

EPISODE 15

[INTRODUCTION]

[00:00:05] ANNOUNCER: You are listening to 10,000 Swamp Leaders, leadership conversations that explore adapting and thriving in a complex world, with Rick Torseth and guests.

[INTERVIEW]

[00:00:19] RT: Hi, everybody. Rick Torseth. Welcome back to 10,000 Swamp Leaders. This is a podcast where we have conversation with leaders who made a decision to lead in very difficult and challenging environments, or what we call here the swamp. Today, as my guest, I have Sadaffe Abid, who has a remarkable story to tell, at least in my opinion, I think you'll agree. Sadaffe has been hard at work in Pakistan and beyond Pakistan doing work in an organization she founded called CIRCLE, working with women. I'm going to give her an opportunity to set the stage for what that work is about. Sadaffe, welcome to the conversation.

[00:00:57] SA: Thank you so much, Richard. It's wonderful to be here with you.

[00:01:00] RT: Just to get a started, tell people about yourself.

[00:01:03] SA: I grew up in Pakistan. My dad was in the military. We were mostly in small towns. I went to government schools. In fact, my father was very concerned that my brother and I won't learn English, because we went away in basic schools. Then we settled in Lahore. My best friend was going for college to the US, and that's how I got the idea of going to the US. My father said, "It's a great idea, but go for your master's undergrad. You're too young. America is very different. The values are very different. Go later." Somehow, I didn't give up. I convinced my dad and my aunt jumped in. Together, we worked on him and then he said, "You can go if you get a scholarship."

I got a scholarship with Mount Holyoke. I think, that set a great ground for my, actually, future in hindsight, when I look back. Going to a women's college, a liberal arts degree, the exposure to the US diversity really influenced me in many ways.

[00:02:03] RT: You started an organization some time back called CIRCLE. I know there's a lot of road that you traveled between finishing at Mount Holyoke and starting CIRCLE. We may get into some of that as it's relevant to where you are today. As I was getting ready for our conversation and looking at the work you've done, it's pretty impressive. You've touched the lives of at least 12,000 women in the last few years and now you set an aspirational goal of touching a million by 2025. You're focused on building digital skills for women, leadership, development and entrepreneurship. My first question is, what is it about the mission of CIRCLE that is who you are, and what is it you're trying to do with this work through the work that you're doing at CIRCLE?

[00:02:49] SA: Right. I really believe that for Pakistan, women are the most untapped asset of our country. I have noticed this over time when I was involved in microfinance. Now that I'm doing entrepreneurship, like digital literacy, that women tend to be in the informal economy, they're stuck in low paid jobs, or they don't have a job, or they don't have enough skills.

That's really the problem. After I finished my master's and I returned to Pakistan, that's the problem I wanted to focus on. What could I do for women and in particular, for young women? That's actually how I stumbled on tech. That's how the mission of CIRCLE got to be defined around women's economic empowerment and inclusion. Pakistan has one of the lowest female labor force participation rates in the region at 25% and under. Bangladesh, our neighbor is at 40%. Vietnam further remains at 70%.

That's why I say, this as a huge untapped resource. There are many barriers and challenges that women face. I wanted to see how I could unlock that through technology, digital literacy, entrepreneurship, because it again, gives you flexibility, which is very important for women. Then leadership development.

[00:04:05] RT: Okay. People out there listening are going to say, this is a hugely noble, cool thing. You're all by yourself when you started this. I mean, this is your idea. Help people understand how one individual with that idea, what is it that you started doing that brought you at least where you are today, much less where you're going to go? Because you were on your own with your idea before you started moving here. What was the action you took? What did you do?

[00:04:32] SA: Yeah, that's a great question. Because I think a lot of times, we get intimidated when we see people who have done things that you see them at a stage where they're more established and you think about, how can I do this? I did my master's at the Harvard Kennedy School, and I studied adaptive leadership with Professor Ron Heifetz and Dean Williams. The Kennedy School, one of the big messages is go back to your country. Focus on a problem, solve it. That's the drive that I brought back when I came to Pakistan.

I had worked in microfinance before. I had been chief operating officer and CEO of Cash Foundation. We had built it from two homes and taken it to 300,000 women giving micro-loans. I had been part of an organization where I had actually played a role in scaling it, growing it from a pilot. I joined it when were in two rooms. I have to say, it was very disorienting and confusing when I started again, because I had no idea where to begin. Young women, with what to do. It's a country 20 million people. It was really the philosophy of running experiments and just being curious and listening. I started with that.

[00:05:42] RT: You and I shared the background of adaptive leadership from Heifetz, Linsky, Dean Williams. For those who may not be as familiar with that, running experiments is a fundamental part of building adaptive capacity and creating a movement. Share with people what that actually looked like for you when you're doing it. What were the experiments you were running? What were you learning? How did you evolve it?

[00:06:02] SA: The first experiment was a failure, because the thing is – but it gave me so much insight. I came back to Pakistan, to Karachi, in fact, and I thought about tech for women, and I started researching, reading up. Back in those days, there was nothing happening in Pakistan in terms of opportunities for girls to code. Somehow, I heard about an area which was actually about an hour and a half drive outside Karachi, Gadap, which is a very difficult area, very difficult to get there, bad roads. They had big electricity shortages.

It was just that I got connected to that area, to that community. Me and one of my team members, we would go out with focus groups trying to understand these young women, what would were their needs and how we could bring digital skills to them. We ended up actually not working in that community, because it's such a hard community. I learned so much to it. That was the first experiment to go out, listen, done. I learned while I was engaged that it's better for

me to start in an area where I understand better. Where I don't have these big problems of electricity breakdowns, travel issues, security issues. How will I be able to maneuver so many challenges at one time?

We didn't work in Gadap, but we started building the mode. Then, actually started working more from urban slums in Karachi, and started our first pilot. That was also not easy. I remember, I hired a field mobilizer and he said to me, "No one wants to enroll in this program. I've been talking to people, communities. They say, we don't want to train our young women in digital skills. We just want them to get married and settle down." I went out in communities myself then, talking to parents, talking to fusion centers, educational institutes. Then we had open tea houses, inviting families, because no one knew CIRCLE. No one knew me. I was very new to Karachi itself. I'm from Lahore. It's a huge, big city, 20 million-plus people.

We had to start by building trust. Why are we here? What's the purpose? Then slowly, people started coming in. In our first cohort, I made sure we had 65% women. When we were able to retain that, and they learned these skills and they graduated and the industry then started being open to interviewing them, hiring them. That's how slowly the shift started happening. It was a very slow process.

[00:08:29] RT: Give people a sense of the length of time.

[00:08:31] SA: I was on the timeline, because I had managed to raise my first funding. I had to show a cohort in a couple of months. The first, let's say four or five months were grueling in the sense that no one wanted to talk. No one wanted to enroll their daughters. I had a team member we had hired, she dropped out. It was a lot of pressure. I think, what kept me going and kept me steady was the inspiring mission and the innovation that people bring in, and just curiosity and talking. One thing I did differently this time was I built a group of mentors and advisors, because that's so important. People who can actually advise you, guide you, open doors for you. I cultivated those relationships. It's been challenging.

[00:09:19] RT: Let's just take a moment here to dig a little bit into that strategy you had about mentors and advisors, because oftentimes, especially when you're starting a project like this, you're alone. Being alone as a leader is not a great place to be, especially when you're dealing

with challenges. How did you frame it set up, if you did it in a deliberate way, this relationship with advisors and partners to help you navigate the road?

[00:09:44] SA: Right. Richard, I mean, I have to say this, the advisors and mentors didn't come in very early on. I think, it really started happening maybe three years later. We had a board, but you know what happens. I set up CIRCLE as a non-profit. Now, what happens is people who come on non-profit boards, they're not being paid for it. They're busy people. Although they're good people, they're inspired by the cause, but most of them are busy.

I think, I also felt at that stage a bit not very comfortable asking them for a lot of time, because we're also learning experimenting. There's nothing much on the ground. I was careful in going to help. I think, after a span of two years, two and a half years, I could see that it's important for me to have that advisory group. Some of them started informally. For the tech piece, for example, the university, which became our partner, the academic counselor over there, Dr. **[inaudible 00:10:36]**, he became a good friend and a supporter for tech role, because he could see the impact that we were creating. He was excited about having a classroom with majority women, which had not happened in Pakistan before.

He wanted to see how we could replicate this, grow it. You start finding the right people also. Sometimes it's not a formal relationship, but you start cultivating. Now, I'm thoughtful about it for sure. Now five years down the road, I am now more thoughtful about which people do I need to engage in, because even though sometimes by default, I can fall into thinking, I have to do this on my own. That can be daunting. Then I tell myself, I can draw on networks. I have now managed to build some great networks and people who appreciate our work and who can see the impact with it.

[00:11:25] RT: Would you share a little bit about on that journey with those people? I'm also imagining that you were finding your voice in progressive ways, as you're traveling along there. How are you different in terms of how you use yourself and your voice to not just move the work along, but to keep the board moving and keep your team engaged and find new people to come into the program? How have you changed yourself to do that work?

[00:11:53] SA: It has been a challenge for me. Something now that I'm more comfortable with. I realized, for example, in difficult situations, I would not be as firm as was required. My own

stomach for disequilibrium, conflict was not that strong, and I have built it over time. I think, when you're in leadership and you're facing difficult situations, there have to be times where you have to say things as they are. I think this is a muscle that I have built over time.

Finding my voice was challenging. I mean, especially early stages when we didn't have funding. It was a goal. It was a mission. I had to attract people towards it. That piece, I think I did well. The piece around raising funding, for example, was always harder. When you're asking someone for funds, I think, I myself I found that to be harder. Now I'm getting better, because you've just got appreciation and trust, which is Prince Charles Charity, and they are funding us this year, which is very exciting.

[00:12:54] RT: Well done.

[00:12:55] SA: Then we have another Global Fund for Women, which is also coming. These are great recognitions for CIRCLE and our mission.

[00:13:03] RT: I want to get into the work you do in CIRCLE, but you just said something I want to tease out a little bit, and that is your stomach for disequilibrium. What I've noticed is that using what you just said, the leaders' capacity to hold that tension, that disequilibrium internally and move forward mirrors what the organization's capacity is to do it as well. Meaning, that they're holographically connected. That's been my experience. Just wondering if when you look back on the journey of CIRCLE as the organization and the team, if the pace at which they're able to go was somehow organized and connected to the disequilibrium growth that you're experiencing yourself.

[00:13:42] SA: I think that's a great insight, and it's making me reflect also on the experience. Yes, I did feel that in terms of, let's say, stretching ourselves, or bringing new ideas, at times I would feel that I am the one who was doing that. We all know that no one person in today's world carries all the solutions. You got to get ideas from wider stakeholders, and everyone is carrying some piece of the solution. I've had to work on that, because also, I come from a culture, Richard, where people are into hierarchies. There's a big thing about, if you're the CEO, someone who has the answers, who would lead, respectful authority. I do appreciate that in CIRCLE, actually. Even the vision behind CIRCLE is, that it's more inclusive. It's not hierarchy. That's what the culture we have developed over here, that we want everyone to be in proximity.

[00:14:39] RT: I'm also imagining that you left Pakistan to go to Harvard and you came back a different person, because among other things, you came back with the distinction between what is authority and what is leading, and them not being the same thing necessarily embodied in the same person. I imagine, you landed back in Pakistan as a troublemaker in an innocent way, because you had these distinctions that were in opposition to not just Pakistan's model, but as you know, most organizational models. How have you dance between using yourself as a leader and choosing to lead and using your authority and bringing those in some harmony for the sake of growing your organization?

[00:15:17] SA: Learning with authority is something that I am still working on. I think, it really comes from my own background and my childhood, because my dad was from the military. He was a big authority figure in the family. That's what I understood after adaptive leadership, that because he was so authoritative, I mean, he loved us, but you had to follow him. You couldn't really give suggestions. He became more mellow in his lasting years. I think, I struggled with authority. Using authority and also in authority relationships. That mirrored in my personal relationships also, and professional relationships.

Post-Harvard, I had this insight. I have been working on using authority and stepping into it when I need to, and leaning into it. Because I did face in my work environment also. I faced a challenge actually, where someone needed to follow certain procedures and things and was not. I spent too much time just counseling and being soft on it, where I should have been firm. Some issues could have been avoided. It has given me a great way to now navigate space, but it is a constant reminder, because I guess, we all have our natural inclination. If you overuse that muscle, which is what I've learned, then it's not healthy also.

[00:16:38] RT: I want to give some space to the work that you're doing in CIRCLE. You have several specific initiatives that you're using to develop and help women advance themselves. Speak a little bit about the specific workstreams, or the focus that you're bringing with CIRCLE and why you chose those, and what's happening with women who are participating in that.

[00:17:00] SA: We have four streams that we are working. The first one that I actually started with was Elevate. The idea behind Elevate, this, I started in 2016 when CIRCLE was not even formally registered. I came to Karachi, I would get invited to conferences, I'd speak at events,

and I noticed there were very few women as speakers and in the audience. I was like, “What’s going on? Where are the women?” That’s where I realized that high-profile committees, events don’t have women in them. We need to change that.

It’s not that the women in leadership don’t exist, but they’re just not that visible. Anyway, it started as a campaign to mobilize CEOs to commit to gender diversity, to bringing more women in leadership and boards. With time, we had a legislation passed in Pakistan, which now requires at least one female on every publicly listed company. That was a very positive step.

We’ve got CEOs from some leading local companies, like National Food, Jazz to Unilever, Standard Charter, who are champions of Elevate. We run leadership programs. I run leadership programs and I use adaptive leadership in it to grow women in leadership roles. That’s what we started with. We continue this work even now. The second project was She Loves Tech.

[00:18:16] RT: She loves tech.

[00:18:18] SA: She loves tech. Yes.

[00:18:19] RT: It’s a cool name, I got to tell you.

[00:18:21] SA: Yeah, it’s a very cool name. She Loves Tech, is about women startups and women in tech. It’s about encouraging women startups to use technology to solve pressing challenges, whether in health, education, climate change, transport. It’s become a global movement. I met the founder in Malaysia, and she invited me to join this. I said yes, actually, because – and I didn’t think twice about funding, partnerships, how to execute it, because I knew intuitively, the right thing for the women in my country and for Pakistan.

I wanted to have a platform where we could make women more visible, connect and build a community. That’s She Loves Tech. That’s now in its sixth year. One of Pakistan’s largest banks, Habib Bank, has been supporting us from the start, which is a great testament to their own commitment to support women, to grow women in tech, women startups. We’re very excited. We run, basically, the competition in different cities of the country. Women pitch their ideas, they go through these rounds, and then there’s a final, and the winner gets to go to China

to represent the country. It's very exciting. This year, She Loves Tech will happen in 50-plus countries of the world. Pakistan is the oldest partner.

[00:19:38] RT: Oh, very cool. Very cool. Okay, so then you have another couple.

[00:19:42] SA: The ones that's closest to my heart is digital literacy. This is something that we designed under the pandemic, with UN women's support. The pandemic has shown us that basic digital literacy is so key, because if you're not digitally literate, like you and I are talking now, you can't make connections. You don't have access to skills, knowledge. Even when women who have a smartphone, they have access to Internet, but they don't know how to use it, because they're not digitally literate.

They only use their phone for making calls. Maximum, they use YouTube for watching dramas. They are not able to leverage the power of the Internet, the power of digital tools. We propose this to UN women and pilot it with about 500 women in the last two years. We saw phenomenal results, where women started setting up micro, small businesses from their home.

[00:20:35] RT: What did you do? How did you take them from using it as a telephone to something else? What did you do?

[00:20:41] SA: The innovation was that we didn't visit them. They would then visit us from the comfort of their home. We gave them a data bundle for a month, and we worked with women who already had smartphones. Smartphones prices are going down, so more and more women are getting access. Although it's still not as accessible for women. What we did was we found the women through community-based organizations. We invited them to join this program, and then we trained them on Google Meet. They didn't know Google Meet. We trained them how to get on Google Meet. We got them on WhatsApp groups. We sent them video content on how to create an email ID, how to use WhatsApp for business, Facebook and stuff, how to take pictures of your products, how to improve lighting, editing, logo, what's your logo, why your business needs to be a brand? We taught them all these concepts.

I still remember, one of our instructors sharing with me that one woman in our class said, "I have an email ID now, but I thought only big people have email IDs." **[Inaudible 00:21:43]** said, "My husband's a rickshaw driver, a tuk tuk driver. I felt useless." I mean, this was her word. "I felt

useless.” Then she said, “Now that I've learned WhatsApp, Facebook, Insta, I'm setting up a food delivery business from home.”

It's these micro-shifts that have started happening, because the Internet is so powerful. Then, like you and I are able to surf the Internet. Each time I have an issue with my cat, I just Google. This is not available to many women, millions of women. We're teaching these skills. That's why I taught this year, next thing big. This is a country of 220 million people. We've set a very ambitious goal of 1 million women. This year, our goal is 10,000 women. We have raised funding for 7,000. We need to raise the additional funding. A global fund is coming in to support us. We've got a team of women instructors, everyone in place. It's very exciting and now we're tracking results.

[00:22:46] RT: Share, if you will, a couple more stories of success for some of the people who have been part of your program. How have you changed their lives, or the work changed their lives?

[00:22:56] SA: Well, another story I love telling is that of Sonia. I remember, this was before the pandemic. I went to the class. They just had a tea break. I asked a young woman randomly, “How's your class?” She says to me, “I love coding.” I said, “Really?” She said, “Yes, I wake up thinking of code and I sleep thinking of code.” I was like, “Wow, this is incredible.” This young woman. She was wearing an abaya, which is a dress. I could only see her eyes, but I could see the sparkle in her eyes, the enthusiasm in her tone. She was a teacher and she wanted to increase her income. She saw on Facebook that CIRCLE is offering coding programs. She said, “I must try.” She came for the test. She said, she was scared then, and she thought she wouldn't take the test, because what if she can't do it? Then she saw other young women and she thought, if they're trying, she must try. That's what I am learning to see. I think, it's so important to create local role models and to celebrate young women like Sonia, like Anam Shahzadbi, who are our everyday women.

These are the women who can then inspire hundreds of thousands of women in their community. That's how I'm thinking of reaching the 1 million goal, because if all the Sonia, Anams go out there and teach another 10, 20, 100, that's how we can scale and cascade the effect.

[00:24:20] RT: Yes. This is an important point for some people listening, which is how do you initiate foster and support a movement? Everybody's clear up there. You don't have enough authority to produce which you're producing, so you have to take other means. You have to lead, you have to mobilize, you have to engage people, you have to support them, so they go. What wisdom and lessons learned can you share with people about how you get to where you are now and what it's going to take to get to where you're going in the next couple of years, based on finding the right balance between your authority and your leading to do that?

[00:24:57] SA: Yes. First of all, I think it really starts with believing in yourself and the purpose that drives you. Because I think, that's an important answer, because there are times when you're like, "Can I do this? Is it worthwhile?" Those tough days? How do you stay anchored in those tough days? It's about having a sense of purpose. I've been very blessed that this focus has always the women economic empowerment piece has always been very meaningful for me.

