the police is now attempting to shift the blame for Parveen’s murder onto the Taliban (who have not claimed responsibility for the attack) and other religious groups, the NGO world is convinced that it was these powerful land and water mafias who are responsible for her death.

“Parveen meticulously documented 500 goths (settlements) in Orangi, teaching young people to do the mapping and data collection. She regularised these settlements and the land mafia didn’t like it one bit,” explained Fayyaz Baqir, another close acquaintance of Parveen who heads the Dr Akhter Hameed Khan Resource Center. “In fact, at one stage the land mafia even tried unsuccessfully to take over the OPP office building itself. Parween would receive threats all the time”. The OPP staff had actually been forced to stop work for a month while the land mafia occupied their office in the hope of forcing them off the plot (once peripheral but now well-located). They had to negotiate with other power brokers who recognised their contribution to improving people’s lives and were willing to intercede to enable them to continue with their work.

The day after Parveen was killed, the OPP decided to open up its office and hundreds of NGO workers from all over Karachi came to Orangi to show their solidarity. “We must continue with her work, we cannot be deterred by her murderers”, vowed Fayyaz Baqir at the meeting in Islamabad. Along with the heads of other NGOs in the capital, he is organising an open house at the Islamabad Hotel on Thursday at 4pm to “express solidarity with Parveen Rehman”. Civil society members, the media, university students and trade unions are all invited to come and learn about this amazing woman and to ensure that others, especially amongst the younger generation, will indeed dare to be like her.
Rest in peace, little sister

I NEVER had a younger sister but at some stage, I can't recall when, a woman entered my life to fill the vacuum I had always felt. Actually she was my friend Aquila’s “little” sister and so charming were her ways that we became connected. She brought sunshine into my life as she did into the lives of many others.

This little sister of mine — Parween Rahman — was shot dead last Wednesday leaving not just her family and supporters devastated. The whole country — in fact the community of caring social workers the world over — is mourning her loss. There was something about Parween. Anyone who met her was attracted by her cheerful disposition and warm, caring nature. Her versatile personality allowed her to strike an immediate equation with people of all ages and background who met her. Her witty retorts followed by her musical laughter have now been silenced for ever. That really hurts.

Why should anyone want to touch a gentle soul like her who was incapable of doing anyone any wrong? Why? Why? Why? was the question asked in the hundreds of messages that poured in.

Najma Sadeque, who is the postmaster of my favourite email circulation list that reaches thousands of people, had circulated 70 messages expressing shock and sorrow within a few hours of the brutal killing. The number of people who visited Parween’s modest home in Karachi’s Gulistan-i-Jauhar area was unbelievable — some had travelled all the way from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to pay homage and then made their return journey home.

This is a manifestation of the huge number of lives she touched and that provides the answer to the question that is being asked about the motive behind her killing. She had forged a bond with the people she worked with and this would have been reason enough for unscrupulous vested interests, which abound in this unfortunate land of ours, to eliminate her.

Though hers was not a confrontational style, Parween was not by any means a weak woman. Her fragile exterior belied her inner strength, the quality that the powerful fear most. She would never compromise on her principles and drew her strength from the people she inspired by creating a consensus to take their mission forward.

She persistently described the present system as corrupt and “we will change it” was her constant refrain. Men with feet of clay felt threatened by such determination and her unlimited capacity to take people along with her.

Her enemies who are also the enemies of society understood this more than many of her well-wishers. Having learnt her primer in development work from the legendary Akhtar Hameed Khan, she proved to be an excellent pupil who understood his philosophy and disseminated it through the Orangi Pilot Project-Research and Training Institute’s work.

Unlike other NGOs working for the uplift of the poor, Parween’s work cannot be described as welfare work. It was more than that. She worked to help people help themselves. Even the sanitation and sewerage system which was launched by Dr Akhtar Hameed Khan was not gifted to them. They built it on a self-help basis with the OPP providing them technical support.

Self-help and self-reliance are the OPP’s guiding principles. It does not seek aid from foreign donors — Parween once refused an offer of several thousand dollars from the Melinda and Bill Gates Foundation.
She told me they didn’t have the absorptive capacity to use such huge sums and such liquidity would lead to corruption.

The OPP’s overheads charges are minimal and unlike many other organisations its funds are used judiciously and not squandered. If the OPP model were to be honestly followed poverty could be eradicated without any foreign assistance. Would those who have flourished because of the inflow of foreign aid ever tolerate such a strategy?

The other “dangerous” work that Parween did was research. In a country where a person unearths the corruption of the corrupt by meticulous investigation and research and goes on to document it on her website to expose the evil can prove to be more effective than big-mouthed media guys who just shout quoting “some sources” which are known to be dubious.

Take the case of the 2,173 goths (settlements) on the periphery of Karachi that are being “regularised” in the name of development. Parween documented how 1,673 goths had had their status changed since 2011 — to create loyal constituencies for different parties while driving the poor out of their homes.

But her biggest ‘crime’ for which the wicked of this earth feared her was her commitment to empower the goth inhabitants through advocacy, bringing together the goth activists in the Secure Housing Support Group and providing them technical assistance, mapping all the land and supporting them in building the infrastructure that would enable them to safeguard their titles to their land.

Parween was a brave woman and now we know she had a huge constituency which will carry her work forward. There is no doubt about it though the killings in Karachi have made the task she undertook more daunting than ever.

The last sms she sent me was on the morning of her death. She wrote: “Your article in Dawn today is super! So informative. Thanks n Cheers PR”. I had replied, “Wow you are back. Was calling and calling…” Now I can call forever and she will — very uncharacteristically — never respond.

(By Zubeida Mustafa, Dawn-06, 20/03/2013)

**Perween Rahman, a dear friend, colleague and valued mentor remembered**

Parween Rahman was an inspiration. Mentor and teacher to many, she represented a critical consciousness amid a general environment of compromise and mediocrity. It was that critical consciousness and her revolutionary fervour that inspired those who recognise what is at stake in the current social and political environment, and threatened those who saw their power and corruption scrutinised and challenged.

Her death is a heart-rending loss and a damning indictment of both those who snuffed out the light of her life as well as those who have sworn to protect our lives and rights as citizens but have failed to do so consistently.

Taking forward Dr Akhter Hameed Khan’s vision for the Orangi Pilot Project (OPP), Perween successfully did this and much more by putting her own stamp on the organisation’s culture and objectives. Under her leadership, the OPP Research and Training Institute, the charitable trust, and the health and social development programmes flourished.

Even more, the OPP-RTI’s extensive mapping of Karachi’s new phase of urbanisation, its land transformations, and sanitation systems have become an invaluable tool for the poor to make claims on land, to assert their rights as citizens, and literally to be seen by the state.

Perhaps it is the very potent nature of these maps that has destabilised the power of those who thrive on ‘land grabs’ for speculative purposes, and in these efforts are backed by the state and political parties in
nefarious land deals. The OPP-RTI's maps embody the situated struggles that are remaking contemporary Karachi. These maps are the ground zero of state-society contests, of subaltern resistance in a tense new phase of an ethnicised and spatialised urban politics. Perween understood unequivocally the high stakes involved in this process, and never compromised even for an instant.

As an urbanist and grassroots activist working among and with marginalised communities, Perween was instrumental in creating a space where communities and professionals could come together to work for social change. Her legacy is huge – a roadmap and a beacon for those who believed in her. It is to be hoped that that legacy will not be lost and will instead create a momentum for the deep-rooted change that we need in order create justice and equity in our society.

Written by Nausheen H. Anwar from the Asia Research Institute, National University Singapore, Singapore, and Sarwat Viqar from the School of Community and Public Affairs, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada
(The Express Tribune-17,21/03/2013)

Condolence reference: Homage paid to courageous Perween Rahman

Civil society and intellectuals paid tribute to the commendable services of the slain social worker and Orangi Town Pilot Project Director Perween Rahman at a condolence reference here on Thursday.

They condemned the brutal attack, demanding the government bring to book all those involved in attacks on social workers.

Harris Khalique, columnist and social activist, expressed concern over the deteriorating law and order situation in the country, especially in Karachi where such attacks have become frequent. “There was time I wrote columns on social issues but now a column of condolence is painful,” he said.

He dubbed Rahman a symbol of courage and determination.

Simi Kamal, women’s rights activist, reminisced her time with Rahman.

“She was a great friend and sister. Soft-spoken and courageous, she knew how to handle a difficult situation with a smile on her face,” she said.

Kishwar Naheed, poet and social activist, said, “I cannot forget the moment when I received a call from Tahira Abdullah telling me that another courageous fellow activist of ours had been brutally murdered.”

She lamented that people working for lofty causes are being victimised but the government is indifferent.

“Currently none of the political parties has a plan of action to provide security to us, all they have is a plan of action to kill all innocent and hardworking people,” she said.

In remembrance of all the lives lost in terrorist attacks, she read a poem titled “Dekh rahi hai humari maa”.

Tasneem Siddiqui, social activist and former bureaucrat, termed Rahman’s death a huge loss. She recalled the efforts Rahman rendered for the poor round-the-clock. Siddiqui said Rahman’s work was spread out from Karachi to Azad Jammu and Kashmir, adding that during the 2005 earthquake, the social worker provided 16,000 shelters to the homeless.

She highlighted the women savings group that Rahman set up and used to improve health and sanitation issues at underprivileged areas.
Later, a declaration for countering violence against community workers and human right activists’ defenders was presented. The declaration called upon the state to declare such crimes as terrorist acts and establish measures to deal with them accordingly.

Moreover, it called upon the media to play its part in stemming the rising tide of violence against innocent people and political parties thus declaring its full commitment for promoting values of non-violence and social justice.
(The Express Tribune, 22/03/2013)

**Condolence reference: Homage paid to courageous Perween Rahman**

Civil society and intellectuals paid tribute to the commendable services of the slain social worker and Orangi Town Pilot Project Director Perween Rahman at a condolence reference here on Thursday.

They condemned the brutal attack, demanding the government bring to book all those involved in attacks on social workers.

Harris Khalique, columnist and social activist, expressed concern over the deteriorating law and order situation in the country, especially in Karachi where such attacks have become frequent. “There was time I wrote columns on social issues but now a column of condolence is painful, “he said.

He dubbed Rahman a symbol of courage and determination.

Simi Kamal, women's rights activist, reminisced her time with Rahman.

“She was a great friend and sister. Soft-spoken and courageous, she knew how to handle a difficult situation with a smile on her face,” she said.

Kishwar Naheed, poet and social activist, said, “I cannot forget the moment when I received a call from Tahira Abdullah telling me that another courageous fellow activist of ours had been brutally murdered.”

She lamented that people working for lofty causes are being victimised but the government is indifferent.

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Moreover, it called upon the media to play its part in stemming the rising tide of violence against innocent people and political parties thus declaring its full commitment for promoting values of non-violence and social justice.
The city, the slum and the savior

In the beginning there were no slums. When the city of Karachi began, there was enough for everyone. Enough for the British that came searching for a port from where they could lug goodies from their subcontinent back to the factories in their homeland, enough for the traders that came from elsewhere in India to set up shop, to sell and buy and make the profits to pad their pockets. The fishermen, the people who had lived before, stayed near the sea or by the site of two long dried up springs, Kharadar and Meethadar, out of the way of all the newcomers. Karachi before Partition was a sleepy city, a city unburdened by the dreams of people who came to find something more than what they had left behind.

They came after Partition and then never stopped coming. At first, the fuel of dreams and the fervor of a mighty battle won, a colonial power banished intoxicated everyone. Karachi was the capital of the new Pakistan and it was a hopeful city. But as droves of migrants arrived, the population increasing in days and weeks and years from a few hundred thousand to a million and then more, another part of the city was born.

Orangi is one the oldest slums in Karachi and it accommodated those that no other part of the city would take. In the layers of its migrants, all the major epochs of Karachi’s making and breaking and remaking could be found, the first migrants who came from India in the years after Partition, the migrants who came after the war of 1971, and successive waves of migrants that have never stopped coming. Like the hundreds of other “katchi abadis” in Karachi, it represented the cruel undersides of urban life. Coming to life like an organism that grows on what is leftover by others, Orangi had no real roads, no formal education system for the hundreds of children that frolicked on its trash heaps, no clean water for the parched throats of its barely surviving souls. The worst of Orangi’s curses was the trash. Human refuse and animal droppings and the filth of too many lives crammed together, clogging everything.

It was here, that Parveen Rehman chose to work. The woman so suddenly killed by a gunman’s bullet last week was one of the pioneers of saving a slum before such things were fashionable. It was in 1981 that she left her job at an architect’s firm and turned to work in the hapless, ignored Karachi whose existence most city dwellers would like to deny. The Orangi Pilot Project, one of the most successful NGO sanitation projects in the world, developed a system of disposing waste that was managed and controlled by the community itself. In a city wracked by conflict, by military operations and ethnic violence, the Orangi Pilot Project aimed to provide a definition of development that was communally sustainable.

The odds against its success were tremendous. As noted urban planner, Arif Hassan who is one of the leaders of the Orangi Pilot Project has pointed out, Karachi’s planning, when there has been planning, has deliberately and routinely ignored the poor. Huts in informal settlements are routinely razed to accommodate the profiteering whims of this or that developer, and residents forcibly evicted every time they do not fit into the plans of one or the other planning commission. It was against this formidable complex of locally held prejudice, helplessness and want that Parveen Rehman chose to work, quietly, diligently doing the work that no one else wished to do, was brave enough to do. In a city where millions, easily, unthinkingly turn their heads, Parveen Rehman did not do so.

It was a bullet to the head; shot in the city that she loved that killed Parveen Rehman. In the years that led to the fatal moment, she had refused to abandon the slum that she had worked so hard to save, and for that she was killed. So many have tried to help Karachi, plan for Karachi, improve Karachi but the woman
who died last week had shown exactly how it could be done. Through her work at the Orangi Pilot Project, Parveen Rehman had proven that a city with too many problems, too many poor, too little planning and too much political strife can still have hope. Developing and implementing through the simplest of plans, the idea of community led sustainability, she showed that hope among the helpless was not a bad idea.

Parveen Rehman was a savior in a city that defies saving. Her death was not an act against a person it was an act against hope. When a city begins to kill its hopeful, or cannot stop the killing of the hopeful, darkness descends on all the living that is worse than death. With the brave gone, only the cowardly live and turn their faces and look away, convinced that hope is fatal, that hope will kill you, their fear now imbued with the righteousness of believing that the hardness of not caring is a necessity of survival.

(Rafia Zakaria, 22 March, 2013)

Tribute
Revolutionary resolve Perween

Rahman had a capacity to pick up on the potential of people, and believe in them until they had no choice but to believe in themselves.

It is a natural human instinct to celebrate those that leave us. But a tribute to Perween Rahman is like sharing some of the stuff that real legends are made of. Not the people of big awards and media coverage, but those that make change on the ground while shunning publicity; the true heroes of Pakistan.

I first met Perween eleven years ago. After being disillusioned by the role of mainstream architects in making the kind of change that was needed in our cities, I had decided to plunge into the NGO sector. The replication of the OPP (Orangi Pilot Project) model in Punjab had begun, adding to its recognition as a development alternative with much promise. I expected Perween to be the proverbial ‘NGO-type’: scary, aggressive, intimidating. She was none of these. With a warm smile, a chirpy voice, and a kind demeanour, she welcomed me to the OPP-RTI (Orangi Pilot Project-Research and Training Institute) and told me that I should spend the first two weeks just trying to understand the work of the organisation.

OPP was at the time and still is, running on the momentum of Dr Akhtar Hamid Khan’s teachings; simplicity, frugality, and the ideals of love and humanity. Two of the first of Dr Sahib’s axioms I was told I must remember were: “I made a mistake”, and “I have not understood”. Being used to an academic and professional world where flaunting one’s knowledge, talking more than listening, and proving one’s point often in heavy jargon, were characteristic of ‘strong’ professionals — this new ethos was most liberating, and one of the things that made me fall instantly for the OPP’s development philosophy.

Anyone interested in being a part of this most beautiful process of true, rooted change, could just sit back, listen, observe, and internalise when ready. There was no room for ego. Also, where mainstream development work is about ‘doing’ for the poor, this was about learning from the poor, and supporting their initiatives with whatever know-how is appropriate, from technical input, to maps and training. It was the self-help model, committed to bringing human dignity back into the formula of helping the poor help themselves.

It was this that I learnt most from Perween and those at OPP: working for ‘real’ development is, more than anything else, a spiritual discipline.

On the operational side of the organisation, there was the weekly Monday meeting. In appearance just a tedious reporting of the week’s progress by every OPP-RTI team member including Perween herself, in reality it is an exceptional tool for accountability, transparency, and inclusive decision-making. It was the platform for debate, disagreement, acknowledgement of failures, and a celebration of small and big successes.
In work ethic, Perween was a disciplinarian and this had trickled down to all members of the institution. Work was the temple, the worship; there was no compromise. While she was gentle, she was as firm and upright as the trunk of an oak tree. The OPP-RTI research objective was clear: advocacy for the poor. The methodology was simple — interview, mapping, writing, and dissemination.

And then there was Perween’s insistence on using the right words; “It is the terms we use that shape our biases towards the poor,” she would say. Perween was not opposed to the city’s ‘mafias’ any more than she was saddened by the government’s indifference in solving the problems of the poor. She had come to realise that the term ‘mafia’ is misleading; in a system that is not fair by its very nature, and where the majority has no choice but to fend for themselves, a ‘mafia’ was simply an opportunist’s response in a crisis.

The word ‘katchi abadi’ she would say, leads to an automatic anti-poor prejudice. It was merely ‘People’s Housing’, “They are people who have found no alternative and this reflects the failure of the government to absorb them”. And ‘informal settlements’? Perween had concluded that there is no such thing; it was simply that which was ‘unofficial’ planning, unofficially supplied services, and unofficial systems, versus what was ‘officially’ done and recognised. And it was these ‘unofficial’ systems that existed often in collusion with the government, and supported the lives of 70 per cent of the city’s population, hence the need to recognise and understand them.

Perween was high on life. Along with countless people from community-based organisations in Sindh and Punjab, we travelled across the country several times a year, trying to understand and support poor people’s initiatives. Travel was not just business; while the tone was always jovial, it was above all an opportunity to make connections and give people hope. It is this people-building that was the real and lasting investment. Perween had a capacity to pick up on the potential of people, and believe in them until they had no choice but to believe in themselves. She would instil idealism, humane values, and a work ethic without overtly ‘preaching’. She was that rare combination of mentor and friend.

Perween was not the change itself, she was one of change’s most potent agents — the faith of change, the brain behind change. In her inside-out understanding of the city’s ways, and in the networks and relationships with government and communities that she had forged over the years, Perween had crystallised a movement of sorts, where the marginalised were shown ways in which they would really no longer be the city’s ‘Citizen X’. And it is always the true change-makers of the world that shake the hold of those who live only to maintain a ruthless status quo.

Many theories abound about who would want to so heinously rob this gentle soul of her life, this soul that couldn’t hurt an ant. The truth is simply that in the years since she first joined OPP, Perween had quietly grown and come to a point where she could move mountains. The OPP’s ground-breaking low-cost sanitation model, and the upgrading of housing in Orangi, were the primers. The Karachi master plan for the conversion of Karachi’s open nallahs into box culverts was achieved through an arduous process of lobbying with the KWSB. Research into the truth about Karachi’s water crisis, and unearthing water ‘thefts’ was geared by the OPP.

The 2006 floods in Karachi and their connection with the choking of Karachi’s storm-water nallahs due to encroachments by government and private interests alike, was investigated by the OPP. And now the Secure Housing Initiative, wherein it was discovered that pre-partition villages or Goths in Karachi’s peripheral areas, were being evicted by political interests in order to create new constituencies for political parties. Where the government’s figures recognised these goths to be 400 in number, through research the OPP-RTI discovered that there were more than 2000. The OPP-RTI had entered into a process of mapping these goths, and supporting goth dwellers to advocate for land title.

In 2010, these maps helped convince the government to issue land titles to over half of those communities. Now, by 2013, more land titles were on their way. “The maps did it. Maps help to build relationships,” she would say, “The maps tell us what to do, where to go, who to lobby. They help professionals to understand the reality and have the courage to accept it. They help government to
understand the reality and accept it too, because they are no longer the only ones that have that information. The people have this information now, and the NGOs and media have it too.” Most of these maps of the goth settlements have now been accepted as official government maps. "It is the community youth who actually do the mapping. We only help train them, and then take a back seat, become invisible."

Despite negativity and despair all around, with the youthful spirit of a sixteen-year-old, Perween never stopped being an incurable optimist.

In a presentation she made in Bangkok in February at a meeting of community-based organisations from Asia, Perween’s words are the only solace one finds in the midst of this painful turn of events: “Today Karachi is in flames, and one of the aspects of the violence in the city is the politics of land and who gets title to it. Getting land title for these goth settlers, who have lived there since long before partition in 1947, has been a very powerful step forward for the peace and the political balance of Karachi. We were just saying amongst ourselves that if we die today, we will die so happily, because we have done it.”

This was Perween Rahman. With the childlike vivacity of a fluttering bird, the resolve of a revolutionary, and the magnanimity of a sage, this gentle soul had helped to change the map of Karachi.

(By Rabia Ezdi, The News, 24/03/2013)

**One lane at a time**

Perween Rehman is most at ease sitting with a group of people, especially if they are from a katchi abadi (low-income settlement) and can exchange ideas with her. A qualified architect, she heads the well known Orangi Pilot Project — Research and Training Institute (OPPRTI) in Karachi. There are piles of papers waiting for her and scores of meetings with government officials and their partners. But poor people are more important. And herein lies the success of the project, for people are ‘their own best resource’.

Rehman radiates warmth. She smiles easily and frequently bursts into a chortle. You marvel as you listen to her with rapt attention, trying to figure out why she is the way she is. "I am an optimist. The maximum I can remain depressed for is ten minutes,” she tells you later when you interview her in a spacious, well-ventilated meeting room in OPP’s office, in Orangi.

“Maybe it has to do with what happened to us in East Pakistan,” and she begins her story. “I was in Class IX, in 1971, when Pakistan lost its eastern half (present Bangladesh). I was spoilt and pampered, being the youngest among four siblings and was like any teenager, obsessed with music, friends and partying.” Life was a never-ending joyride till the day the Mukti Bahini came to Mirpur, in Dhaka, where Rehman lived with her middle class parents. “We saw people being killed, right in front of us. They separated the men from the women. I thought this would be the last I’d see of my father.”

It was in her final year of studying architecture, in 1982, when Rehman, a star student of Dawood College of Engineering and Technology, Karachi, realised that what she was being taught was ‘not relevant’. "I was really confused. I didn’t know why I’d taken up architecture. The way the architects were designing was all wrong and the way they were treating young architects was worse,” was her first impression.

She had been visiting katchi abadis and had become interested in the social networks that existed there. Unwittingly, she was chalking out her future. The next two decades saw her totally committed to understanding development in the poor settlements of Karachi.

Even before her graduation, she landed in one of Karachi’s high-flying architectural firms. She didn’t last there for even a month. After graduating, she got another plum job but her heart was just never in it. Restless, yet not knowing exactly why, she started exploring the city of Karachi by herself. One morning
she read about a low-cost housing project by some United Nations agency in Orangi, and decided to visit the place herself. A few hours later, she was in the office of the late Dr. Akhtar Hameed Khan, the renowned Pakistani social scientist.

“I still remember my first encounter vividly. It was quite fascinating. It was a tiny room, with barely any natural light. I didn’t know what to expect,” recalled Rehman. “Doctor Sahib looked me up and down and asked why I had come. I said I wanted to work,” she narrated her first meeting in detail. “He sat next to me and listened attentively to all my woes as a disillusioned youngster.” The thing that struck her was the respect he gave to her.

She has fond memories of the 18 year relationship with Khan. “He taught me a way of life. When I first joined I would fight with a lot of the other team members. Fresh out of college, armed with a degree, I thought I knew more than them and ordered them around. Naturally there were many rifts.” Khan taught her to “first acknowledge what you lack, try and see who has those skills and then stick to them like a leech and pick their brains!”

When Rehman joined the OPP, she was the only woman among a group of men. Somehow, water and sanitation have long remained a male-dominated sector. But that did not deter her in any way. In 1988, the OPP branched out as three independent institutions. … Today, there are 24 women in all the three programmes, including six working in water and sanitation. “I think it’s very important to have men and women working in a team. Women learn to be assertive and men become gentler,” she said.

However, she feels women have an advantage over men in the development field, especially vis-à-vis the poor. “As a woman working in the field it was very easy for me to enter a household and talk to the women. That gave me an edge over the men in my team and let me look at issues in a more detailed manner.”

With OPP-RTI now actively lobbying with the local government, Rehman, being a woman, finds it easier to meet the Mayor. “My male counterpart may well be made to wait for hours before being allowed an audience. Women are treated with more respect!” But to be taken seriously, women in the water sector, have to prove that they are technically knowledgeable. “Only then will they be accepted,” says Rehman. She experienced that too. “I was young and talking about serious issues. For many, who were not used to women in this area, it was initially a little difficult to digest. But once they started working with me, things were different and acceptance was forthcoming.”

After over two decades of working with women in the urban areas, Rehman quickly puts to rest the long-held view that women have no say in decision-making. “My experience has been otherwise. However, women may be using men as their mouthpiece and it may seem that men are making that decision. Women, by nature, are not assertive but gentle persuaders. We had to take women on board first. Men may have laid the pipes, but it was the women who collected the money; they were the mobilisers. I’d say things are a lot less complicated if you involve women!”

Rehman gives the example of Dadi Amma, the octogenarian who went door to door, convincing the people to lay the sewers. Single-handedly she collected money for the work from all 50 houses in her lane. It was the first lane in Orangi’s Mujahid Colony where OPP carried out sanitation work.

The OPP took people into confidence and started by advocating for the development of an underground sewerage system, one lane at a time, without a master plan, and convincing the local government to “build and improve on the existing external drainage system of the rest of Karachi, which would cost less than starting a new system.”

“We’re neither contractors, nor delivery people, we are teachers, ourselves learning from situations,” says Rehman.

Excerpted from Women Water Professionals: Inspiring Stories from South Asia, edited by Sumi Krishna and Arpita De, Published by Zubaan under the auspices of SaciWaters.
Perween Rehman as a Teacher

Perween Rahman’s tragic departure from the turbulent scene of development work for the cause of the poor of this country and beyond has been mourned widely. One dimension that deserves appropriate mention is her contributions as a teacher.

Perween taught as a visiting faculty member at the Dawood Engineering College for about two decades from 1982 and at the Visual Studies Department at the University of Karachi. She also taught scores of community youth that were invited to learn basic skills in development work such as mapping, documentation, report writing and record keeping. The youth training programme at the Orangi Pilot Project (OPP), youth internship programme at the Urban Resource Centre and young professional training initiative at the Dawood College benefitted greatly from the teaching and training input of Perween for a significant period of time during the past quarter of a century. I am honoured that Perween also taught me during my undergraduate studies and later became a colleague in many joint initiatives with which we tried to educate the youth about the issues and challenges in development.

Despite the fact that Perween was an excellent and skilful architect, she chose to work for the betterment of the underprivileged. This appreciation of the plight of the poor had been induced in her due to a sharp observational capacity, the ability to interact and relate with people and the intention to catalyse change through cooperative action. She taught students of architecture with the same approach. Her favourite courses were studies in environment and urban planning. Through an informed discussion format, Perween used to lay down key knowledge points around the core topics of the curriculum. She would outline the important facts and observations with her succinct analytical review of the same before her students. Then they were asked to add new facts and observations to expand the knowledge base around the subject matter of the discussion. Thus rather dry topics such as the environmental profile of South Asian regions, development and environment interface in Pakistan, critical review of major human interventions in natural environment, reasons of variation in typologies of buildings and assessment of diversities in the human habitat were deliberated with profound enthusiasm.

Perween brought such energy and liveliness to the class that even the dull and distracted students would find some interesting attribute to be part of the group work.

Perween, in her usual unassuming manner and soft voice, would delve into some of the most complicated trajectories of intellectual discourse with effortless ease. Most of the students used to look forward to her class as it provided them with the opportunity to freely express and interact with the teacher without any fear of reprimand and rejection. Her simple but bold methodology made many shy and laid-back students gather courage and strength to speak their minds.

Perween taught with an objective to make her students observe the ground realities of the topics under discussion. Many such topics were covered by undertaking field observations, surveys and interviews with the concerned. When she was teaching us the process of evolution of katchi abadis (squatter settlements) she took us to the terrains of Orangi and Qasba so that we could observe first-hand the dilapidated and inhuman conditions in which people lived there. It was a tough yet life changing exposure for many architects under training who were then motivated to adopt careers for the benefit of the poor and the society at large. Perween also emphasised on the importance of exploring the real truth behind the obvious situations. Through interviews and other research methods, she taught her students the sequence and process that could lead to the unearthing of reality usually hidden under smudgy layers of fiction.
Community youth from various underprivileged areas were invited by Perween to learn skills of various kinds for earning a living. She emphasised on map making as a distinct method for projecting analysis and presenting realities. Information gathering around the topic of consideration, basics of drawing, reading and interpreting visual symbols and details, understanding the symbols representing various phenomena and then preparing a commensurate map accommodating the details was a usual combination. It may be noted that these young people often had very little background of formal education. But during their stints of learning at youth training programmes, they not only gained competence as technical expertise but also social entrepreneurship to support themselves. A sizable number of such youth is now gainfully employed in Orangi and elsewhere in Karachi.

A small institution, namely, Technical Training Resource Centre has been set up by the alumni of this programme and is extending valuable services to community members in different regions. Such skilled youth have been instrumental in assisting flood affectees in rebuilding their houses and rehabilitating their enterprises, mapping the unabated land grabbing along the peri-urban village locations in Karachi and extending input to infrastructure development works in underdeveloped neighbourhoods in various cities. Asian Coalition for Housing Rights, a large group of development organisations and individuals in this continent, sent many young people from various countries to learn such methodologies from Perween and her comrades.

On several occasions, Perween also visited and conducted short trainings in various parts of the world. A sizable number of beneficiaries of such inputs have been all praise for the worthwhile training input and exposure received at her hands. While these professionals did not attain any recognised or high-sounding degree, they were called para professionals, a term coined by OPP to give recognition to this useful cadre of groomed workers. Perween will live in the form of this invaluable heritage of capable young people, who shall surely manifest a change in this troubled society.

(By Noman Ahmed, Daily Dawn, 31/03/2013)

**Socially responsive workers:**

**Perween Rahman’s salary was Rs.32000 the day she died**

For Arif Hasan it is not easy to talk about Perween Rahman, the director of one of Pakistan’s most celebrated socially responsive organisations – the Orangi Pilot Project Research and Training Institute. She was shot dead on March 13 in an attack that highlighted just how powerful Karachi’s mafias can be.

It was not easy, but Hasan did talk about her and he had an auditorium full of people who wanted to listen. They were urban planners, architects, social researchers, students who had come to attend the eighth annual NED University seminar on the dynamics of land and planning on Saturday. According to lecturer Najia Zaidi, Rahman was supposed to be the chief guest. She had confirmed she would come just two days before her murder.

Instead, in the chilly NED auditorium, there was silence as that image of her was projected overhead. She is mid sentence, pointing to a map.

The photograph encapsulates what Hasan said was her philosophy: Samjho, seekho, samjhao (Understand, learn, explain). She wanted to understand people’s processes, not impose her will. “Trends and not conditions” mattered to her, said Hasan. Conditions were static.

Rahman had insisted that any research that was done could not be esoteric – it needed to have an outcome, a result, some use. He admitted, of course, that there had been plenty of disagreement over the years on these fundamental questions. “Why should we do it,” she would tell him. “Let the people do it.” She was right. She was able to unite people. She spoke to them at their level.
Hasan first met Rahman when she was a student of his at the Dawood College for Engineering and Technology in 1979. She graduated in 1981 and disappeared. But, a year later, he found her waiting in his office. “I don’t like the offices where I am working,” she told him. She didn't like the culture. “Ye sab ameeron ke lye kaam karte hain.” She felt they all worked for the rich. She wanted advice. What could she do?

He sent her packing to the Orangi Pilot Project and told Akhtar Hameed Khan that she would be interning there. But Hasan was skeptical. Two ex-students had barely lasted a few days.

She was still there six months later. No salary.

Thirty years later, on the day she died, she had just drawn her salary. It was 32,000 rupees. Her philosophy was that the salaries at OPP should not be so high that they would feel embarrassment publishing them in the community.

She said no to lucrative consultancies. According to Hasan, there was once one from Africa that was paying more than the combined salary of the entire OPP staff. He persuaded her to go ahead with the work. She took only 200 pounds as remuneration. The bulk of the consultancy fee went to buying laptops for the OPP staff across Pakistan.

“She was not a social worker but a diehard professional,” concluded Hasan. “She was basically doing people management – at a ridiculously low cost.”

(The Express Tribune, 06/04/2013)

Parveen Rehman

Keep the Torch Alight

Parveen Rehman headed the Orangi Pilot Project in Karachi and helped empower an entire community, especially women, and spoke out against the land and drug mafi as in the city. She was assassinated in Karachi on 13 March because she took on criminal and corrupt forces in Pakistani society on behalf of the poor.

Beena Sarwar

The cold-blooded assassination of the gentle, soft-spoken development worker Parveen Rehman (56) sent shock waves around her native Karachi, around Pakistan and around the world. Her murder leaves bereft her octogenarian mother, two brothers and a sister (the writer Aquila Ismail). Not to mention other relatives and a huge number of friends, students and admirers, in particular the people of Orangi township, the sprawling low-income locality in the north-west of Karachi to the uplift of which she devoted her life.

‘Dharavi’ of Karachi
Karachi is a sprawling megapolis of over 18 million, spilling into the rocky desert that surrounds it, the Arabian Sea and the Indus River delta to its south. It is Pakistan’s largest city, business hub and major seaport. The hum of traffic – heavy industrial transport, interspersed with public and private transport, motorised and animal-driven – is a constant background noise. Many of the countless roads and flyovers that criss-cross the city have displaced human settlements inhabited by the urban poor. It was near a
flyover known as the Benaras Pul that two masked men riding a motorcycle waylaid Parveen’s vehicle on the afternoon of 13 March as she returned home from work. They shot her at close range and sped away, the targeted nature of the shooting apparent in their leaving alone her driver, Wali Dad. By the time he got her to the hospital, she had breathed her last, hit by at least four bullets.

Orangi where Parveen worked competes with India’s Dharavi for the title of “Asia’s largest slum”, winning hands down in terms of land area, 22 square miles compared to Dharavi’s one. Its population of about 1.5 million is a bit more than Dharavi’s million. But Orangi, Parveen Rehman always insisted, is “not a slum”. The word “slum”, she would say, does not do justice to its hard-working people. “People are poor but they are not destitute, they’re working class. It’s one of the poorest settlements. People have arranged their own schools, clinics and water supply. They are a great example of people helping themselves”, she told Dean Nelson of The Telegraph in 2009.

Orangi Pilot Project

Orangi’s development is so, in no small measure, due to the work of the groundbreaking Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) that the legendary development activist and social scientist Akhtar Hameed Khan, who was widely known as Khan Sahib, began in 1980. Parveen had just started working as an architect at a prestigious private firm after graduating from Karachi’s Dawood College of Engineering and Technology in 1981. A few months later, persuaded by Khan Sahib she joined OPP as its joint director in 1982. She had found her calling and she never looked back.

Khan Sahib had set up the OPP along the lines of the participatory rural development programme he had pioneered in Comilla in former East Pakistan in 1959. The model is, through technical guidance, social mobilisation, and microcredit, to help poor people to dig their own sewers or water lines, build their own houses and infrastructure, run schools and clinics, or set up their own businesses. The programme also helps build up partnership between people and government, and mobilises local resources “be it the community’s or the government, so that there is no need for any World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB) loans or doles”, as Parveen put it in an interview with Fahad Desmukh in 2011.

A soft-spoken, humble, down-to-earth man, courteous to a fault, Khan Sahib was known as a dervish, uninterested in material gains, focused single-mindedly on uplifting the poor. His courage shone through in his quiet determination to continue his work, come what may. His protégée shared all these qualities in full measure. Khan Sahib was a great believer in the power of women. He compared himself to a grandmother – “not your grandfather, because your grandmother gives love…and through love she’s able to encourage and make people grow”, as Parveen told Steve Inskeep (the author of Instant City: Life and Death in Karachi) of National Public Radio in 2010.

Women are active in Karachi’s development, but “they do not like to publicise their roles”, she said. A woman

“is in charge of the entire house, [the] entire budget. And if she’s not convinced, no money can be let out for the development. No house can be improved, no child can go and get educated. It’s a woman who [makes] the decision.

But when you go into some house, a man will come and talk and be very upfront and high profile, because by nature the women have been very gentle but persuasive. They know how to persuade their men….to do the things that they want to get done.”

That was how the women of Orangi learnt to deal with government officials who they initially found difficult, said Parveen. “If women told an official, ‘You do this, you do that’…he would start avoiding us. There are a lot of things he can’t do. The system is such. But now we go and we say, ‘We want your advice. Please tell us what to do’ and they feel very happy”, she told Steve Inskeep.

“I feel sometimes – not with men and women – with any group, if you come just upfront and try to be…the person taking credit for everything, that’s where things start going wrong. Once you rise up horizontally,
you take everybody with you. But if you want to rise vertically, you will rise, but then nobody will be there for you."

The Mother of Karachi
This nurturing, gentle approach earned her the title of “the mother of Karachi”, as many students and admirers referred to her at a protest outside the Karachi Press Club the day after her murder. Parveen Rehman had taught at her alma mater Dawood College as well as at the University of Karachi’s Visual Studies Department and the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture. Her legacy includes “students who know the difference between a slum area and a squatter settlement”, says a former student Andaleeb Rizvi, a teacher at Karachi University, in a blog entry mourning the loss of “one of the best teachers I had a chance to interact with”.

“She taught me how ‘not to hate the poor’; not to refer to ‘katchi-abadis’ as slums and instead ‘squatter settlements’, for she said in her sweet melodious voice, Slums mean poverty, crime, hopelessness, while ‘squatter settlements’ are a hub of hope, cultural diversity, the will to make things better. Don’t you think so too? I feel we should not say ‘slums’. It sounds so wrong. She asked if I knew that people in squatter settlements take care of each other more. ‘They stand up to support their neighbour if there is a problem’.

If I am aware of these nuances today, it is because of Parveen. If I disagree with the popular discourse that this country has gone to the dogs, it is because of teachers like her. People like her, who chose not to run away in the face of threats, fears of losing loved ones and being left alone to deal with problems.”

Criminality, Politics and Religion
The day after Parveen’s murder, her devastated colleagues made it a point to keep the OPP office open rather than close it in mourning as might have been expected. This in itself is testament to Khan Sahib’s legacy, to Parveen’s fighting spirit and to the OPP team’s determination not to buckle under threats. Hundreds of social workers and activists from all over the city came to Orangi in solidarity.

Khan Sahib had quietly and with dignity faced his share of adversities. Powerful interests, threatened by his work that empowered the urban poor, on two separate instances filed “blasphemy” cases against him, one in Karachi in 1989, and another in Multan in 1990. There was clearly no basis for the complaints, which were clearly meant to harass the elderly social worker. “No one can help the poor without evoking the ire of one vested interest or the other”, said I. A. Rehman at the time. Rehman is the director of the non-governmental Human Rights Commission of Pakistan which had taken up Khan Sahib’s case. The cases were eventually quashed just a few years before Khan Sahib passed away in 1999 aged 83. Aamir Mughal, a former intelligence officer who conducted the enquiry into the blasphemy case against Khan Sahib in Karachi in 1991, says that he found that “the land mafia was behind it”.

And now, just over 20 years later, the land mafia is believed to be behind the murder of Khan Sahib’s protégée. She knew she faced threats from not one, but several quarters. Recounting one of those threats (among several) to Fahad Desmukh in 2011 she recalled, “We said all you can do is kill us, yeah? What else can you do? So kill us. We’re not afraid of you. I think that is important.” (Full interview, with transcript)

But it is not so simple anymore. Over the years, criminality, politics and religion (or rather, the pretence of religion) have become increasingly intertwined in Pakistan. Many of the militants who are engaged in relentlessly attacking civilians and security forces personnel, besides schools, mosques, shrines, marketplaces and government offices around the country, draw sustenance from Karachi. Extortion, kidnappings for ransom, vehicle and cell phone thefts, burglaries and donations from shopkeepers deluded into thinking that they are contributing to an “Islamic cause” largely fund the “terror network”. In
this situation, there are cases of target killings by the “Taliban” at the behest of one or other vested interest.

So it is not surprising to hear that shells from the 9 mm pistol used to kill Parveen Rehman reportedly match a 9 mm pistol found on a suspected Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) commander’s aide. The man was killed in a police shootout in Manghopir on the outskirts of Karachi the following day, reports The Express Tribune.

The police raid was based on information obtained from their network of informers, who “told the police Bilal was involved in Rehman’s murder. The TTP has said it was not involved. It usually claims responsibility if behind an attack”.

“The bullet shells of a 9 mm pistol used in Rehman’s attack and a 9 mm pistol found on Bilal were sent to the forensics division for a match. The expert who did the match confirmed this and that the record of Bilal’s pistol was also being cross-checked with data of around 9,000 records”, says the ET report.

Even if the TTP has denied responsibility, it is entirely possible that some of their affiliates were involved – instigated perhaps by the land mafia, which includes people from all the political parties.

A Woman in Man’s World
Parveen was not a high-profile person who came much into public view. But she was a woman in a man’s world. A woman who did not don a chaddar or a veil, although she dressed simply and conservatively, with a dupatta always draped over her shoulders completing the shalwar kameez she typically wore. She was a woman who was helping empower an entire community, which included women. There are elements in Pakistani society who do not like that.

In her few interviews Parveen spoke out clearly against the land mafia and the drug mafia, as well as the political parties involved in violence in the city. She was also clear that the violence, while given an ethnic colour, was not due to ethnicity. After her murder, a mutual friend disclosed that the Taliban had in recent months attacked three of her colleagues for their work on school reforms; two were killed and one injured.

“She never sought the limelight and was rarely interviewed but her work had international recognition – she won the United Nations Habitat Award in 2001. It appears that she was aware of the threats to her life and had been so for years, probably because her work impinged on the activities of assorted land mafias and others who exploited the poor”, commented The News in an editorial:

Thus Pakistan loses another brave, devoted and resourceful person who gave her life freely in the service of the poor. Under her leadership, the OPP had managed to avoid the taint of corruption that dogs the steps of so many NGOs. Within minutes of her murder, tributes were pouring in on various social media networks from not just Pakistan but across the world. But tributes, honour and respect are no shield against a gunman’s bullet. The evil forces that killed Parveen Rehman have free range in this country, ruled as we are by the corrupt at every level who are bent on self-interest rather than the uplift of a population that is mostly poverty-stricken, has inadequate sanitation and poor drinking water supplies – all issues addressed by the OPP and Parveen Rehman. Whoever killed her, whether it was a “banned organisation” or thugs working for land mafias and encroachers, is unlikely ever to be caught, much less punished. The culture of impunity that has grown on the cancer of corruption ensures protection for even those committing the most heinous of crimes. Rest in peace, Parveen Rehman – your country is the poorer for your passing but it will only be the poor and your fellow-workers who will keep your memory alive.

http://beenasarwar.wordpress.com/2013/04/09/parveen-rehman-keep-the-torch-alight/

(By Beena Sarwar, 09/04/2013)
Continuing her work will keep Parween alive

KARACHI, April 18: "Parween was able to evolve into the person that we all know because she had some inbuilt qualities, one of which was feeling people's pain," said architect, town planner and researcher Arif Hasan at a reference and tribute for Parween Rehman organised by the Women Action Forum at the Arts Council here on Thursday.

“She was in the habit of saying three words ‘Samjho, seekho aur seekhao’ [understand, learn and teach]. She was killed at a time when her thinking was being consolidated. Had she only lived another 10 years, she wouldn’t have been a name any less than Dr Akhtar Hameed Khan,” he said, sadly while throwing some light on Ms Parween’s evolution.

“I taught her in Dawood College and remember her as a student who used to argue a lot. She was critical about everything, she wouldn't accept anything readily and she stated her point of view bravely. Earlier, she used to do it very strongly but later she learned the art of diplomacy,” he said.

“Vanished from my life for a while after graduating, I met her again when she wanted to meet Dr Khan. I had sent over other students to him earlier as well and they had all run off. I thought she would do the same but I was wrong. The first job given to her was surveying Orangi and doing research that became the base of Orangi Pilot Programme’s sanitation and housing programme,” he added.

“She had this great quality of being able to mix with all kinds of people. Once while passing by a dirty pond, Doctor Sahab [Dr Khan] commented to her that she was like a lily in that water. She had the power to transform the ugliness into beauty,” he shared.

“Management, she learned on the job. Following the thinking and principles of Dr Khan, she made sure their accounts remained transparent. When being offered big money for a consultancy, she refused to accept it. And then when I signed to accept it, she only took what we needed for the project while the remaining amount was used on improving office equipment,” he said.

“Her becoming a teacher was the third part of her evolution. That was when she passed on her own thinking to her students,” he said.

Former adviser to the chief minister Kaisar Bengali said that Ms Perween possessed a good heart and a good mind that she applied for the good of people.

Tasneem Siddiqui, the founder of Khuda ki Basti, said that she would never accept big grants and dole.

Later during a panel discussion with her colleagues and students Sadia Fazli, Rabia and Mir Raza, it was mentioned that she didn’t like using the word ‘poor’ and preferred ‘low-income groups’ instead. She didn’t want sympathy for the low-income groups, she wanted them to be appreciated for the work they did to help themselves.

Her student, Mir Raza, said her killers hurt her students the most, because her way of thinking, which was changing the way young people think, had been stopped abruptly.

Another panel comprising OPP partners Shamsuddin, Riaz Siraj, Sharifa Rafiq, Naheed Abro and Humaira discussed her inspiring personality.

I.A. Rehman, head of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, shared the three images of Ms Perween that stuck with him. “She ran OPP for 13 years after Dr Khan’s death in 1999. She did a lot in her short life. Continuing her work will keep her alive,” he said.

Interim minister for Human Rights and Women Development Anis Haroon read out a multi-voice message from several WAF members and Ms Perween’s friends.
“Her death fell on us like lightening and all the hard work we were doing for the good of people came to a halt as we were stopped in our tracks. But only for a while as we will gather our sorrow and channel our emotions to get back to work again,” she read out.

Between the speeches, there were several video clips of Ms Perween speaking about her work, her childhood and of her at home with her mother.

Poets Areesha Khwaja and Mohammad Najib-ul-Akhtar and young classical dancer Suhaee Abro also paid tribute to Ms Perween through their poetry and dance performance.

(By Shazia Hasan, Daily Dawn, 18/04/2013)

**Rich tributes paid to Parveen Rehman**

Director Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) and veteran journalist IA Rehman said on Thursday that the land mafia wants to push to the wall the personalities that want to show the masses the path of enlightenment.

He made this observation while speaking at a meeting held in memory of eminent social activist, architect, educationist and director OPP-RTI Parveen Rahman who was ruthlessly killed by marauders on March 13 in Karachi. The meeting was organized by the Women’s Action Forum (WAF) at the Arts Council of Pakistan here.

“When you kill a scholar you kill a universe,” Rehman observed.

The former Pakistan Times Editor said that he had little knowledge about Parveen Rehman but he would like to share his three impressions about her.

“One when she came to Lahore and was bestowed Faiz Award some 25 years ago; the second impression is when we recently came to Karachi to make a probe about the killing spree in the mega city, and the third when he met her at the Karachi Literary Festival (KLF) where she laughed wholeheartedly,” Rehman said.

“I was scared because only some people can smile and laugh so wholeheartedly,” Rehman said.

Paying glowing tributes to Parveen Rehman, the veteran journalist and human rights’ activist said that when the HRCP team visited the office of OPP-RTTI in Orangi and found how precarious was the journey to that place he asked her was she not afraid to come to her office every day, to which she replied: “Raasta tu yahey hey!”

He said Dr Akhter Hameed Khan enunciated the idea of participatory development and made OPP a model that was being replicated across the world and after his death Parveen Rehman succeeded him and continued to fulfill that mission with utmost dedication and commitment for 13 long years. Rehman said OPP’s concept was to inculcate humanism, to make humans, and that was a concept of socialist societies.

He said a man was known by the company he keeps. No doubt, he said, Dr Akhter Hameed Khan was a stalwart and one should not be astonished when Parveen Rehman was chosen as his successor. She not only successfully ran that organisation for 13 long years but also enriched it.

“We should continue this good work with the hope that there might be more Perveen Rehmans in our society,” he said.
Clips of Parveen Rehman were also displayed during the programme in which she spoke her mind and explained the concept of OPP-RTTI to fellow workers and interviewers.

“In the worst circumstances you can do things and that is liberating,” the graceful Parveen Rehman said in her melodious voice at one point in the clip.

Her class mates at St Joseph Convent shared their experiences and said Parveen Rehman never lied. If she came late in the class and sister asked the reason she would simply say she went to bed late and that’s why she was late in her class.

Later, when she taught at Dawood College of Engineering and Technology, she was sweet even if she scolded a student, her college mate reminisced.

“Parveen used to dress in accordance with our culture and liked silver jewelry,” said Rabia, who worked with her at OPP-RTTI. She motivated everybody, she added.

Parveen Rehman would say they work for the masses, not for individuals, Rabia said. She hated the usage of word “poor” and preferred low-income group, she said. One should not be sympathetic towards these people since they toil, she would explain. “OPP-RTTI concentrated on documentation and our weekly meetings were held at all costs,” Rabia said.

Parveen Rehman’s students too shared their experiences and said urban theory was a very tough subject but she explained it in simple terms and her students would grasp what she taught.

“She taught us architectural activism,” one of her students said. “The curricula should be a combination of theory and practice,” she would say. He said youth training programmes initiated by her should be replicated in educational institutions. Earlier, noted architect and town planner Arif Hasan, who was also associated with OPP-RTTI, shared his experiences.

(By Shahid Husain, The News, 19/04/2013)

Taming the killing fields

Our country has turned into a killing field. Death comes everywhere, too easily and too frequently. The latest killing of Zahra Shahid Hussain, a founding member of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, late Saturday night outside her home in Defence in Karachi may have been intended to deter voters from taking part in the re-polling for NA-250, held on Sunday May 19. Or the motives may have been different – there is no way of knowing for sure. But the end result is the same; another person is dead.

Before Zahra’s murder, social activist Parveen Rehman was shot dead also in Karachi in March. And in May another activist, Abdul Waheed, originally from Swat who had worked with Parveen Rehman on the Orangi Pilot Project was killed at his medical store as his one-year-old daughter watched. Waheed had been receiving threats after speaking out against Parveen Rehman’s killing.

Many other good people have been killed in Karachi. The city has become a killing field – but it is not the only one in the country. The Awami National Party lost scores of activists in 2013 alone. As the leader of the party, Asfandyar Wali, said after the ANP was decimated at the polls, that the election campaign for the party consisted of picking bodies off the streets after rallies, tending to the injured in hospitals and attending funerals of the dead.

Yes, the party also suffered defeat because of its inept governance, but the ruthless attacks on it, apparently by the Taliban, had a role to play. No political entity can survive systematic murder on this scale – and Wali, for all his own leadership failures, has a point when he says that Hakimullah Mehsud emerged as a key arbitrator in the polling process.
The killing field extends into the vast, rugged territory of Balochistan – assuming here perhaps the ugliest form of all. Bodies of persons who had gone ‘missing’ turn up regularly in the province, the faces sometimes spattered with acid to disguise their identity. Torture marks can be seen on many of these bodies. All – or almost all – have a single gun-shot wound in the head. Yet the issue remains ‘sidelined’, barely picked up by the mainstream media.

Journalists who have regularly taken it up have attracted wrath from the establishment. This was almost certainly one of the reasons New York Times Bureau Chief Declan Walsh, whose visa was suddenly withdrawn this month forcing him to leave the country a day or so after the polls, earned so much distrust of the authorities, who eventually ousted him. Perhaps he should consider himself fortunate to have been evicted..

Sadly there is no evidence either that the post-poll scenario in Balochistan will bring much change. In a fractured provincial assembly the Pakhtoonkhwa Milli Awami Party headed by the highly respected Mahmood Khan Achakzai is contesting the PML-N’s right to form government and holding that with ten seats, it has the right to do so with backing from Baloch nationalist groups. The PML-N holds nine seats, but has independents ready to join it. The party’s candidate for chief minister, Sanaullah Zehri, is a contentious figure – and more divide in the most troubled of our provinces is not something to look ahead to.

We all know many different groups are behind the killings; we also know the killings – everywhere in the country – must be stopped if we are to re-claim any sense of civilisation; any sense of normalcy. The groups engaged in the murders in Karachi, in Balochistan, in KP and other places are all different in nature. The task of dealing with these diverse elements, which include those linked with the state, is not an easy one, but it has to be undertaken.

Killings of the kind we continue to see simply de-humanise us further and with each body that crumples after a shooting or blast, more hatred is injected into a society through which poison now runs through virtually every vein. The Shias have been victims too, with the Hazara community of Quetta a prime target in recent months.

We need to act to stop such massacres. They simply must not be tolerated. For this reason the words of Pervaiz Khattak, the man put forward by the PTI as its future chief minister for KP are disturbing. At his first press conference in Peshawar, Khattak stated his party had “no fight” with the Taliban.

The point is it should have a fight; we as citizens should all have an enmity with the Taliban. The outfit has ruthlessly killed thousands of citizens over the years, including women and small children whose blood-stained bodies have fallen in bazaars, in streets and in mosques. How can we then say we have nothing against those capable of mowing down innocent people in this manner?

We need to see them as enemies if we are to stop the killings and prevent further death across the expanding tract of territory that they command in our country, extending recently also into Karachi.

In the same context, the links between the PML-N – the ruling party for the next five years – and certain extremist forces is also alarming. Much has been written about these liaisons, with some of them again visible in the recent allotment of tickets and in arrangements made in various constituencies.

If the PML-N is to end the heinous crime of mass murder in the country, it will need to detach itself from these forces and demonstrate that for the sake of the country as a whole it is strong enough to abandon past loyalties and distinguish right from wrong. We must hope it, and also other parties which will be a part of the governments in various places, demonstrate the courage to take this step.

The problems of Karachi, those related to the Taliban, those that exist in Balochistan and the hate-killings targeting Shias all need to be dealt with. A country where death has become such a regular event cannot really hope to live.
We must find ways of resuscitating it by ending the cycle of killing and taking measures against all the groups responsible for such acts of violence. This has become our most pressing need.
(By Kamila Hayat, The News, 23/05/2013)

ADIEU PERWEEN RAHMAN

Legendary social scientist, architect and development professional Perween Rahman was assassinated on 13 March 2013. With her martyrdom ended a chapter of selfless service to the deprived in this land of the pure. Perween remained committed to her mission till her last breadth and proved that bravery is not an adjective that can be singled for the men folk alone!

I knew Perween since the past thirty years. She studied architecture at the Dawood Engineering College and graduated in 1981. Her teachers re-call that she was one of the brightest and most talented of architects produced by that institution which was at its peak in those days. With her creativity and design capabilities, it may have been very normal for her to have chosen commercial design practice as her career path. But Perween soon became disillusioned with the narrow social scope of the commercial consultancy. She joined Orangi Pilot Project during its initial days under the able leadership of Dr Akhtar Hameed Khan and Architect Arif Hasan. These were times when the settlement in Orangi was spreading fast without any assistance from the public sector agencies. Building on the energies and initiatives of community members, the project team came up with affordable and scientifically viable options for sanitation, housing, vocational training, healthcare, family planning, rural development, micro-credit and women works programme. The philosophy of the OPP team was to enable people take technical advice as a catalyst and become owners of the development enterprise themselves right from the onset of the initiative. Thus a sizable part of Orangi changed completely in terms of basic infrastructure and quality of life for its teeming millions.

Perween and her colleagues embarked upon the journey of expanding the lessons learned at Orangi in other parts of Karachi and elsewhere in Pakistan. After conducting scientific surveys to establish the suitability of the settlement for launch of development work, they would engage with local community groups and invite them to learn and improve the conditions of their settlement. They would always insist to keep their role as a teacher. They trained thousands of community youth in useful trades such as mapping, social surveys, supervision tasks, conduct of basic developmental assignments and similar ventures. Perween was a strict administrator – a trait she had learned from her mentor Dr Akhtar Hameed Khan. Record keeping, reporting, accounting and audits were the procedures that were strictly applied under all circumstances and in all dimensions of the OPP. After the death of Dr Akhtar Hameed Khan in 1999, Perween became in charge of OPP-Research and Training Institute. This arm of OPP aimed at expansion of sanitation, training of para-professionals, support to small scale educational facilities and related matters. She also supervised the timely preparation of various progress reports and documents for reference in various types of research and professional assignments. It has been a working norm of OPP under Akhtar Hameed Khan and Perween to prepare and maintain accurate and up-to-date records and accounts to ensure transparency and fairness across all operations of the institution. This attribute would become a practical lesson for hundreds of workers from community based organisations. Perween and OPP fraternity preached what they practiced. She also penned down useful monographs and research papers to share the lessons learned at OPP during various phases with an expanded audience.

As a person, Perween was extremely humble, down to earth and frugal in her conduct. Despite the enormity of the tasks that she shouldered, she and her comrades took very small remuneration for their invaluable inputs. She was always in the forefront in solidarity with the affected and down trodden.
Whether it was the issue of evictees of a squatter settlement or attacks on minority communities, Perween would join hands in protest and extended all possible support to those in need of it. The disadvantaged peoples impacted by displacements caused by construction of Lyari Expressway and similar other mega projects received worthwhile support and professional advice from Perween and her colleagues. Apart from OPP, she was a founder member of Urban Resource Centre in Karachi and a key figure of Asian Coalition for Housing Rights. With eminent architect and planner Arif Hasan, she spread the pilot model of OPP to various other locations in Pakistan. Due to the effectiveness of the development model, many noted politicians and government officials routinely came to OPP where they would learn and observe the realities of development work at the grass roots level. Mr. Shahbaz Sharif, who was also Punjab Chief Minister in 1990s, visited OPP and was so impressed with the approach and work, that he initiated swift replication of the programme in several cities in the Punjab. Participants in staff courses at National Institute of Management and administrative staff college visited OPP to learn the approach and methodology as a regular feature.

On each encounter, Perween would brief the visiting group with eagerness and enthusiasm in a bid to sensitize government officials about development inputs needed by the poor. She was ever optimistic that some, it not all, the bureaucrats may become convinced towards the pressing requirements of poor people and incorporate the same in their working norms. Mobilization and support to indigenous groups was a core function keenly undertaken by Perween and her team mates.

Few people know that despite her hectic work schedules and travels to far flung locations in the country, Perween used to teach regularly as a visiting faculty. Dawood College and Karachi University benefited from her worthy contributions for substantial periods of time. She would teach subjects such as environmental studies and introduction to urban planning with avid interest. Apart from delivering knowledge through talks, presentations and lectures, Perween relied move on interactive methods by creating discussion platforms around core ingredients of the subject. This helped the students become a part of knowledge creation process themselves. Field visits, observations and critical reviews of area under study were some common components of teaching methodology adopted by Perween. Her engagement with students used to act as a source of motivation, including those who lacked in skills or were lagging behind in studies due to any handicap. As revealed by her former students, her class was a sought after time and the students used to eagerly wait for it. Many young minds became interested in development work and adopted it as a career path after graduation.

With her tragic martyrdom, the poor and downtrodden have lost one of the most sincere professionals who cared and contributed her entire energies for their betterment and emancipation. 
(By Noman Ahmed, Achr.net)

Parveen Rehman on Land, Politics and Violence in Karachi
Interview conducted by Fahad Desmukh
Transcribed by Fizzah Sajjad

Parveen Rehman was a social development worker and researcher who headed the Orangi Pilot Project in Karachi. She was murdered on March 13, 2013, by unknown assailants as she was leaving her office. In this interview, conducted in September 2011, she discusses the connection between land, politics, and violence in Karachi, as well as her personal experiences of being threatened by thugs associated with different political parties. The original audio of this interview can be heard at: https://soundcloud.com/desmukh/parveen-rehman-interview-2011

Parveen Rehman: There’s nothing ethnic about violence. Secondly it’s not to do with the informal sector. There is no informal sector. There is just the official sector and the unofficial sector. The violence in Karachi is related to its land, that’s what we have seen, this violence. We’ve even documented that land everywhere is so expensive, and because there’s been a complete breakdown of the government and the
government functionaries/departments – all sorts are involved in all the illegal activities: so they are partners. Because of that there is continuous battle over various segments of land in Karachi, between various groups of people who I would not say are given sanction by the political parties, but who I would say as a strategy align themselves with political parties. And police, and of course, all the government departments and the elected members are all partners in this. The violence that emerges and has aggravated more is because with this scenario of control over various areas to do with land and selling of land – of course there’s drugs and arms – but land for us is the most prime thing that makes one kill at an instant because of control over each others area, because the finances involved are so much more that overnight you can earn 1 lakh, 2 lakh, 3 lakh – much more than that. So one group to kill the other, they won’t even wait a little while. They just shoot. This has been aggravated because like I said that various groups as a strategy align themselves with political parties. And when the political parties are seen battling, are seen against each other, so its just great time to shoot each other and put it up that some MQM has shot this one, ANP has shot this one. So this is like political conflict gives the ground for great killing and violence to settle your scores.

Somebody asked us – what is the solution? The solution is very simple, because the political parties have to understand this that they’re being used. These killings we have seen have not much to do with political parties or with ethnic, but this has to do with interest groups here linked to land and finances. The way to end this violence is very clear, and why we say we have seen this happen? Because we are sitting in the midst of fire. This is the place where the maximum – June, July, August – everyday that we would try to come to office we did not know whether we would reach safely or go home safely. I myself would not tell my mother that I’m going to office and this is happening and that is happening, but we have faced ourselves violence.

D: Can you describe if there was a particular incident, or what it was like one of these days? If there was a particular incident one of these days when the violence was really bad and you were trying to come to work?

PR: Many many days, many days. The entire July and August has been like this. Except like 1-2 days, everyday. We would be sitting here, maybe there’s a guest coming in: ‘There’s firing, severe firing’ and then we’d get all – there’s also fear. There’s a lot of fear, and we’d try and strategize: what to do - should we call the rangers, should we call the army? Sometimes it’s happened that in front of our gate the people have gathered, and we don’t know, they’re not from the community, we don’t know where they are from. So it’s been many many days. Sometimes we just think let’s just stay quiet and not do anything, but then you don’t know whether you’ll be able to reach home for a week or so. What do you do for a week?

There’s also been times when we have been threatened in this office. Let me say when there’s political conflict then the chotus in the political parties use all this and they become blackmailers and cheaters. So we’ve had people about three years back – three years back election tha na? When first time the ANP came into power? And we had people from ANP coming into our office occupying – one month they were coming, they were threatening us that you leave this place. First they said we want a hall, your hall is great, we want this to have judo-karate lessons. We said as a policy we don’t give it out to anybody. Then they would just come, pressure us from various MNA’s, MPA’s and they would ring us up. So we said we can’t, as a policy we can’t. Then they started coming everyday and threatening us, and we said all right you kill us – that’s all you can do, we are not afraid. One day they just came, and from the morning they occupied the roundabout in front of our office. They came with gunmen. About 5-6 of them sat there at the roundabout, 5-6 of them went all around, 5-6 of them went into this courtyard trying to threaten us. And they said today we will occupy this place no matter what. So one of our colleagues was negotiating with them, we said, we won’t go, you stay, if you want kill us, if you want, kill everybody. We were lucky that one of the active members of the community who’s been working with us, his brother is a bigger thug, yeah? And he belongs to the PPP. Then he said that all right, I will come over, and how can they do anything like this? So he came and talked to them that if you fire, we’ll fire many many more rounds. So imagine to save ourselves we went to a bigger thug.

D: I mean especially for the foreign, it seems bizarre that someone can come and say look you know, I’m going to occupy. Can you give a sense of why they didn’t occupy this thankfully, I mean they’re many
places which they have occupied, and they come just like this? Can you give a sense of why this happens, why there isn’t security of property which one expects?

PR: But one more incident I must relate. It’s to do with the local, he threatened us, who is now a MPA, he is local MPA of the ANP. He threatened, he came to me, he rang me up and threatened me so many times. He said this is illegal what you all have done. This is our plot, give it back to us. We said the very point is that we applied to the Government, the Government gave us this, we have paid it, and if you have a battle go and do it with the Government. I think the important thing is if you are scared, if you get scared – that’s a strategy – then you’ve had it. But for us, we’ve been working here ages. We said all you can do is kill us, yeah? What else can you do? So kill us. We’re not afraid of you. I think that is important.

Plus secondly one thing I’d like to relate before I answer your question – sorry. Why we are always saved here? Because of our work, of our contacts with the community. It’s people all around that save us. It’s people all around. If some of the students get out, and somebody from – then we talk to them. It’s young men from the community who save us, who go and tell the political parties that why are you doing this? I remember after this thing happened, when they wanted to occupy, there was a word sent to the ANP because you see our members who work here also have political affiliations. Some of them go and sit in the ANP office, some of them go and sit in the MQM office. So they themselves sent in the word, and I remember that one of the Secretaries of the ANP lives right across our office in the big tall building. He was told that you are now responsible for this office – if anything happens you will be taken to task. It’s the community work that saves all the time, because you see our office is very open you can see everybody keeps on coming and going.

D: How is it that given that you’ve been here for so long and that you’re part of the community, that people can still come…right?

PR: That’s very interesting and also how the question you asked before – you must remind me about that, yeah? You see the thing is that in any, how do I explain this? It’s not so much that people in one community are the ones who are threatening their neighbors. It’s not that. You see what has happened is, and it’s very sad about ANP, ANP has learnt all the negative tactics from the MQM. What they do is immediately when violence happens, they also have started making units, they send in the unit members of somewhere else to occupy the place. When violence happened here, we even didn’t know these people. Because all our guards and everybody are friendly with everybody. So they said who are these people? We are from the unit, and we’re from North Nazimabad. So they’ve used the tactics – they send people from somewhere else – they don’t know the people and they can create violence. There are a lot of strands and the people we work with, you see the community members are also people who are by nature, who want to be peaceful. People like us who want to be peaceful, who don’t want to do violence beforehand. We do protect ourselves of course by resorting to a bigger thug. Not resorting to violence but getting help from a bigger thug. And knowing who is the bigger thug is very important. The important this is that there are lots of strands, and not necessarily everybody knows that who is threatening whom, when, because these people come very quietly.

D: But what determines the timing of it? Do the orders come from above or is it local economic factors?

PR: Local thugs. For instance, this one thug I won’t take his name, who was shot in July, right in front of the gate. I can take his name – Rahim Swati – everybody knows. The point is that they’re all extortionists. Kaheen se bhi, whenever they can get some money, they’ll try to do that. They’ll try and get money out of somebody. It’s just that when you feel there is a complete conflict above, there’s a breakdown of governance above, that you can get away with things. There’s a time that you know that you can get away with things. For them, that timing is important: when there’s complete conflict between 2 political, 3 political parties and everybody is involved. Of course governance toh khair hai hi nai, but thora bohat when there’s political harmony, these things are controlled. Toh jab woh, on the top they are fighting, toh neechay toh khair…

D: Now the question of, you mentioned, you touched on it – because of the lack of governance – what is it that makes it so easy, I mean almost accepted, it’s almost convention that you can do this? This is
something that you're either doing it, and if you're not doing, you have to prepare yourself for it. So can you explain what are the factors which…?

PR: Okay, like when I say lack of governance, it’s very simple, because look at land. You said that some places people can go, thugs can go, and they can get away with the extortion money and occupying that land. If you just look at the Katti Pahari area, which has been the most notorious, I have a beautiful photo which shows the Nur Jehan police station and right behind it all the plotting taking place. The two together cannot happen if they don’t support each other.

D: Do you have it here?

PR: Yeah I have it on my notebook. If they don’t support each other, it’s very obvious this will not happen. So the breakdown means that everybody’s involved in unofficial activity. Official activity, pure activity toh hai hi nahin: whoever is the lesser illegal is now the good person where everybody is illegal. Dekhein na when a land transaction takes place, a study that we have done on land supply and the goths of Karachi, there’s a fixed amount that goes to the police. I’ll give you one example: on a plot of land of Rs. 250,000 for a 100 square yard plot. Rs. 250,000 is the cost. So in the initial plotting of an acre of plot, the police takes Rs. 250,000 – that’s standard. You have to give it to the police station. Second, when the plots are sold as a token to buy some sweets, they are given Rs. 5,000 – 10,000 – that’s standard. All right? Then in the Rs. 250,000, Rs. 100,000 goes to the owner and his team members, Rs. 150,000 is subdivided, eik toh you give it to the thana, again between various government officials, revenue departments, local councilors, local nazims, MPA, MNA, everybody –it’s divided. Like we said in Rs. 250,000, maybe lesser of Rs. 100,000 remains with the seller and his entire team – including the owner – but the rest is all subdivided. One estimate that we have made that this land transaction annually – with a conservative estimate – has a turnover of Rs. 30 billion annually. This is huge. Unimaginable. This is huge.

D: Why in Karachi and not in other big cities in Pakistan? What’s specific about Karachi that makes it so ripe for this?

PR: Karachi, the cost. Of course other cities – Islamabad mein bhi cost hai, but there’s some element of government there. Yeah? Yahan all these years of breakdown, all these years of dictators supporting one political party to prop them up and all has completely finished the institutions. There is no – like we said, where is the government on site? There is no government on site, because the government we see is the government which is involved in all these things. When somebody says the mafia – who is the mafia? The mafia is all the people involved in official agencies, they’re all the mafia - because they behave like one, they cut money like one.

The question that you asked that why do these thugs get away some place and don’t get away some place else? It’s the fear factor. If you fear them that we could have easily said, last week also one thug came from here – he was a Pathan unfortunately from ANP. He said, he just came – there was another guy outside – he came strolling in, and he talked to one of my colleagues and he said you know so many people died, and we want you to help us, Pathan families died. So we said we help everybody, why just you? We have all our programs if somebody wants to take benefit from the programs, yes. So my colleague told him are you asking for bhatta? Because he’s also very good at all this, asking for bhatta, extortion money? He was also loud. So you have to do those tactics. You’ve got to.

D: And that day when they came – when was this incidence when they tried to occupy this place?

PR: That was about 2 years back.

D: So when they came and you said that you can kill us but we’re not going to leave -- what was your reaction?

PR: First was, that was not the only time they came. They were trying to do this for a month. Eik toh they came very sharif you know they were very good that we are students, and we need a place for karate. Not a hall. Agar hall bhi nai de sakte, give us land – after office we’ll take it. And then when we did not,
they tried to pressurize us through MNA's, MPA's, through Nazims – that also didn’t work. Then they kept on coming and threatening – for a week they kept on. And then they just came. So they had been given this message that we’re not afraid. The point was that they thought maybe in front of the gun we’ll become unafraid, but we’re not because we’ve seen the gun since 1985. So gun doesn’t make us fearful. It’s the fear. If you fear them, if we had just said all right we will… and I think that fear is, I don’t know what it’s related, we can’t blame anybody. But it’s also to do with if we had done anything wrong in the past, if we had been involved in anything wrong, anything wrong – in our work, in our office, like when we got this land – if there was anything that we had done illegal, we would be afraid. So that’s something that we know that nobody can, take up our budget – nobody can tell us anything.

Because once I remember even the MQM MPA threatened us, because somebody in our office, because like I said in our office everybody supports some group or the other. Sometimes somebody becomes the die heart supporter of one party, but we never tell them not to do that – you can’t do that. Once one of our team members became very violent and he started hitting somebody. And we didn’t understand why is he doing it to his colleagues, and then we found that he’s become a die heart supporter of the local MQM and the unit. So after 1-2 instances, we had to remove him. But when we removed him – oh my goodness – the local MPA Qudoos, MPA Qudoos, then we got a letter from even Farooq Sattar. But Farooq Sattar was very gentle, he said please consider this if you can. But Qudoos threatened, he rang me up and he threatened keh aap dekh lein ge keh aap niklein ge toh kesey. Then he threatened my colleague, he threatened the people who the guy had hit, he said hum dekh lein ge when you get out. So the point is sometimes we think that we have to play act. We are fearful from inside, but we have to play act.

D: And if you could describe the process of what happens when land is occupied. If you were to say that all right you can take this land, how does land now then generate revenue for the land grabbers? Just describe the process of it - formalization?

PR: Okay it’s very simple. Any place aap le lein, Kathi Pahari or anywhere else. Pehle toh you see the police is given a bribe, the day that anybody is going to occupy a land, the police is already given a bribe so the police is not there. So when the police is not there then the first thing you do is that physically you are there, and you start raising up a wall around, and you just see that who is the group that is threatening you. Without the police if there’s a group threatening you, then you take up arms and you kill each other – whoever is alive occupies that land. And once that land is occupied, then they go about, because the selling doesn’t take place by advertisements or anything – it just goes by word of mouth. So if you are say, for example, there is Sultan bhai, so he tells his neighbors keh yeh eik zameen hai and I take the guarantee, nobody will remove you, and you buy. Sometimes they even themselves they try and occupy because once 1-2 families are there then everybody feels secure buying. Sometimes they themselves start staying there, all their relatives start staying there, that’s the biggest ploy. Once 1-2 families have occupied then everybody thinks that nothing will happen. And then the police is also invited. I’ve got photographs – you must have also seen – where the police is sitting with the land supplier within the booth where the land transaction is taking place. So that itself is security for the others.

