

Sunday, March 27, 2011

Guidelines on gender issues offered

By Our Reporter

ISLAMABAD, March 26: The USAID-funded Gender Equity Programme (GEP) of Aurat Foundation on Saturday formed a national advisory forum to get broad policy guidelines and align itself with government's gender commitments.

Speaker National Assembly Dr Fehmida Mirza will be the chairperson of the forum while its members included Secretary General Women's Parliamentary Caucus Dr Nafeesa Shah, MNA Yasmeen Rehman, Adviser to Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Saadia Danish, Balochistan minister Ghazala Gola, KP minister Sitara Ayaz, Sindh minister Tauqeer Fatimah Bhutto, Punjab minister Kamran Michael, TV artist Samina Pirzada, Prof Alya Khan, Chairperson of National Commission on the Status of Women Anis Haroon and Assistant Inspector General of Police Ehsan Sadiq.

Wife of US ambassador, Dr Marilyn Wyatt told the forum that the US had made a long-term commitment to improving the lives of women in Pakistan and that all US development strategies reflected the importance of women's core roles in raising families, providing health care, running businesses, providing education and feeding children. "We consult women as we design our programmes and we hold our programmes accountable in terms of the impact they have on the lives of women and girls," Dr Wyatt said.

Speaking on the occasion, Nafisa Shah expressed the hope that GEP would deliver effectively the much-needed financial support for women's rights.

Quratul Ain Bakhtiari of Balochistan, Mariam Bibi of KP, Mukhtaran Mai of Punjab and Sughra Solangi of Sindh are icons of women's struggle, she said.

Saadia Danish highlighted the problems of women in Gilgit-Baltistan and regretted that rigid elements in the area opposed co-education. To counter this, the government should set up colleges and university for women in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Tauqeer Fatima Bhuttu said women in rural areas of Sindh were so much involved in the household work that they were unaware of their basic rights.

Through the Benazir Income Support Programme, the government is trying hard for financial uplift of women so that they can join the mainstream of political, social and economic empowerment. Sitara Imtiaz said the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were in a state of war which was affecting women's very basic human rights.

A documentary, *Main Safar Main Hoon*, was also screened highlighting the achievements and sacrifices of Pakistani women starting from 1911.