I think, that's one lesson. Ground yourself in a purpose. If you do not care about your purpose, try different things, experiment. Because I remember, even in Kennedy School, after post-microfinance, I was not clear on my purpose. I would notice, if I'm sitting in a lecture, if I'm talking to someone, when do I get excited? When do I feel good? When do I feel a sense of flow? It took me a while, because post-Kennedy, for three, four years I was in Dubai. I still remember, when I would meet people in Dubai and they'd be like, "What are you doing, Sadaffe?" I would tell them about my microfinance career, and they'd be like, "Wow, 200,000 women, and so successful."

Inside, I'd be thinking that I don't know what I'm going to do next. I have no clue. Can I be successful again? It takes a while to rediscover and to transition from one thing to another, and you have to hold steady in that period. I learned also, for example, to be able to differentiate between what I love doing and myself, the self and the doing. Because if it's too meshed together, you can just lose balance. I also learned that, yes, love what you do and enjoy it, but there needs to be a sanctuary, a space which is about the –

[00:26:43] RT: You are not your work, is what you're saying.

[00:26:45] SA: Yeah. You're not your work. It is a secret self and being. I think, now, I anchor myself more and more in that space. I remind myself about that. I think it's about, it also creates

more ease and flow in your life, because sometimes I can get daunted that 1 million women, or even 10,000 women this year, am I going to be able to do it? What if we can't raise the funding? Then, allowing yourself that, adjusting yourself that the universe is behind you and the universe will guide and things will ease up. I'm learning to be more in this zone and space, was this what I used to be a planner and being very well organized and mapping everything, which I still do, but I am becoming more comfortable with uncertainty, and navigating my space in more open spaces. That would be another lesson, I think. You think you've got it all figured, but I think it's important to keep that space of possibility, openness there.

[00:27:45] RT: Yeah. How do you define leading, based on your experience now? Between school and the real world, what's your definition of what it means to be leading?

[00:27:57] SA: I would maybe start by saying that it's about identifying a challenge, a problem that you care about deeply. It's about then leading in solving that challenge. Because you know that that will create impact. It's about bringing like-minded people together, leveraging each other's strengths and consistently listening, experimenting, being open, shaping and moving in the direction of the vision, the problem-solving piece. That's the big goal that's driving you.

[00:28:32] RT: You start in that place. I say, you, meaning all of us, if we're in this place that you're describing, beginning with making that choice to do that. Meaning, it's not preordained that you're destined to do this. Somewhere, you have to begin and leading, I think oftentimes, it's about raising your hand metaphorically, or literally and saying, "I'm going to go do this. I'm going to go try this and see how it goes." Is that similar to some of your experiences?

[00:28:58] SA: It is about saying yes to opportunities. It is about sensing, what am I being called to do? I am relying on that more now. I think previously, I would do more like, "Okay, what are the opportunities? Where should I be going?" Yes, I believe in women's empowerment, so micro-finance sounds very exciting. I go and speak and it resonates and I end up spending 12 years doing that. Now, I think I ask myself more and more, what am I being called towards?

I listen. I give myself some space to meditate on it and for it to emerge. I do feel it in my pulse, that the digital literacy, the women empowerment space to entrepreneurship, digital skills is something I really feel. I am called to do. It's very exciting for me, and things happen, which I see as the universe guiding me. I really believe there is a bigger force. When we really want to

achieve something, or do something with a sense of purpose, I do feel there's an alignment that comes in. There's a bigger force that supports you. Things become easier.

[00:30:13] RT: Having some practice of self-reflection, or slowing down, or being present would hype it sometimes, cause getting on the balcony, too. There's a little bit of that in there as well, would you say?

[00:30:25] SA: I don't know if you read *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho. He talks about, if you really want something, the entire universe conspires for you to achieve it.

[00:30:34] RT: You believe that now.

[00:30:36] SA: I have come to believe that. I feel I've experienced that. I now meditate quite regularly. That's another shift in my life. Having that sanctuary, that space, I think when you are also working on a big purpose, it's really important to invest in self-care.

[00:30:52] RT: Yes. I agree.