D: And after the transactions have taken place, how are the contracts enforced?

PR: Okay, sometimes they give a paper, sometimes they don’t give a paper. But the papers are nothing, we have all these papers, nobody is signing it, there’s no date in it, but they say that it’s a lease. So it’s just a paper to finalize a kind of give and take, but the paper has no meaning.

D: But I mean how do they stop someone else from another party, or someone else saying now I want this piece of land?

PR: It’s your arms, it’s your contact with the police, and your contact with the local Nazims, MNA, MPA’s.

D: But is it the residents who are doing this for themselves, or does the land seller, does he provide the security?
PR: If you want to know the land-suppliers – who are they? The land suppliers are 4 types: one are the various, the owners of, because now the land supply in Karachi are in and around the goths so I'll give an example. Like there is a goth or a village close to the city where the land value is high because of the city’s influence, yeah? The land is becoming urban. So that goth elder has a paper from the government which simply says that you have been given this land for 30 years to use for agricultural purposes and the related housing. He simply uses that paper to show that he has the ownership, and he then, together with his relatives, knowing that the land value is high, does the subdivision. Eik toh they themselves do it. Secondly, there are some goth elders who hire the services of experienced land suppliers, who are people who can be from any ethnic group, who are simply those who have been supplying land since ages and who then strike a deal with their goth elders that on sale with every plot of land – the standard rate is Rs. 25,000-30,000 – and the rest will be subdivided.

The third category is a little dangerous because these are also very experienced land suppliers, but these are land suppliers who do buy land from the goth elders – buy land. See the goth elders say we have 20 acres of land, and we are putting 5 acres for sale. Again that 5 acre for sale is unofficial – remember, because the paper he has does not give him ownership, it gives him the right to use the land. So then he says all right, 5 acres I'll put up for sale and you give me Rs. 500,000, for example. So that land supplier says look I don't have, I'll give you Rs. 100,000, and once I get that land, I'll give you the rest. But he never gives the rest. So he is the coercive land supplier. He has all the armed men. So in Karachi we have Ettihad Town and Mohammad Khan Town, great examples of nearly 3000 acres of land being subdivided like that. They are armed groups of people and they buy some land and occupy the rest.

Then finally, the fourth category is again very dangerous – much more dangerous – than these coercive land suppliers, because they are people who are members of political parties, backed by the political parties in power. And then they subdivide the land. They occupy some land, like in Karachi, in 2006, the main political party, the MQM, I can say that because now it's in the open: they demolished about 2 goths, they wanted to demolish 2 more, they could not – and they set up Altaf Nagar, over 2,500 acres of land. So that was one, because they were in power they could do it with Musharraf Government there.

D: That was a legal transaction?

PR: Illegal, but supported by all the legal office bearers, supported by the government, supported by the Governor, supported by the police and everybody. City Government.

D: Illegal in what context?

PR: Illegal because there is no document. And the documents we have collected which they give to the land, somebody who’s purchased the land, has no signature - nothing. But it has the thappa of the City District. And it lies that it says that this land has been there since 1980. Google image says that land has only been occupied in 2007. So all these things. Then we have been able to relate some of the documents and also see this. But today these land suppliers, members of political parties, backed by political parties, they become much more forceful than their political parties in power. They have again become like the categories of land suppliers who negotiate with the goth elders and get land.

D: What then is the ethnic aspect to this? Is there one? Everyone seems to be going on about this, especially recently, we have the low level violence, but then we have these breakouts where everyone says that people are being killed because of the language we speak – what’s going on there?

PR: That is again a strategy. That is again a strategy to hide the real face of the horror. Even in our office area, many people from Sindh, we can’t come, we can’t cross the Qasba area. This is the fear factor. This perception is deliberately floated so that the focus from the real issue is diverted.

D: And have there been population movements because of this which have facilitated more land grabbing?
PR: Not permanent movement. For a little period till the violence goes down, and then people come back to their houses.

D: I’m trying to get at - what is the strategy? What do they gain by creating this fear?

PR: By creating the fear…

D: Very ethnic – by making people feel as if they can’t go into these specific areas?

PR: Because I think not going to specific areas is a temporary thing, but making this an ethnic thing – like one says, then everybody starts saying Pathan-Mohajir, this that. But once one understands that it’s not Pathan-Mohajir then one will focus on these mafias. Dekhein na, what also happened in 1985, the Bushra Zaidi thing, what was it? It was not ethnic. It was made to be ethnic. Because again we were here. That time we were in Aligarh, and I don’t know whether it’s a coincidence, wherever we are, the horrible violence happens. We were in Aligarh, our office, and that same street was the venue of a lot of violence and killings. Us wakt bhi we saw that it was not ethnic, it was the drug mafia that armed people, just coincidently, the area that they wanted to arm people, the maximum number were Pathans. So the people that they armed and paid were the Pathans. So it appeared that the Pathans are firing. But who armed them? It was the drug mafia. The drug mafia, against the drug mafia there was an operation, but they came to know about it before, the police had already informed them. So to divert their attention – we also had a picture of that footage, I don’t know where that is when there were all these people up on these hills and firing down. So that everybody: ‘oh it’s a Pathan firing on us.’ But who armed them? It was a drug mafia, and then it was found that after that thing, the drug mafia disappeared – nobody could catch them. But who was the General who started the operation against the drug mafia? But then they all disappeared. This was a plot. So likewise, when this happens, all these, especially to do with land – I would say land is much more, at this moment, behind the violence. Then they consolidate themselves.

D: I don’t know if it’s too early to be able to explain, for example, then what was really going on at Katti Pahari, with this recent incident? What was the ploy of trying to generate ethnic violence, what were they trying to hide or cover up?

PR: Dekhein na, Katti Pahari, in it’s very birth, Katti, the cutting of the hill, whoever planned it – the basis of the plan was to give access to the people settled in Orangi to get out because Banaras Chowk always gets blocked and there are Pathans. So the very fact that it was planned to give an access to one ethnic group to get out – the basis was conflict. And whoever planned it, was completely blind I think. They should have known that an axis – there can never be an independent axis for the people of Orangi who belong to one ethnic group because all around are another ethnic group – the Pathans. So when this happened, the basis, everybody knows na keh Mohajir ko rasta dena hai. And you must know Katti Pahari is not in Orangi. Katti Pahari on the one hand side is North Nazimabad, on the other side it’s S.I.T.E. It’s not Orangi. So the North Nazimabad is the Mohajir and the MQM, and this side it’s ANP. So the very fact that the hill was cut to give access – that gave rise to the conflict keh yeh yeh kya hai? What is this? I feel that the politicians by their very shallow thoughts, narrow-mindedness, give rise to these conflicts. Because just a physical cut in the hill would not have, they should have, they should know that they have to stay together, they have to co-exist instead of bypassing each other. Why should any ethnic group have a road whereby they bypass all the others? It cannot be. Even when Altaf Nagar was formed, because they wanted to get hold of Northern Bypass. I mean it’s incredible. Don’t they survey? Don’t they find out who is settled where? I mean it’s completely blindness and arrogance, whenever you are in power you think I know everything.

D: But in Katti Pahari, the recent incident of really, ultra-violence that we saw last month, or a bit more than that. Do you have some theory of what was going on? Similar to what you discussed what happened to Aligarh. Do you some idea of what might be the real case, and what was going on here?

PR: Eik toh dekhein na, like I said, the reason for the plan on cutting of the hill is based on a conflict. And whenever it was happening, it sowed the seeds of conflict, though they did resettle the people very well. But it sowed the seeds of conflict, because cutting of the hill, displacing people, who were the majority if
the people displaced, yeah? And then strategic: it’s contours are such that it gives benefit to anybody wanting to kill anybody – the hill, the hill itself – on this hand side you can hit anybody, on that hand side, you can hit anybody. So if you see on this hand side, who’s trying to occupy? Aap Shahrah-e-Nur Jahan, just at one end, one of the parks has been occupied – which ethnic group has occupied it? Right behind the police station, a flat is being made – which ethnic group has occupied it? I think the thing is when you take up a stand, when you take up a position that we are two different people – this is bound to happen. Whenever there is this kind of militant posturing, and of course it’s supported by the contours – it’s a hill.

D: What changes have you seen in the recent years? You’ve been here for a long time. Recently it seems you’ve got a lot of violence. What changes have you seen in the nature of the violence, and in the nature of land grabbing?

PR: One more thing I’d like to add in Katti Pahari thing because if you see the hill na? At many places it’s not so easy to just go up and catch somebody. So that is very important. That somebody can fire and just disappear. You can’t catch them. Like I said, this side of the hill it’s one ethnic group. The other side of the hill, it’s another ethnic group. Then even abhi bhi when the road was cut, then the City Government - Mustafa Kamal was there, he himself was very kind of, he postures very aggressively, the way he talks and all that is militant kind of thing. Like I said us zamaney mein bhi they did something which sowed a lot of hatred among the local people: they wanted to barricade the entire settlement from the street, that nobody could come on to the street. Us peh bhi there was a big conflict - there was a whole jala-o-gherao, and people did not want the barricades and they demolished the barricades. So off and on these things happen. You see these things happen which show that every time you’re trying to show that you are the one – you are the occupier.

D: One of the surprising things I found when I went to Katti Pahari last week or maybe week before, was that even now it’s still surprisingly mixed. I mean, I was in Mohammadpur, mostly Pashtun, but there were Urdu speakers there. It took me a bit – I thought that by now it would be completely segregated. How is it that you have this and at the same thing when conflict happens – it’s like they switch it?

PR: Like I said, when conflict happens, it’s not so much the people of that area. It’s people of the other areas who use the two ethnic– how do I say? When the two ethnic groups are next to each other, they strategically choose that place to create violence so that it’s shown that it’s two ethnic groups against each other. All the violence, Aligarh violence, it happened here. And then it happened at a place like Raees Amrohi and Tori Bangash – again two different ethnic – why there? Because anything happens there will be attributed to two ethnic groups. You see the people who do the violence do it strategically. And they are the masterminds. And like I said, it’s very unfortunate that one ethnic group, ANP, has copied all the militant tactics of the MQM.

D: Can you describe that question of the changes that you’ve seen in recent years?

PR: The changes in recent years have more to do with conflict between political parties continuing and being so very aggressive. That kind of an aggressive and continual conflict was not there before. It would happened a while, pehle bhi, there would be conflict, maybe a week, and then everything would calm down. But this time it continues, it goes on and on and on. So the continuity of the conflict situation, and the aggressive nature of that situation, and the arms I think have contributed to that aggressive nature.

D: But fundamentally it’s the same thing that you’ve been seeing since back in the day, since Aligarh and all that stuff – it’s the same process?

PR: Aligarh mein it was not political, it was the drug mafia. Then the other violence that happened was in 1989 and 1995 – that was the army operation and the backlash. Then abhi. Abhi since, it was violent 2007 mein, it was violent, November 2007-08, then again, us ke baad se June-July, I don’t know why. It’s the KESC – also contributes to it. Yeah, we’ve seen it contributing to it. Kese? Dekhein na, all the time there’s no light – electricity nai hai. People go out and protest and then somebody fires and then it becomes. This has also contributed. Because people get out on the street, people are violent, and then
somebody fires and agar woh koi mar gaya ethnic group ka banda toh gaya – pata chala eik political party ne mara, us ne mara. KESC has also, to a great extent, contributed to this violent.

D: You’re talking about how this has gone on for extended period now, how does that affect your work on a day-to-day basis? Actually, I want to ask you, if you can describe very briefly the nature of your work? What is that you do over here?

PR: We’ve been working since 1980 in Orangi, and since 1990 in many other cities Sindh and Punjab – extending our work. Our work is simply that wherever communities undertake self-help work, whether it’s building their own house, building their own infrastructure, running the schools, clinics, or setting up their own businesses, we support the communities in their initiatives with 1) technical guidance, 2) social mobilization, 3) only in their businesses – micro-enterprise, credit. Second, we, in some of our programs, like in sanitation and water supply, we try and build partnerships with the Government so that community at the neighborhood level can take care of financing and managing the infrastructure whereas the Government can come in and compliments their work by doing the larger infrastructure. So there we help build up partnership between people and Government. Third, we focus on mobilizing local resources – be it the community’s or the Government, so that there is no need for any World Bank, ADB loans or doles. So our work is with the community and with the Government. In this violence, the violence that happened before was not so prolonged, but this violence, this year went on for months. If you simply look at the totality, it’s not so much affected, as it happens in one place, everywhere the community wants to develop itself, they never stop. They stop for a while and then they go on building their house, they’re building their infrastructure, they’re running their micro-enterprises. So nobody stops because life doesn’t stop. We are there wherever there is life, we support life. Since the work is so spread, it’s not so dependent on us all the time. Because if we have community organizations that we support, maybe Orangi is violent, but somebody working in Korangi, they can just ring us up and get some advice and get going. So in the totality, it is not stopped. But of course in the details, if you are busy in 1 goth, mapping 1 goth, it stops for a while and continues after a month. So in terms of the timing, for a brief period it stops and then it continues because people want to life their lives. For example, the schools cannot remain closed. And the schools in Orangi or the settlements that we work have not closed down. Contrary to some media reports, media reports said that ‘in Orangi there are 7000 schools and they’ve all closed down.’ First, there are no 7000 schools, they’re just 700 schools. And they have not closed down. Why? Because you have community schools – the teachers are from the community, the children are from the community. If they were teachers coming in from outside and children coming in from outside, it would have closed down. Because everything is centered in the community, the work never stops. Even in Zobu goth, where we have now worked helping people to stop evictions and now rebuilding their houses, yeah it stopped for a month, again people have started. And of course we have our own strategies to do the work. For instance, all of us – all of us – this violence, a few years, we ourselves have made a strategy: we take a lot of work at home and the mobile has been a great thing. So if we can’t come to office, we go somewhere else.

D: My last question is: what needs to be done? What fundamental structural changes need to happen before we can resolve this situation?

PR: One simple thing needs to be done first: the political parties need to end their conflict. They can have their great conflict, but then on the table. And if at the community level they can form peace committees, rather than at the top level where political party members are members of the peace committees – not community. If community are members, they’ll be the first ones to be shot dead. But political parties, if there is a peace committee in Qasba, it has to have membership of PPP, MQM, ANP, even PML(N) or PML(Q) if there are some supporters of that. But there has to be Peace Committees at the Mohalla level, settlement level, where the membership is of the political parties. They have to take responsibility. Just like they have their units, they have to have their peace unit. And that will ensure, that will also ensure that the arms are not being used. If somebody wants to make Karachi arms free – it has to be at that level. That is one key thing that will help restore peace, and of course when there’s peace there’s life.

D: Anything I may have missed, you want to say?
PR: No I think we’ve covered a lot.

D: Thank you so much.

PR: You’re welcome.

(Interview conducted by Fahad Desmukh, Transcribed by Fizzah Sajjad)

Kirtee Shah’s note on Perween:

It is some days today. Yet it is hard to believe that it happened and that Perwin is no longer with us.

If that is the case here with me, it is hard to imagine what you all must be going through having seen her last moments.

She was delicate, fragile. Her body was not meant to take so many bullets.

She was ‘peace’ personified--inner and outer. These violent ways were not for her.

Even the thought is crushing.

Not only because Perwin was a very very special person or because we all loved her dearly or because she was a role model and gave her all to the cause. But because this way of eliminating people, silencing them, taking them away as a way of trying to defeat a cause, though time immemorial, is self defeating. It serves no purpose. It just delays and further stretches the process of finding answers to the ills of our systems of which they, the perpetrators of the crime themselves, are the victims. It is not their victory. Even they must seek deliverance form these violent ways and she was contributing to a long and seemingly endless process of fighting the causes of such violence.

On hearing the news I wrote this. I enclose it here to share with you all.

I have this compelling desire to be with you all while you suffer this loss. I thought visa may not be difficult as I have some connections. But these are bad times in our relations.

Have spoken to Arif Saab on phone. Got through to Aqila. Her daughter told me that she is not in shape to talk. I fully understand. But that deepens the blow.

Take care. It is not easy.

Kirtee

What a disaster!

Killing a woman of such wisdom, virtue, values, compassion, love, and endless ability to give! Just see where did she invest her youth and ambition! Giving new life, dignity and power to the struggling thousands, tens of thousands, of Orangi and other poor settlements!

She was an architect and a planner. What did she do with her skills and special training? Invested in a way so that the poor’s shelter and settlements improve, so that they stand up with pride and dignity of self help!

Why did you have to kill such an innocent person of endless love who would not think of harming even a fly!

Why did you take Perween away from us and hers?
Tell us God, if we say you are cruel, would you punish us too?
Punish us, punish us--that is all, it appears, you can do.
This is terrible. Unacceptable. Cruel. Senseless.
What is happening to this place called Pakistan?
You did not have to take away this person-- she was the one showing the way.
She had a class!
She was the one lighting the path.
She was the one showing the way: fighting darkness, poverty, exploitation, ignorance, backwardness and hatred. And she had put her everything in the battle. Yes. Everything.
Not many young people can leave so many orphans behind. We have lost a friend and a colleague and we feel orphaned.
Perween. Not you, our friend!
We all loved you very much for what you are--were!
And what a cruel way of making the present into the past! Yes, very cruel.
And we saw your sparks just two weeks ago in Bangkok.
We never knew that was the last. We do not want it to be the last.
You can not go Perween
You can not kill Perween.
We need her here. With us. No, she never wanted the luxury of endless silence, endless peace.
She wanted to speak and make noise.
Why has she been silenced? For always? But why?
In great distress
Kirtee

A woman of substance

I am terribly sad but not even a wee bit surprised at what happened to Parveen Rehman. In Pakistan, this is how we reward some of the best among us. This is how we honour the brave and the brilliant. This is how we appreciate those who are altruistic. This is how we recompense the ones who decide to apply their education and training to serve the disadvantaged rather than earning dividends only for themselves.

There are physical, emotional, social and economic costs a person coming from educated or affluent middleclass has to bear when deciding to side with the weak, poor and oppressed. The conventional path for the social class Parveen belonged to is to climb up the ladder of good fortune at a high pace, aspire to be more rich and powerful and continue to aid the elite in perpetuating their grip over our state and society. Becoming one of the elite is the ultimate middle-class dream. Parveen had a different dream. To have that different dream and then the desire to translate that dream into reality is difficult business.

