

INTERNATIONAL AWARD  
UCLG - **MÉXICO** CITY - CULTURE 21  
CATEGORY PERSONALITY  
WINNER 2014

**FARIDA  
SHAHEED**





# FARIDA SHAHEED

Farida Shaheed is the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations in the field of cultural rights. Her early work as a sociologist in Pakistan was on rights-based development. Her interest led to extensively exploring the interface of culture and identity in relation to both development and rights, and the State's responsibilities in this regard. Extensive work has encompassed deepening conceptual understanding as a social analyst and translating that knowledge in practical terms as a development consultant, as well as decades of grounded work at the grassroots level, transferring knowledge and building skills across a wide range of cultural contexts.

She is currently based in Shirkat Gah Women's Resource Centre, a pioneer on sustainable development issues in Pakistan, and the only one with a gendered lens. In all arenas, whether at the grassroots, national or international levels, Shaheed has consistently worked to dispel the notion of culture as being static, a monolith or a relic of the past and has instead promoted an understanding of the dynamic nature of culture and its deep-rooted interconnectedness with laws and development projects as well as social norms, in the contemporary environment.

Farida Shaheed's writings, with a special focus on the interface of culture, gender, religion and the state, have been published extensively. She received the Prime Minister's award for her

co-authored book *Two Steps Forward One Step Back? Women of Pakistan*. A major interest has been the multidimensional issues entailed in women appropriate development, in particular the interface of human rights and culturally diverse realities in which the lives of women and girls are embedded.

Farida Shaheed's work at the United Nations began in 2009 as an independent expert. Since 2012 she has been the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights. From her position, Shaheed has proposed several initiatives to integrate culture and human rights. Farida Shaheed's periodic reports to the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly of the United Nations are fundamental references in the relationship between culture, human rights and sustainable development. She has identified and documented the main challenges of cultural rights present in our societies, including the right to access and enjoy cultural heritage, the right to benefit from scientific progress and its applications, the right to freedom of artistic expression and creativity, cultural rights of women on an equal basis with men, historical and memorial narratives in divided societies. She is an essential reference in the struggle for explicit consideration of culture in the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations.