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25 FOR 25 SERIES

## KULSUM SHADAB WAHAB

*25 for 25 is an original content series by Gucci and CHIME FOR CHANGE to mark the historic milestone of Beijing +25 in March, as well as Women's History Month. The series will highlight activists, CHIME Advisory Board members, partners and supporters who represent the progress made on gender equality over the past 25 years, as well as the emerging next generation continuing this critical work.*



As the CEO of **Hothur Foundation** and Founder of **Ara Lumiere**, **Kulsum Shadab Wahab** works with women acid attack survivors across India to help improve their social and economic well-being and build a better future. Learn more about Kulsum's vision for a gender-equal future below, as one of the 25 gender equality activists and leaders featured in CHIME's 25 for 25 series.

## **What are your hopes and expectations for gender equality in the next 25 years?**

In the next 25 years, it is my strongest will to see women getting equal opportunities to take their decisions independently without having to struggle for their basic rights. In a country like India, girl child abortions, education, societal status and acceptance remain to be some of the major problems society acutely faces. To be able to open peoples' minds and change their perspective towards equality and women would be one of the greatest milestones for me.

## **What does gender equality mean to you?**

Gender equality for me is treating, respecting, accepting and giving rights to men and women equally. Neither gender should need to struggle to obtain the basic rights every being is rightfully entitled to.

## **What keeps you energized and committed as a leader for gender equality?**

The world around me, especially my brave survivors of acid attack keep me on my toes towards a topic like gender equality. I see them almost on a daily basis and it reminds me to be grateful for what we have, yet empathetic towards the ones who do not. I also feel a strong responsibility for trying to protect them in whatever way I possibly can.

## **What advice would you give younger generations on how to advocate / work for gender equality as they get older?**

Gender equality is something that should be nurtured into the minds of children and young adults. It is deep-rooted and could be linked to early memories of roles and behaviour of parents and adults surrounding them. Thankfully, the younger generation is more open minded to sensitive topics such as these and if they can initiate small changes in their lives such as treating women with dignity and respect, it will definitely lead to a better society.

Who do you look to as an example / role model in the fight for gender equality?

Melinda Gates is an inspiration for me for gender equality. Not only has she closed significant gaps in women inequality and made 'opportunity' and 'equality' a reality, she has also brought astonishing changes in fighting diseases and improving agriculture around the world. She has inspirational grit, compassion and perceptiveness.

