

# Polio True Story—Mehnaz

Recently having completed her Bachelor Degree from Karachi, Mehnaz is determined to succeed. Given her lifelong passion for academics, her mother ensured that Mehnaz went to school to secure a good education. In the beginning expresses Mehnaz, she did feel as if she was different to other students in her class, but she was determined that this difference would not hamper her future plans. As she grew with age, her willpower to continue studying grew stronger, and today she looks forward to getting admission to complete her Masters Degree, and hold a position in a bank.

This determination, willpower and desire to live, all from a girl who was crippled with polio as a young child is something that we could all learn from.

Mehnaz's polio disability is so severe that she cannot walk but upon her knees. Reaching out to anything above her is impossible and climbing stairs is nothing less than difficult—yet Mehnaz seems to overcome these obstacles with a smile and a laugh that carries energy, life and enthusiasm to live, but things have not always been this way.



*Images courtesy Sharp Cut Films*

For Mehnaz's mother, her daughter's access to quality education was primary, and so day in and day out, she would take her daughter to the English-medium primary school and later the Government secondary School, spending the entire day in class with Mehnaz, and then bringing her home at the end of the day. When Mehnaz was young carrying her to school was not very difficult, but as she grew older, access to school was limited to her wheelchair. Her mother acknowledges with sadness that “even her brothers, who love her very much, would become embarrassed to take her to school in the wheelchair. They worried about comments from the local community.”

As the level of studies got more difficult and Mehnaz needed tuition, her mother ensured that she didn't miss a single class—come rain or shine Mehnaz and her mother reached every class on time. Her mother admits that many teachers and mothers thought that she was Mehnaz's maid, yet she very proudly would clear this, telling all that Mehnaz was her daughter.

“Because of her polio disability, I will not allow my daughter to be a burden on anyone,” states her mother emphatically. “I had to fight against the opinions of my husband, my sons and the community about giving her an education, but I did not give up. The day Mehnaz is truly independent—financially and otherwise, will be the day that I can say to Allah that I am ready to die— but until then I pray to keep me with Mehnaz.”

Currently, Mehnaz provides tuition to students from the local community, giving her some financial independence as she prepares to continue her studies and work towards a career in the banking sector.

Life has been difficult Mehnaz admits, but believes that she needs to remain positive. She looks at the young children she teaches and realizes how fortunate they are. Polio teams now travel door-to-door to ensure that every child is given polio drops in every campaign so that no child will see the same problems that she had to see.



It is not easy living with polio—each stage of life from childhood through to being an adult brings with it unique problems, but there is no reason why children in this day and age need to face these. Children can be protected against polio if each and every child is given two drops of the vaccine in each and every campaign. Successfully reaching every child every time is working towards eradication of this disease so that the children of tomorrow need only know about polio from history books. Together we can make this possible.

**Mehnaz's story is just one in the series of Polio True Stories produced and directed by Sharpcut Films.**