[00:30:53] SA: That's another practice that I would encourage everyone, whether it's spending time in nature, or it's doing meditation, or even just every hour, taking three conscious breaths. Whatever practice it leads to, yoga. I think, it's really important to build these practices.

[00:31:09] RT: Specifically, as you sit here now, given what you've just said about, you have to trust what's ahead and the world conspiring to carry you forward into your work, what is ahead for CIRCLE in the next few years? Best case that you can see right now. What's up for it?

[00:31:26] SA: I think what's ahead and the aspiration would really be that we are able to build a scalable model. While I think, of course, touching even one life is wonderful and appreciated, but I think it's important to go to scale so that that is something I see. Then to look at giving this model to other countries, because digital literacy is a big challenge in many governments. If we can really track it and do it in an efficient way, in a cost-effective way, and also in a humane way, where there is a sense of connection with the community. Because I think that's really important. It's not a checkbox activity. You do want that. Each time an instructor goes on the screen and communicates with 30, 35 women, it's a transformational experience for them.

For example, every class we start, we start with five-minute meditation, and just breathing. It's a way for the women to learn also, of investing in their self-care. We're building these practices and we are talking about resilience with them, stamina, about sanctuary self-care in a way that they can understand and relate it to their lives. There is a bigger focus along with digital literacy, it's economic empowerment, it's also about, I guess in some ways, awakening of the human consciousness. That's the bigger goal.

[00:32:50] RT: We're coming to a close here. A question I have is what should I have asked you? What should I be asking you that I don't know enough to ask that you want into this conversation?

[00:32:59] SA: What place? There's so much.

[00:33:03] RT: As many as you like. Take the top two or three. What should I asked you that I did know to ask that's important for people to know?

[00:33:11] SA: About me, maybe something that is important is I love Gilgit-Baltistan, which is the northern areas of Pakistan, where we have some of the highest feats in the world. K2, which is the second highest mountain in the world is there. I have talked to Concordia, which is one stop before K2 base camp. I think that itself taught me a lot. It was a 14-day trek. You couldn't take a shower. You're just trekking six to eight hours every day. It helped me appreciate all that we have in our lives. Of course, being close to nature is something I really enjoy. It anchors me. I spend a lot of time in GB. We're working with women in GB, in Gilgit-Baltistan. We're teaching them digital literacy, entrepreneurship.

This year, we'd have some more workshops. It's a more remote area. You to have to travel by car, for example, from Lahore, where I live. It can take you 20-plus hours getting there. The Internet is not there everywhere. It's a hard terrain mountains, but very lovely people, beautiful people.

[00:34:10] RT: I'm going to let everybody know that in the show notes for this episode, I will put the link to CIRCLE. Sadaffe, if there's other resources that you think should be in the show notes that you want people to know, we can get those put there, so we can work together on

that part. I mean, I'd give you the last word here before we finish off this episode. Anything you want to say to bring our conversation to a close?

[00:34:33] SA: Well, I think I would like to invite the audience with this thing in, that if this conversation appeals to you and if you would to get involved in some way in the CIRCLE mission, I would love that. Because we are looking for volunteers, supporters, painters. There's so many different ways to get involved with the community and with our mission to do reach out.

[00:34:53] RT: Yeah, we'll put points of contact to do that in the show notes. For listeners, you would be able to find that there. Sadaffe, thank you very much for making this time and this conversation. It was wonderful. For the work you're doing with the women of Pakistan and around the world, so critical, and so important and appreciate that you've committed yourself to that. Thank you.

[00:35:12] SA: Thank you so much, Richard. Thank you for inviting me. It was great to touch base with you again. I look forward to staying in touch.

[00:35:18] RT: Okay. Thank you.

[00:35:20] SA: Thank you. Bye-bye.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[00:35:24] ANNOUNCER: Thank you for listening to 10,000 Swamp Leaders with Rick Torseth. Please take this moment and hit subscribe, to follow more leadership swamp conversations.

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