There is a cost of speaking for the poor and writing for the oppressed in the face of an omnipotent system where elites and mafias collude to eliminate any difference, leave alone any challenge to their absolute authority. There is a bigger cost involved if you practically work for the wellbeing of the poor and oppressed. And, the cost is deadlier if you decide to work with the poor and oppressed for changing their lives. When you work with them, hand in hand as equals, those who are kept weak for ages begin to find their own dignity and self-respect.

To me, Parveen Rehman’s work is not about housing for the poor, teaching to lay down the sewerage system on one’s own in the squatter in which one lives, providing credit to poor women for creating small and medium profitable enterprises, running schools for disadvantaged children and setting up dispensaries for those who have no access to decent health facilities. These are ways, and undoubtedly significant ways, to transform how people live.
But essentially Parveen’s work is about how people think, most importantly about themselves, how they view their past, present and future, what do they wish for their coming generations. Parveen’s work is about helping them discover their ability to make decisions themselves that affect their lives by nurturing their innate agency to bring change in their living conditions. It is about bringing dignity and self-respect to those who are treated like dirt by the rich and the powerful.

Parveen went beyond the rhetoric of change. She worked with people in practical terms, day in and day out, for bringing about the change in their lives and thinking. Orangi Pilot Project, the institution Parveen worked at for about thirty years, was founded by no other than Dr Akhtar Hameed Khan – the guru of community development in Pakistan, a champion of people’s active participation in social development and an advocate for finding appropriate local solutions to local problems.

Some social scientists may have theoretical and academic differences with what Dr Khan preached and practised. But no one could ever doubt his integrity and his uncompromising dedication and commitment to empower common people through community action. He lived like a dervish and left a legacy in the shape of OPP, Urban Resource Centre, rural support programmes and scores of community organisations following his teachings in social and economic development across the length and breadth of the country. The Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development was also founded by him.

There are luminaries who followed Dr Khan in development thinking and practice and contributed substantially to making lives and living easier for their fellow human beings suffering at the hands of grinding poverty and social exclusion.

The range of people he inspired is broad. From architects and thinkers like Arif Hasan to development theorists like Shoaib Sultan Khan and Tasneem Siddiqui, from arch practitioners like Sadiqa Salahuddin and Anwar Rashid to actual implementers like Gulbaz Afaqi, Hafiz Rashid, Qurban Raza Shah and Sumera Gul, Dr Khan influenced so many across Pakistan through his writings and practical work.

But I found Parveen to be the true disciple of Dr Akhtar Hameed Khan in every possible sense. She lived like a dervish. There was a halo of innocence around her. Her sobriety, polished manners, a reticent smile and an unmatched dedication to her work made her shine. Parveen was based in Karachi and spent most of the time working there but she helped activists from all over Pakistan and also abroad.

When I was studying at NED University, Parveen’s sister Aquila Ismail, an author, translator and electrical engineer, used to be there as a faculty member in another department. But we came closer in a group of teachers and students led by Late Prof Mohammed Nauman. We all believed in progressive political thought, democracy and people’s rights, and rejected Zia’s illegitimate rule. We all suffered in one way or the other, some more some less, for being what we were. I saw that period ending while still being a graduate student. But its scars remain on our souls if not on our bodies. However, it was not Aquila Ismail but Arif Hasan who introduced me to Parveen a couple of years later.

Arif Hasan is not just a friend. He is my guide and mentor in understanding the wide range of development issues in Pakistan. I have had the privilege to spend loads of time with him at the beginning of my career. He continues to be a great source of knowledge and wisdom. In his study or living room, there were long evenings where his friends and students like us would sit and talk.

From national politics to informal economy, the plight of common folk and the remedies for setting the course right, from anthropology and history to art and literature, everything came under discussion. Parveen was there sometimes. She would listen to everyone patiently, make a remark once in a while, smile when teased by a friend, and nod with candour when she agreed with the point of view of someone who she would not agree with on anything otherwise.

Who targeted Parveen Rehman? It could be someone belonging to the land grabbing mafia that her work would challenge by default as she struggled alongside the disadvantaged for an access to fundamental municipal services and better economic opportunities. It could be a bigot who found the existence of an independent woman in his neighbourhood threatening to his ideology and values as she was influencing
other women and men to come out of the traps of poverty and ignorance. We may never be able to know
the real motivation behind Parveen's murder even if the police are able to apprehend those who
committed it.

I seriously doubt though that all of the real culprits will be rounded up anyway. Karachi, the city Parveen
loved, is at the mercy of killers and marauders of all hues and colours. It is one of the deadliest cities in
the world. From intellectual-philanthropist Hakim Saeed to poet Raees Amrohvi, from journalist Wali Khan
Babar and all the six witnesses to his murder to activist Nisar Baloch, from MPA Raza Haider to Lt Cdr
Azeem Haider, thousands have perished over the last three decades. Hundreds of police personnel have
lost their lives. Carjacking, robberies, thefts, heists, mugging and snatching, all are rampant.

Rest in peace Parveen Rehman. May God bestow mercy on the city he has forsaken.

**Perween Rahman: Pyar**

Perween, once, I heard you called pyar. A play on two words, perhaps, love and friend: pyar. It was a
perfect term of endearment for you. Your friends, those, who love you, those, who worked with you,
those, whose lives are better because of you, those, for whom you are pyar---are devastated.

I too am devastated and I too am shattered even though I am at the margins of the golden circle of friends
and comrades: my teachers, my role models, that very special group of mainly architects and urban
planners in Karachi. A very special small group with thousands upon thousands of concentric intertwining
circles created in three decades of careful planning and organizing and teaching, thousands of students
and practitioners who will collectively defeat the assassins' conniving mean spirited brutality and murder.

There will be much written about you and some of it is here, here, here, here and here.

I remember in 1987 meeting Dr. Akhtar Hameed Khan in Orangi when I worked in Karachi. And after
spending an hour with me he directed me to you. So I climbed the stairs up to your office on the rooftop
of that slim three story house whose interior was painted a hospital blue and there up there as though it
were a bird's perch-- I met you.

Perween Rahman---a slender young woman, long hair down to her shoulder blades, boney, gaunt—
dressed that day in a slate colored shalwar kameez, silver bangles jangling on her wrists keeping time
with the rhythm of her voice—a dust colored landscape of an architect's tools of trade spread out around
her: maps, rolls of drawings, a large drafting table. I can never forget that moment--up there on the
rooftop--the settlement of Orangi all around--the hills right there—clay colored. Welcoming, happy---
graceful, passionately focused Perween Rahman with a tinkling voice.....so completely content and
excited with her work---completely in her element, in her place, with her world spread out all around her,
planner of all she surveyed, completely committed to what she was doing--changing the lives and living
conditions of an entire locality—and later the entire city, and towns and localities around the country—
then an experiment in self help, self finance and governance in the times of a military dictatorship afloat
and awash in foreign aid.

Perween it was clear then as it was in all of the last three decades, that you were having the time of your
life! The first time I met you I could not help notice the sound of your voice as though your whole being
and body were one instrument which sang because it was in its element, in the right place, bent to the
purpose and meaning of what you loved. Your whole being hummed and sang and pulsedate, breathing in
the city spread around you, breathing it in and breathing out to it your commitment and love.

From that rooftop, then, Perween pointed out the lay of the land—there over there the main line—there
over there the lanes that connect to it—notice these gutters beginning to be put in over there—and over
there the households with home based schools, and over there those who borrowed micro credit and
sewed cloth bags on piece rates for factories, notice the trees in every courtyard. And that afternoon, trying to absorb it—as I followed the arch of her direction, I looked out over the edge of the rooftop and saw the settlements, as an overwhelming rill spread, I saw chaos where she saw simplicity and a finely organized intricate ecosystem of relationships. I had a sense of her complete confidence and unconditional belonging there and my own distrust of myself and my place and when I got home I wrote the Prologue and Epilogue of my first novel Mass Transit.

Perween understood that, all agency, was in people, in us. She understood this as an article of faith: that the collective cannot be destroyed. That it is made of love.

Perween was an architect and an urban planner. A keen observer of natural processes in communities and the environment she practiced and shaped an approach which was based on the understanding that social behavior, attitudes, politics, power, emotions of love, hate, greed and murder are determined and effected by physical structures. And the other way around. She practiced conversation, a constant conversation, and understood its constant tension which required a careful cultivation of symmetry and an aesthetic of sympathy. She spoke the language of structures, of architecture, pipes, and gutters, beams and mortar, bricks and cement. She understood that civil works depended on the workings of civility and the meeting of interests of masons, dalals, land grabbers, land sellers, bricklayers and money lenders. She knew the legal and historical importance of mapping and documenting and the enabling activating power of this in the hands of the people.

She had studied over three decades the cause and effects of a sudden fire or disaster in a locality where sanitation and water pipes of the city did not reach—a fire in an unregulated settlement and the land grab that would soon follow in its wake. How greed initiates violence and disasters. And she set about helping localities and settlements regulate themselves—lane by lane house by house, mason by mason, dalal by dalal. She understood and practiced the concept that the key ingredient of positive change was organization and the harnessing of skills and interests—into collective action. It was never about the injection of money—it was about shifting the conversation from resistance to a natural flow in the direction of organizing-----it was about shifting the conversation and actions from money to what really mattered.

And the powerful centers of money that spoke in terms of "targeting" the poor, and other such brutalities, she politely refused their advances, inviting them instead to stay and learn from the Orangi Pilot Project approach of managing and implementing and creating at a fraction of the inflated costs they instigated.

Perween, the architect reminded me of a potter who touches clay in motion, gently placing her finger along its rotating surface on the wheel, a gentle, still manner, changing the shape, defining it with the natural flow of its own movement. She watches the movement. She observes with one purpose, to observe, to first do no harm. And later she taps the vessel, finding the exact points where, if tapped it rings and sings.

Perween carried forward the torch of collective action based on observed reality using the flow of natural forces for meaningful change, lane by lane, gutter by gutter, lateral pipes and mains one at a time. Organizing, training, documenting.

Perween was not given to vague concepts and paragraphs of confusion of “doing good”—of “protecting the needy, the vulnerable”. She was the superlative member of a beloved group of likeminded torch bearers, mostly architects and urban planners and others.

There are parts of the world where the wealth of a person is measured by the number of people who come to the funeral--the number of people who truly mourn the passing of a person measures their wealth. It cannot be bought, it cannot be paid for. It is not about money. It is a currency of kindness. The greater the kindnesses, the more, one matters, and the greater the mass.

And the funeral for Perween would have reflected the mass she has created that she was always present for. Pity those, who were absent at her funeral.
We remember a person in fragments. We rescue what's stolen or shattered in fragments. Piece by piece we rescue. Thousands will do that for you and I want to do that too. We met last on February 16, 2013 as you came out of the book launch for your sister's book Of Martyrs and Marigods. A hug, a kiss, a holding of hands. See you soon yar! Perween you live on.

On the flight from Karachi to Lilongwe I had contemplated the theater that the clouds present and had wondered if this was what after all becomes of us—air and shimmering clouds. I must've land in Malawi, just at the time when your spirit must have taken flight in Karachi. I received the news of this a few hours later. And as the night progressed, I lay on the bathroom floor in the intervals from when I hugged the porcelain belly of the toilet bowl, watching the yellow bile I vomited make its way down into its depth, thinking only: This cannot be.

"Buy", the saying goes, in places where they leverage and arbitrage "When there is blood on the streets." Perween, your blood, makes for a buyers paradise. You blood makes things more exciting, more interesting, more attractive, more irresistible as a sale. In a barrage of bullets; in a hail of bullets; it's a barn sale of assets. In the parlance of places where profits are made and asset values are too attractive and interesting to be ignored, public sector asset prices are so low that it is a bonanza of easy pickings—of land, utilities, power and water, you name it. There's a city with a blood splattered sign board across it, "Closing Sale! Everything Must Go at Rock Bottom Prices".

And you are dead. Murdered. Can this be? No. No. No. The bullets that killed you, killed Karachi too. You had taken on forces too ugly to sit back and let you. Land mafias don't take kindly to the meticulous detailed documenting of their land grabbing. So you were murdered near a police station.

Don't get confused, I'll be scolded, this is about extremism. Yes. Don't get it wrong, I'll be cautioned, this is about mafias, including land mafia. Yes. Don't get confused, I'll be informed, this is about too many weapons. Yes. Don't get confused, I'll be told, this is about money. Yes. Whatever it is about—Perween, what those brutes don't know Perween, is that they cannot touch you. You are. You will be and you will grow. Your gentle, unembittered, uncynical, unsarcastic, laughing brilliant self, will be a way of being. Your laugh, your voice, your way of being, your work—your serious, systematic approach to planning will continue through thousands of practitioners who've learned from you. You achieved in your life time of fifty six years what most never could even begin to grasp in many, many more years.

Yours is a life lived well. Yours is a life complete and fulfilled. A life full of love and friendship, a life of purpose and of living and working on the principle of first do no harm. Well done Perween! And you, Perween, are pyar. You create, you inspire, you build---you mobilize activate, you motivate, still, you go on. You regenerate.

Perween you are epilogue, you are prologue. We must all die. The difference between you and most others is, that you will live. Perween, you will live on in memory, forever at the height of your achievements, forever brave, forever true.

Perween, sister, daughter, aunt, teacher, colleague, friend and a mother to an entire city and movement you are indeed an architect and a planner. You knew the structure of where you would live. You knew the shape of your house: Our hearts.

(By Maniza Naqvi)

"We are all Ninja Turtles of mapping"

Perween was with us in Bangkok, just two short weeks ago, for the big ACHR regional gathering, which took place February 23 - 28, 2013 - one of the rare regional meetings this busy and committed woman agreed to leave her work in Karachi to attend. On the second day of the meeting, during the special session on community surveys and mapping, Perween and her colleagues made a delightful and inspiring
presentation about the maps they have been making and using for the last 32 years in Karachi and other parts of Pakistan.

"We're all mappers," she told us, in that voice of hers, which went up and down the scale like a flute. "We love maps! We are all the Ninja Turtles of mapping! Maps are to our work what x-rays are to a doctor's: they tell us where the problem is and how to resolve it."

Although we couldn't have known it at the time, this was Perween's last presentation to her friends and colleagues in Asia, her farewell message to us. Here is the fully transcribed text of Perween's presentation.

Why are maps important for us?

A map for us is like an x-ray for a doctor. For us, who are development workers, if we do not know what exists in any settlement or any city, then there is a fear that we might do something which the government has already done - sometimes even something already done and already financed by the ADB, the UN or the World Bank! When they take up a project in a new place, they don't have any idea if there is a telephone line, a water line and they want to lay a sewerage line. So in the process of laying that sewerage line, they cut everything else. So that is why for us, a map is like an x-ray that tells us what the problem is, so we can resolve it.

What do we get in a map? Starting in Orangi:

In 1982, we began mapping of Orangi Town. Orangi is a town in Karachi which has 113 settlements and 1.5 million people in it. We began doing the mapping ourselves. At one time, we thought about hiring consultants or professionals to do it. But no, we thought they would just go into a settlement and just do the work, without interacting much with the community. For us, it was important that we do the mapping - we who were in the community - so that the map could help us get the community youths into the mapping process, and help everyone understand the community and us coming together. We first mapped the sewerage and drainage and water lines in Orangi, as well as the clinics and the schools, and the block makers yards.

Let me tell you, everywhere in Pakistan there is self help. Everywhere. We sometimes think, where is the government? And that is because of the fact that 85% of Pakistan’s entire government budget goes into repaying the country’s IMF and World Bank loans and to defense, so there is hardly anything left for the people, hardly anything left for development. That’s why people do lot of self help, because they need to survive. They lay their own sewer lines and water lines, they set up their own schools and clinics. And of course they do their own businesses and build their own houses.

So for us, it was very important to understand who was doing what - where is the sewerage line? Is it a government sewerage line or a people-laid sewerage line? The kind of information we gathered and mapped spanned every sector in Orangi, and all the actors in involved. That mapping has now spanned the entire Karachi city. Mapping the rural "Goth" settlements in Karachi: Today we are involved in mapping those settlements which about six years back were known as "rural villages." But when we mapped them, we found that they are no longer villages, they are urban. First we made "walking maps" of these settlements by walking through them, then we marked them on the Google satellite maps and put the two together. We worked together with the residents, the goth elders and community activists, and we were able to map each and every goth settlement which had become urban. The government's data showed that there are only about 400 of these goth settlements. But our mapping showed that there are more than 2,000 such settlements. In fact, just knowing that there are 2,000 such settlements, we and many of our partner organizations were advocating to everybody. I think the idea of our advocacy was to make the government understand that it's too many communities - you cannot just evict them. These communities are afait accompli - you can't do anything about these old settlements, so you might as well give them land title. We started mapping all these goth settlements in 2006, and in April 2010, the government announced that more than 50% of all these urban goths villages - 1,063 of them - were to be given the land title.
And it was the maps that did it. Just the maps! I remember one thing: all of us were talking with the elders in these villages, and we asked, if it is so important, why didn't they lobby for land tenure before? They said, that when they used to go and lobby without a map, nobody thought it was very serious, nobody took them seriously. But when they went with the map,"With the map we became visible. The map made us visible. And the map made the government take us seriously.

" That is the power of the map. Who does the mapping? All of us do mapping! Even Naheed maps the villages in the flood-affected rural areas where she works. She maps, her daughter maps. He maps. She maps. We are all Ninja Turtles of mapping!

We don't know anything unless somebody shows us a map! All of us - we are mixture of people living in communities, people having community-based organizations and technical support organizations - and we all map together And these are highly professional maps.

They begin as rudimentary sketches or "walking maps", but then we link them up with Google satellite images. We have tried to use the GIS system, but for us it is too time consuming, and it does not get us close to the communities. So for us, the walking maps and the Google satellite images are map making techniques that help us link up, they make us build up relationships.

The youths in the community have been very important in this mapping.

Right from 1981 until today, the young people in communities have been involved in mapping, all across the country. We are part of a community development network which links more than 80 partner organizations and 3,000 community-based organizations across the two most populace provinces - Sindh and Punjab. And the community youths are involved in all of these organizations. Why the youths? They like to talk, and they are not short of time. They build up relationships, and these relationships work both ways: to understand what people are doing in a community and to gently extend any information into any town or settlement. The map helps us build up these kinds of relationships.

What have the maps done?

The maps have helped professionals to understand the reality and to have the courage to accept reality - that's very important. The maps have also helped the government to understand the reality and for the government to understand that somebody else also has this information, so somebody else can pressure them. So it's not just we or just the ADB or UN developing and owning this information - the people and the NGOs and the media all have this information now. The media is very important for this work, because in our case, the media have used all our maps. Today, all our maps are being used by the government, the media and even the politicians. So it's good for us. In this we have a strategy.

Sometimes on a map, we do not put our names. We also say, OK, you put your name: you put the chief minister's name, you put the government department's name - as long as you accept that map. That is also a strategy for us, that we take a back seat, we become invisible. And sometimes the people use the map and put their organization's seal on it - And we love that! It's great for us!

And of course the maps help the community to understand also.

Because the people within settlements may understand their own work, their own few lanes - but an understanding of an entire area, that is needed. And once that understanding of the larger area is there, the advocacy goes to another level. Because within the community, there are people who understand their lane work, people who understand their molhollah work, and people who understand the town and city work. So this helps take the advocacy and pressurizing of government to a higher level. And of course, government officials within the various departments are also making use of it and supporting it.

There is a lot of relationship-building that happens within a community, during the mapping. Because whenever the information is gathered, it is gathered while talking, while discussing, while actually being in
the settlement. For us, the relationship-building has been the key that has helped advocacy and citywide upgrading.

What has the mapping done, at the wider level? Some examples.

1. Using maps to stop an unnecessary ADB loan for sewerage: In 1999 we were involved in the city of Karachi in trying to stop a very scandalous US$ 100 million ADB-financed loan for one town's sewerage - not Orangi but another town in another part of the city.

   How we stopped it? We mapped the settlement. The government had signed the agreement, with no map in it. There wasn't any map. The entire loan was sanctioned without any map. So we started questioning it. We said, no map? OK, let's do a map ourselves. And we mapped it, and we found that the loan that the government was taking was for the sewerage and the drainage of the entire town, whose population was one million. 80% of all infrastructure already existed in that town. So why the loan? And then we estimated that if 80% exists, only 20% of the town needed some work, and about $15 million was needed. And I remember that in one of the meetings with the governor, when the loan was cancelled, the government department that was taking the loan was lobbying. No we need that loan, we want it, we can't do without it! So the governor, who had seen the map (and of course after a lot of advocacy), said,"If we can build the atom bomb," he said, "why can't we make our own sewerage line?" The point is, the governor hadn't wanted to take the loan, but the info to make his point powerful was not there. The map did it. There was a huge advocacy - the URC was involved, lots of other organizations all over Karachi were in on it. And the map strengthened that and made our advocacy visible. In the work of the OPP-RTI, the URC and the TTRC, we began as working in settlements, and then expanded into town and the city. And that expansion into the city and into other cities was due to maps. Because maps are our eyes - like the x-ray. They tell us what to do, where to go, who to lobby.

2. Using maps to secure the land in goth villages: For us, the story of how the goth villages have become urban and have gotten their land titles, because of the maps, has been such an exciting development. I remember when Diana Mitlin was visiting us in 2010, she went and met some of the community members, who at that time were distraught,"The government gives land title to the rich, why not to us? We have been here since ages. We are the oldest settlers in Karachi. These were settlements that were here even before the migrants came to Karachi - and Karachi is a city of migrants. All these settlements have been there since long before the birth of Pakistan in 1947. More recent migrants are getting their land titles, why not us?"

   This was also a case of political friction between the old settlers and the new migrants. But the maps did it! That settlement that Diana visited got the land title - individual land title! We were just saying amongst ourselves that if we die today, we will die so happily, because we have done it.

   Karachi is in flames. One of the aspects of the violence is the land: who gets the land title is very important. Because the latest migrants, who are represented by a very violent political party, have all got land titles. They came after the 1980s. And these goth settlers, who have lived there since before partition in 1947, they never got the land title. When we were doing the mapping in the goth settlements, there were lots of angry young people, and they said,

   "Oh that settlement over there? They are new migrants and they got the land title. We are the original settlers and we haven't got it." The maps were what helped us to turn it around. And now we are doing a lot of infrastructure in those goth communities and setting up savings groups. This land title thing has been a step forward for the peace of Karachi. It's contributed to the peace and political balance - so it's very powerful.

Pakistan mourns murdered aid worker Parveen Rehman
Parveen Rehman may have been targeted because of her work in exposing land grabbing

The funeral of one of Pakistan's top development workers - shot dead on Wednesday - has been held in Karachi.

Parveen Rehman was killed by four gunmen while travelling in her car near the western Orangi area of the city. It is believed to be one of the largest squatter settlements in Asia.

Ms Rehman was head of the Orangi Pilot Project, one of Pakistan's most successful non-profit programmes, which helps local communities escape from poverty. Scores of people attended the funeral, including relatives, friends and members of civil society.

The BBC's M Ilyas Khan in Pakistan says her death reflects the increased level of violence in the country's largest city, where scores of people this year have been killed in ethnic, sectarian and criminal violence.

Ms Rehman had been documenting land use around Karachi, which some believe may have antagonised the city's powerful land-grabbing criminal syndicates. Ms Rehman was shot after she left her office in Orangi. She was hit twice in the neck and taken to hospital, but doctors could not revive her.

**Parveen Rehman - 'fighter for the poor'**

Born in Dhaka in 1957, then the capital of East Pakistan, and received her early education there.

Trained as an architect but soon moved into aid and sanitation work.

Made famous by Steve Inskeep in his book about the Orangi project called Instant City: Life and Death in Karachi. He described her as a "thin, raven-haired woman with a musical way of talking".

Taught architecture to students in Karachi. No militant group has said it carried out the attack which has devastated many residents of Orangi.

"She was a great help for us. She was just like an elder sister to whom we would go whenever a problem struck us," a resident told local media.

Ms Rehman's associates say that while she had no enemies, her work on land grabbing and illegal water hydrants in and around Karachi may have angered elements involved in the illegal multi-million rupee business. The provincial parliament of Sindh, of which Karachi is the capital, offered a vote of condolence for her on Thursday.

In a statement the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan - an independent watchdog - called on those who "believe in freedom, justice and human rights" to stand up to the "enemy who wants to eliminate all symbols of hope".

Ms Rehman has complained in the past that she has received death threats. At one point some armed men stormed her offices and ordered her staff to leave.

In 1999 she became head of the Orangi Pilot Project (OPP), founded by development expert Akhtar Hameed Khan.

The project encourages communities to maintain their own systems for sanitation, health, housing and micro-finance.
Another OPP worker killed

KARACHI, May 13: The head of the Orangi Pilot Project’s Baldia office was gunned down in the Manghopir area on Monday exactly two months after the killing of OPP director Parween Rehman.

Abdul Waheed, a school owner and known social reformer who was also active in polio campaigns, along with his brother Naseer was coming out of his ‘Naunahal Academy’ in Islamia Colony near Kati Pahari when armed men fired at them and fled after hurling a cracker-like object at them, said SP Chaudhry Asad.

Mr Waheed suffered gunshot wounds in the head and died on the spot. The body and the victim’s wounded brother were shifted to the Abbasi Shaheed Hospital.

The police officer said the victim had been receiving ‘threatening calls’ for some time but it was being investigated whether they pertained to extortion or militants were behind them.

The victim originally hailed from Swat, the police officer added.

Mr Waheed’s friend who wished not to be named told Dawn that the victim started his school in 2005. Subsequently, he launched a ‘religious reforms project’ by imparting modern education to pupils of seminaries in his area. In 2009, he told his friends that he had been receiving ‘threats’ from some religious elements. Recently, he also became active in administration of polio drops to children in his area, where the polio campaign was resisted by certain religious elements. He said the victim was the OPP Baldia head and also an employee of the Orangi Charitable Trust of the OPP.

For his social and religious reforms activities, a US-based NGO ‘Ashuka International’ had awarded him scholarship.

He had hired guards for the school recently and appeared to be upset for some reason.

He said the family sources informed him that Mr Waheed’s daughter was also wounded in the attack but the police denied that.

(Dawn, 14/05/2013)

Another progressive voice silenced in Orangi

At Kati Pahari, where government schools have remained closed since the violence of 2011, Abdul Waheed ran a 23-room school under the banner of Bright Education Trust. It was open for all ethnicities, and girls studied alongside boys.

Outside this very school, Waheed was shot dead by unidentified attackers on Monday. The assailants did not even spare his his little daughter and younger brother Naseeb Khan, who were also injured in the attack near Naunehal Academy in Peerabad’s Islamia Colony.

The victims were taken to the Abbasi Shaheed Hospital. Waheed had suffered multiple bullets to the upper torso that proved fatal.
Peerabad police confirmed the victim had been working as a social worker in the area for several years. He also ran a small clinic for the locals and had established a small medical store as well.

Waheed's murder comes exactly two months after another prominent social worker, Parveen Rehman, the long-time director of the renowned Orangi Pilot Project, was gunned down in the Pakthunabad neighbourhood of Karachi on March 13. Rehman was being driven back home when she was killed by armed attackers at the Qasba Morr.

A man against ‘Mullah mindset’

The first time I met Waheed, he showed me around the locality. He took me to government schools deserted by teachers who feared their safety in a locality where ethnic violence had taken a bloody toll.

"[You] don’t believe me? See it for your own self," he ranted as he drove me around in his blue Daihatsu Coure. He was vociferous in his beliefs, stood against the “Mullah mindset”, and had at one point in life tried his luck at Madressah reform.

At his school, I once met a Deobandi cleric, who influenced by Waheed’s teachings had allowed girls to study at his seminary, hired mostly female teachers and considered English an important tool for development.

He lived in a locality where militant wings of political parties operated with ease, and Taliban had carried various attacks on liberals like him.

There were threats to his life and he knew it well, yet he worked undeterred. The last time I visited his school, in October 2012, his school had a big banner promoting polio vaccinations. Those days aid workers were being shot and kidnapped — a backlash the campaign faced after the CIA used vaccination programme to hunt Osama Bin Laden.

I entered to meet a young man I had never seen before, armed with a Kalashnikov. "Who do you want to meet? Name?"

"Waheed Sahib, Tell him it’s Sidrah Roghay from The News."

The men took me through a flight of stairs to the first floor, where an apologetic Waheed met me. "I never wanted all this, but my boys insisted."

His brother was shot at the day before outside his school. "They missed me I was the target," he said.

I insisted he should move to a safer location, but this was where he had lived all his life. "This is where my people live."

That day when he escorted me till the school gate, he was on guard. He bid me goodbye while his eyes wandered all over the locality, eyeing for any suspicious objects or people. I stopped visiting after that, fearing I would be shot at in case the gunmen missed their target.

But we stayed in touch on the phone. On the election day he invited me over at his school. Later in the evening when I called he informed me about a bomb blast just outside his school at Islamia Colony. Three men queuing at the polling station were injured.

"People are too scared to step out and vote. Campaign in some areas was done through the pulpit. This soil is hungry for blood. It is blotched with blood everywhere."

(By Sidrah Roghay, The News, 14/05/2013)
A second human rights defender is assassinated within two months from the same organization and area

It is the responsibility of the government to ensure that Abdul Waheed Khan projects are continued so that his death will not be in vain

On May 13 a well known human rights defender, social activist and educationist was assassinated, allegedly by religious extremists suspected to be members of the Taliban. Mr. Abdul Waheed Khan 35, was running a school, the Naunehal Academy under the Bright Educational Society, in the Qasba Colony Karachi. It is a co-educational school -- for girls and boys. He was also running a pharmacy providing free medicines to the poor and started the Bright Educational Society in the late 1990s when he was young.

He was shot dead by three men in front of his house when he was with his one-year-old daughter and his brother. The killers also threw a powerful and loud fire cracker at his body after killing him so that people would not chase them. The suspects also injured his daughter, Pareesha and his elder brother Naseeb Taj. The brother's condition is said to be critical. One
year before, his elder brother, Mujeeb, and Abdul Waheed's close associate were shot and injured as they refused to stop the modern education provided to the girls and boys. Abdul Waheed had been under threat for more than a year. He had been intending to shift his place of residence because of continuous threats from the Taliban and announcements against him from different mosques. His colleagues who are running the education program are also under threat.

This was the second attack on a human rights defender within two months and both victims were from the same area and organisation, the Orangi Pilot Project (OPP). Ms. Perveen Rehman the Executive Director of OPP was assassinated by unknown gunmen on March 13 and Abdul Waheed Khan was also the local president of OPP from the Islamia Colony, Qasba, and lived in the same vicinity.

Abdul Waheed was bringing modern education to young people in the urban poor localities of Pakistan. His education centre was very popular in the slum area of Karachi where a sizeable number of the inhabitants migrated from the Northern parts of the country for better job opportunities. Few of them had sufficient income to educate their children. The Taliban have virtually taken over the whole area where Pathans reside. They are Pushto speaking people living around a mountain and the sewerage nullahs (open drains) with no housing facilities.

In 2009 Abdul Waheed and his associates started a project for reforming the Madressas's (Muslim seminaries) education system which were in good numbers in the slum or low income areas. This initiative has disturbed not only the fundamentalists but also the authorities who wanted the Madressas to flourish so that the budget allocations for the education, health and welfare of the children could be taken as corruption. His reform project was very successful and mosques and Madressas were announcing through their loudspeakers that the project is funded by the USA and the West. Besides education he was also working to provide free medicines to the poor. He and his organisation conducted very accurate land surveys of the areas which helped the OPP to work and develop sewage systems. Such programmes infuriated the land grabbers and revenue authorities who made a nexus with the Taliban to stop such activities.

He was very good planner and able to mobilise the people and in the late 1990s he organised the youth in the area and launched educational activities. His group was providing help to the victims of human rights abuses and gave the poor people the strength to resist the police atrocities.

The human rights defenders remain prey to the authorities, particularly from the military run intelligence agencies, police, land grabbers and Muslim fundamentalists and other powerful groups in Pakistan. Every year many human rights defenders are killed and many remain under threat. At the same time every year 15 to 20 journalists are killed or shot dead by unidentified perpetrators. In every such killing the police file cases against 'unknown' persons who always remain 'unknown' as no killer of a human rights defender or journalist is ever caught or prosecuted. The authorities in the country enjoy the use of word 'unknown' which helps them to get impunity through the law. In many cases, like that of Abdul Waheed, the police and government know very well who are involved in the target killing but they use 'unknown' as a shield for their protection and inability to actually arrest the real villains.

In Balochistan, every year more than 100 human right defenders are arrested by 'unknown' persons and after some time they are extrajudicially killed and their bodies are found on the road sides. The government, the judiciary and police are well informed by the family members of the victims that they were arrested by persons from the state intelligence agencies and police but still the killers remain 'unknown'.

It is a matter of shame that the government is unable to provide protection to people, who at great risk to themselves, are working to provide free education and facilities to the poor. While they are providing this service to assist, not only the poor but also the government that should, in fact, be providing these services, the government is doing nothing to facilitate their work but rather working for the protection of the Taliban and fundamentalists.
The Asian Human Rights Commission calls upon the government of Pakistan to design and create a mechanism for the protection of human rights defenders and form legislation in this regard. The government must act quickly to arrest the assassins who killed Abdul Waheed Khan as it is believed that they live in the same vicinity, which is under the control of the Taliban, as they came on foot and escaped with ease.

Compensation must be paid to the family of Abdul Waheed Khan and the educational activities along with reforms in Madressas which were initiated by him and his group must be continued under official patronage. It is the responsibility of the government to ensure that Abdul Waheed Khan's death will not be in vain.

(humanrights.asia, 14/05/2013)

Abdul Waheed laid to rest
Another dedicated activist lost

KARACHI: Kati Pahari, where due to an unofficial ban on Urdu speaking teachers, government schools are closed and Pakhtun avoid vaccinating their children, Abdul Waheed, who was shot dead on Monday, ran a school and a vaccine centre.

Ashuka Fellow and a true follower of Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) founder Dr Akhtar Hameed Khan's teachings, Waheed built a school The Bright Future Academy and was running a Polio Resource Centre to make locals aware of the importance of vaccinating their children.

His school was beyond ethnic divisions that are at the heart of most problems in that area. Late Monday evening, Waheed was sitting in front of the same school, along with his family members when unidentified armed men targeted him with gunfire and also threw a cracker.

During the attack, Waheed was killed and his 12-month-old daughter and brother Naseeb Taj injured seriously. Just two months ago, on May 13, another well-known social worker Parveen Rehman, director OPP was shot dead when she was on her way home from work.

Education beyond ethnic divides: I met Abdul Waheed in his school in 2011 along with NPR's Steve Inskeep who was working on his book 'Instant City'. Waheed took us to the nearby government school that was closed in 2009. We walked across a graveyard to reach the school. On the way I saw graffiti on the walls in support of Bhaloo Bhai - a Pashtun rickshaw driver, who quit driving and picked up a gun after some Urdu-speaking people beat him up. In these circumstances, how could an Urdu-speaking teacher step foot in the area, I had wondered.

However, Waheed had no such questions or inhibitions. He only wanted children to have a bright future and a good education.

Waheed, a Pakhtun himself had said that Urdu speaking people make good teachers, while the Pakhtuns make really good students. In those days, most of the teachers, who commuted to the area were Urdu speaking, so when ethnic violence started in 2010, the teachers were afraid to visit, resulting in the closure of Umer Farooq Government Primary School, which was the only public school in the area.

The building was in a dilapidated condition with heaps of garbage all around and scavengers carrying gunny bags searching for tins, cans, bottles and other items they could sell to scrap dealers. He had sadly related to this scribe that, "Sometimes teachers sent someone to the school to just write the date on
the blackboard, so if an inspection team visits, they can justify that they had been visiting the school on a regular basis."

Despite the ethnic tensions between the two communities, Waheed was steadfast in his resolve to get the children of his area educated.

He opened a school where any child, regardless of his ethnic background could get an education. Apart from the school, he also made Kids Peace Committees comprising school children, which would visit the area and ask parents not to fight. He was very upset about the ethnic violence and during visits would share photos of mutilated bodies of minors who were killed during cross fire between the two communities.

According to Sindh Education Department, at least 8 schools have been closed in Orangi Town alone since 2008 due to violence, target killings and armed clashes between different ethnic groups.

Vaccines for a healthy future: In this Pakhtun dominated area, most parents prefer not to get their children vaccinated when anti-polio teams visit them. The teams were threatened and many times were even welcomed with firing. As a concerned citizen, Waheed contacted the Rotary Club and opened Polio Resource Centre, just beside his school.

He spread awareness among the locals regarding the importance of vaccines and how it could change and affect their child’s future. In this regard, he also had taken the local religious scholars in confidence.

Grieving family and friends: The dedicated social worker, originally hailing from Tor Ghar, Kala Dhaka, KPK, had shifted to Karachi for a better future where he not only worked for his own better future, but also brightened the future of many children.

Nazir Khan, one of his close friends, while talking to Daily Times said, “Waheed wanted to help the poor of his area. I cannot explain how much we have lost after his death. Only time will tell us.”

Prominent print journalist Zia Ur Rehman who is an expert on conflict reporting said that he was working for the betterment of his community. “In Pashtun neighbourhoods, people usually were reluctant to vaccinate their children, but Waheed, with the help of local religious scholars, worked hard to persuade people to administer polio vaccines,” he said.

He was a true pupil of OPP's Akhter Hameed Khan and Parveen Rehman and after the assassination of Rehman; he was also worried about his security, as he too had been receiving threats for the past three months.

“I personally know that he was financially supporting several students of the community who were acquiring higher education,” said Zia Ur Rehman.

(By Amar Guriro, DailyTimes, 15/05/2013)

**Courage under fire: Social worker killed**

THE war on progressive thought grinds on relentlessly in Pakistan. On Monday, Abdul Waheed, a social worker who ran a co-educational school in Karachi’s Islamia Colony and was active in polio campaigns and madressah education reform on a local level, was shot dead by unknown assailants outside his school. The attack also left his younger brother injured. While the motive of the killers is not yet known, Mr Waheed had repeatedly mentioned receiving threats to his life. It is pertinent to note that his school lies in a locality that is part of Manghopir, one of the areas in Karachi where the TTP wields influence. Many government schools here are reportedly closed because staff has stopped showing up for duty out of fear of violence.

Mr Waheed is the latest in a long line of social workers who have been targeted in Pakistan. Two months ago, Perween Rahman, director of the acclaimed Orangi Pilot Project that works on social uplift
programmes in some of Karachi’s poorest neighborhoods, was shot dead. It is not yet clear whether the land mafia or militants are responsible for her murder. Mr Waheed, incidentally, was also working for the OPP. Since last December, attacks on polio immunisation teams have claimed over 20 lives in Karachi and KP. Earlier this year, six female teachers working for an NGO were gunned down in KP. Instances abound of kidnapping for ransom of aid workers. In Balochistan, after an aid worker was kidnapped and killed in April 2012 when the ransom demand was not met, several NGOs either wrapped up their work or severely curtailed it. According to a recent report, Pakistan is among the five most dangerous countries for aid workers. That is all the more reason to salute the courage of individuals like Mr Waheed, and to demand that the next government give priority to the security of those fighting for a progressive Pakistan against obscurantist forces who seek to take its people into the dark ages.

(Daily Dawn, 15/05/2013)

Lost humanity

Humanity, and all that goes with it, seems to be slipping rapidly away from us, adding to the brutality that has increasingly come to shape our nation. This is, perhaps, most true in Karachi, where death comes easily and in many forms. The latest victim has been Abdul Waheed, a philanthropist and human rights worker, who was shot dead on May 14 at his medical store in Islamia Colony, Manghopir. His elder brother, with him at the time, lies in critical condition in hospital. His one-year old daughter also suffered a bullet injury.

Mr Waheed, originally from Swat, had been based in Karachi for around 15 years. He had been receiving threats since he condemned the killing of social activist Parween Rehman, with whom he had worked at the Orangi Pilot Project. Ms Rehman was killed in March this year. Mr Waheed himself ran a school, was known as an activist and regularly handed out free medicines from his store. These very factors appear to have resulted in his violent death by unknown assailants, who then fled after detonating an explosive device which created panic in the area. It is quite obvious that the killing was well planned and expertly executed by assassins who removed another good citizen from our midst.

We have lost too many such persons. Only the most evil can, in this fashion, go after those helping others in desperate need. The reality also is that Karachi has turned into a territory run by ruthless mafias. The failure to apprehend these persons, or protect those like Mr Waheed who had been threatened, only emboldens such gangs. Till the culture of crime and murder is eliminated from Karachi, more people will die. This is something we simply cannot afford. We desperately need people like Abdul Waheed and Parween Rehman. The action to eliminate them simply adds to the people’s hardships and proves that we have allowed our largest city to be converted into a jungle from where the rule of law has completely vanished, putting everyone at peril.

(The Express Tribune, 16/05/2013)

Ashoka Fellow Abdul Waheed Killed in Karachi Leaves a Legacy of a "Bright Education"

Abdul was creating opportunities for a modern education in the poor, urban localities in Pakistan, particularly by working with children studying in madrasahs.

On May 13th, Abdul was shot dead and then a hand grenade thrown on his body by which his four associates were seriously injured. Abdul is survived by his wife and 3 young children. The Ashoka Global community is mourning the loss of a friend, colleague and a trailblazer that has left a legacy for a "bright education" in Pakistan. He has worked to break down the walls between religion and education in more than a 100 schools to create new possibilities for young changemakers.
Abdul grew up in a low-income Pushtoon family in which culture and religion were deeply intertwined. From his earliest years, his family put a premium on education as the key to social and economic mobility. They sent him to a madrasah to be educated, but he came back dissatisfied and disenchanted by what he witnessed there. Seeing few opportunities for quality education, Abdul sought out programs and people that could teach him to lead madrasahs past the narrow and limited curricula that had confined his early learning.

At the very young age of 10-12 years, Abdul started working on the Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) with Mr. Akhtar Hameed Khan, a renowned scholar in Pakistan who had worked in the slum areas of Bangladesh and who helped mentor Abdul to find his innovative approach for education for the poor. Lessons from Mr. Khan showed Abdul that he had to focus his work through simple principles and to make the most of local resources.

Abdul's idea - flip the problem. There are thousands of madrasahs that operate in Pakistan and in many cases, they offered the only educational services available to poor families. But they were flawed and had a bad reputation for indoctrinating children in narrow and violent versions of Islam. Abdul had so far engaged more than 300 madrasahs to better serve the deep interests of their students to learn and succeed in the modern world. He leaves a legacy of educational reform; incorporating new approaches to learning in Pakistan: courses in mathematics, computers, and the Urdu language and the conversion of madrasahs into day schools with input from parents and the local community. Taken together, Abdul's reforms and approach of focusing on solutions, pave the way for a major shift in the role of madrasahs, preparing them to deliver high-quality education to thousands of young Pakistanis.

(www.ashoka.org, 16/05/2013)

Abdul Waheed Khan

When a social worker dies, a little piece of Pakistan dies too

Ladies and gentlemen, the conundrum for you today is to guess what March 13, 2013 and May 13, 2013 have in common.

Many of you will answer, ‘the number 13,’ but looking beyond this obvious similarity, the former date marked the death of Perveen Rehman whereas May 13, marked the unfortunate death of Abdul Waheed Khan.

Perveen and Abdul were both human rights activists, trying to improve the situation in Pakistan in terms of social mobility. It has been two months since Perveen’s death and nothing has been reported with respect to any investigations or legal proceedings against her killers; attaining justice for her death has become a lost cause.

Similarly, Abdul Waheed Khan was shot dead by three men in front of his house when he was with his one-year-old daughter and his brother. The man was not only a human rights activist, but was running a co-educational school, the Naunehal Academy under the Bright Educational Society which he started in the late 1990s, in Qasba Colony, Karachi.

He was also running a pharmacy that provided free medicine to the poor. He was a man determined to improve the distribution of income and wealth in the country through the provision of education and medical supplies. Abdul’s death has been a severe loss for Pakistan.

It is suspected that Abdul was killed by religious extremists, possibly the Taliban. However, this is old news to us having encountered the incident with Malala Yousufzai and what she suffered merely because she wanted to educate herself. Abdul was bringing modern education to the slums of Karachi where most of the inhabitants were those who had migrated from Northern Pakistan, for better job prospects.
Perhaps Abdul’s case is different. His elder brother was killed as he refused to stop the modern education of girls and boys. Abdul had been receiving death threats ever since then, but his commitment to bettering the lives of others was endless and this is the price he paid for it.

So, was he wrong in being brave and not a coward?

Should every human rights activist drop everything at the first sign of a threat? Should we live our lives in fear of unfortunate but unforeseen things happening to us?

If that was the case, people in Karachi would not leave their homes, no child in the Taliban territory would go to school, and Musharraf would never have returned to Pakistan.

So what should one do?

Fight for what one believes in, like Perveen and Abdul, and fight for all those who are under threat for their efforts in the form of social work.

However, I do wonder what social workers get in return of their relentless struggle.

Just a blog in The Express Tribune praising their efforts and expressing sorrow at their unfortunate death? That’s all?

Let’s hope not. What these people need is protection and justice. Every death should matter and death shouldn’t be a news headline for a day and then forgotten the next day. In such cases, an FIR is usually registered against an unknown person and I do not remember a name being substituted for this word ‘unknown’ in the previous incidents of human rights defenders. But let’s hope this changes and people are held accountable for their actions.

In this case, it is believed that the Taliban are involved and one can only request the government to arrest the assassins of Abdul and not make his death ‘just another life’, which will be long forgotten in the police stations in a matter of days.

Moreover, an educated population is an important step towards the development of a country and therefore the efforts of human rights activists like Abdul should be appreciated and their deaths investigated. The government must take some action in the form of legislation to protect human rights activists who are constantly under threat in our country. They work to improve our lives – something that the government is unable to do.

On May 13, 2013, Abdul Waheed Khan did not just die; a one-year-old daughter’s father died; a family’s pride died and a member of Pakistan’s well-wishers died; education died.

May his soul rest in peace.
(By Umaima Peracha, blogs.tribune.com.pk, 17/05/2013)

Lost glimmer: A fallen guardian of humanity

KARACHI: The halls of Naunehal Secondary school in SITE Town are uncharacteristically silent. Save for the summer breeze which gently rocks the windowpanes and the distant spluttering of rickshaws, nothing stirs.

A small sign has been pasted at the entrance of the school, stating that classes have been cancelled for a couple of days. Venture further into the school’s foyer and you see teachers with sombre expressions lost in thought. Conspicuous by absence is Abdul Waheed, the amiable owner of the school. The six-foot-tall, well-built man could often be seen roaming the school’s halls, beaming as he observed classes in
progress. Now he lies buried in the midst of the people whose lives he struggled to improve. Three
unidentified men gunned him down on May 13 as he stood outside the school with his one-year-old
daughter Pareesha and his elder brother Naseeb Taj. A bullet also pierced Pareesha’s hand.

As law enforcers try to track down those responsible, some of the residents of SITE and Orangi are trying
to come to terms with the fact that a “glimmer of humanity” has been snuffed out. Nazeer Khan,
Waheed’s close childhood friend, felt that Orangi and SITE had been “orphaned” by his death. “He was a
peace-loving man who wasn’t harsh to anyone. His only crime was that he tried to help humanity,” said
Khan. “Waheed believed that all the problems the residents of SITE and Orangi faced were linked to
illiteracy. He felt they will continue to be manipulated until they get educated.”

It comes as no surprise then, that Waheed opened a small roadside school in Islamia Colony back in
1993. Over the next two decades, the enrolment swelled and it expanded from a single room to a four-
storey structure which stood out from the sea of semi-pucca structures it was surrounded by. Waheed
was keen to open the school’s door to even those who couldn’t afford an education – tuition fee had been
waived for 40 per cent of the students. A total of 600 students are currently enrolled in the school.

A beacon of light
The school itself was a microcosm of diversity where children from Pakhtun and Urdu-speaking families
learnt together while politically backed ethnic violence raged outside.

In the summer of 2011, when Karachi witnessed one of its bloodiest summers, parts of Organi and SITE
were particularly affected by the wave of ethnic violence. Waheed’s school was situated close to the
infamous Kati Pahari, where it rained bullets. Many teachers in the area stopped going to school even
after the violence petered out, putting the future of hundreds of children in jeopardy.

Waheed launched a campaign to pressure the education department to take action. “He was the first
person to set up good educational facilities for the children in these areas without discriminating on the
basis of religion or ethnicity,” said Sajid Hussain, who worked with Waheed for more than 10 years. “Our
team will carry on Waheed’s mission.”

The fight for humanity
The school wasn’t the only philanthropic project Waheed was involved in. Waheed partnered with Rotary
International to assist in eradicating polio. Some residents of Orangi and SITE abandoned their homes
during the polio drives which they labelled as haram (proscribed). But Waheed realised the lives which
would have been ruined by this and quickly formed a team of elders from the community to convince
people to see vaccinations in a positive light. He went as far as informing the people about fatwas issued
by religious scholars who viewed the vaccinations as being legal.

Waheed had also worked closely with Perween Rahman, the Orangi Pilot Project director who was
gunned down on March 13. He was a foot soldier who knocked on people’s doors to collect funds for
improving sanitation in one of Asia’s largest slums. Waheed had also served as the programme manager
of OPP’s Orangi Charitable Trust. Bacha Hussain Shakir, Waheed’s colleague, said, “His death will affect
the 60 families which received free food twice a day from his project.”

Law enforcer says Waheed had complained of threats
Abdul Waheed’s 12-year-old son, Wasif, pointed out that his father didn’t have any enmity with anyone
and never spoke of receiving threats at home.

“He was killed even though he didn’t commit any crime,” said the boy, struggling to hold back tears. He
was at home when his father, a philanthropist, was killed on May 13 but could hear the gunshots as the
school was located just a stone’s throw away. Waheed is survived by his wife, two sons and a daughter.

Most people who attended the philanthropist’s funeral blamed militants for his death. Pirabad SHO Abdul
Moeed said that Waheed had submitted an application against unknown men who were calling and
threatening him. “He took the application back the day he submitted it,” he recalled. “Waheed had a good reputation in the area.” He added that the police will trace the culprit soon.

Amarnath Motumal, the vice chairperson of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan’s (HRCP) Sindh chapter issued a press statement in which he expressed grave concern over Waheed’s murder. HRCP has demanded the government to initiate immediate and thorough investigation into the killing of human rights defenders and assure that rights defenders should perform their human rights activities without any worry of retaliation and threats to their lives.

(By Sohail Khattak, The Express Tribune, 17/05/2013)

**Why Waheed had to die!**
The brutal killing of a community mobiliser and social worker is a grim reminder of how forces of darkness and land mafia are averse to enlightenment and progress

Going for condolence at community mobiliser and social worker Abdul Waheed’s house was an experience different from other condolence visits where family and friends are usually found in a state of shock. His wife Yasmin sobbed uncontrollably, but never once did she say “why him”. His colleagues, still struggling hard to recover from Orangi Pilot Project’s Director Parveen Rehman’s murder, seemed to know this was coming: “He was a bit emotional”, “Of course, he was so active, he was a natural target”.

That people have largely resigned to a tragic fate of proactive and committed community workers has become a reality of Pakistan, more so of the Orangi area of Karachi which is a battleground of criminal groups and a convenient shelter for Karachi’s Taliban. Waheed was killed just two days after he oversaw the premises of his school “Naunehal Academy” being used as a polling station for May 11 polls. His three murderers came by foot at his medical store on May 13 evening. He was chatting with his brother and watching over his one-year-old daughter playing. They asked a passerby who Waheed was, shot him from close range, and wounded his daughter and brother and walked away effortlessly. Police is yet to identify his killers though just days before, he had registered a formal complaint about constant threatening phone calls he was receiving from unknown numbers.

Waheed was a community mobiliser in the Qasbah Colony, a part of the Orangi area, which houses the Pashtu and Urdu speaking population, strongly segregated along the two sides of the Katti Pahari. The tension between the two communities is so strong that both sides avoid visiting each other’s domain even in best of times. The area is a reflection of the state’s criminal absence from the lives of the citizens where organisations such as the Orangi Pilot Project have supported basic services including sanitation, health, education, microfinance, etc on self-help basis.

Waheed, hailing from Swat, had been living in Karachi with his family for 30 years. He was the only among his siblings to devote himself to social causes. The rest opened businesses. It was because of people like Waheed — with very strong persuasive skills — that the OPP was able to pull off its self-help projects that have their basis in community participation.

An Ashoka fellow, Waheed’s help with an OPP’s project to lay sewerage lines and paved streets in his area in 1994, inspired him to take up community work. He along with his partner Mohammad Latif and others founded the Bright Education Society, establishing a school in 1996. The school started with 45 students (mostly Waheed’s relatives) and a Rs 1,300 loan from the OPP in Waheed’s Qasba Colony house.

The community’s positive response, leading to the extension of the school, was mainly because of Waheed’s and his partners’ relentless persuasion coupled with their determination to fight the powerful land mafia. As they acquired a piece of land to build the school with the help of Dr. Akhtar Hameed Khan, the mafia offered them to enter into a partnership to “share the plot”. Miffed by Waheed’s resistance, the land grabbers implicated him in false cases and took over the plot. The matter was settled only after DC’s
intervention, but now the police wanted its share. Dr Akhter Hamid Khan’s intense efforts helped resolve the case and the school was finally constructed under police protection.

Waheed and partners expanded the school, that on the eve of his death, had 600 students. The premises also served as a health centre where childbirth attendants were trained. Most importantly, it gained prominence as a polio centre running fearlessly even when the Taliban in the area had made their displeasure known by executing several killings of polio workers in Karachi in the past one year.

Being with OPPP, Waheed was also involved in a number of initiatives including a saving scheme, in which communities were encouraged to pool in their savings for common use. Waheed’s strong community skills made him an important part of late Parveen Rehman’s team who was leading this programme before her death. He was personally supporting a number of families and children for education.

Fee was never a problem at Waheed’s school. The problem was the closure of the school and the reluctance of parents to send their children during the time of political violence in the area. In 2011, the school had to be closed for over a month as Qasba Colony became a battleground for the worst phase of violence the city witnessed (300 dead in one single month).

Waheed’s desperation to keep the school running took him to many doors, as he flitted between civil society organisations, media and citizens groups to help him re-open the school. One remembers him persuading us at PILER: “please, just come and sit with us. This alone will give people the courage to send their children back to school.”

Waheed’s death followed the brutal slaying of his mentor, Parveen Rehman of the OPP right outside her office, just a kilometer away from Waheed’s house. The police killed a local Taliban in an encounter the next day and blamed him for Rehman’s murder, closing the case. Waheed refused to accept an easy answer for her mentor’s death. He fearlessly spoke his heart out in a memorial reference for Rehman the same week. He never stopped repeating that he will not let Rehman’s mission die!

This and many other qualities are the reason we, in Karachi, think that Waheed had to die. His ambitions for his community, his defiance against the militants in his area, his obsession with his school and health centre — he insisted that his school should have Urdu speaking teachers, since they are better skilled — his relentless quest for a solution to the marginalization of his community and area, and most importantly, his refusal to stop even after his colleagues Latif was shot at, and Parveen was killed, is a reason enough to silence him. It is important that all else be reminded of Karachi’s intolerance for its useful citizens. (By Zenia Shaukat, The News, 19/05/2013)