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Aurat Foundation

Gender Equity Program

**International Women's Day
Step it up for Gender Equality
March 8, 2016**



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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AF	Aurat Foundation
COO	Chief Operating Officer
GEP	Gender Equity Program
NCA	National College of Arts
NCHD	National Commission on Human Development
SAFF	South Asian Football Federation
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Welcoming Remarks

Celebrated on March 8, International Women's Day is observed by the Gender Equity Program (GEP) every year. This year GEP held a joint event with the UN - Women at the auditorium of Islamabad Club that included a skit performance, a panel discussion, a musical performance, speeches and the launch of Success Stories Volume VII on Gender Based Violence and Volume VIII on Institutional Development. The agenda of this event is included as Annex B of this report.

The International Women's Day event commenced with the national anthem of Pakistan and Ms Fouzia Tariq, Program Specialist Women Human Rights and Governance Program – UN Women, requesting Mr Jamshed Kazi, Country Representative for Pakistan – UN Women, to say a few words to welcome the guests. Mr Kazi in his speech expressed solidarity with women and girls all over Pakistan. He also stated that 90 governments including Pakistan have called for the UN to step it up for gender equality. Mr Kazi noted that International Women's Day has been celebrated in Pakistan with more verve than ever before and cited some of the positive developments he has witnessed in Pakistan in relation to women's empowerment. Namely, Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy winning an Oscar for her documentary entitled, "A Girl in the River," and the first ever Punjab Gender Parity Report 2016 and Punjab Gender Management Information System launch in Pakistan.

Mr Kazi stated that he is constantly amazed by the strong and versatile women and girls of Pakistan many of whom remain unsung heroes. He then went on to name a few beneficiaries of UN Women:

- Aziza – a fifteen year old child bride who is now a PhD
- Sana, Shazia and Magul – three women who raise awareness on gender inclusiveness for disaster relief efforts

Mr Kazi ended his speech by stating that reaching the goal of Planet 50-50 is everyone's business and then shared a short clip developed by eight UN Women volunteers on labeling women. This was followed by some remarks from Mr Naeem Mirza, Chief Operating Officer of Aurat Foundation (AF).

Mr Mirza said that the women's struggle in Pakistan commenced in the 1980s for the struggle against discriminatory laws that were introduced during a military dictatorship. He also stated that although many people are unaware of this fact, the struggle for democracy in Pakistan commenced hand-in-hand with the women's struggle. Mr Mirza recounted the history of March 8 stating that it began with the 1908 strike of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union. Mr Mirza congratulated UN and other countries on their Planet 50-50 by 2030 goal and also offered heartfelt congratulations to the women's movement that spans the last 100 years. He also brought attention to the suppression of women in the name of religion citing the *Qisas* and *Diyat* Ordinances and stated that AF stands for the abolition of all parallel justice systems and repeal of all discriminatory laws.

Testimonies of UN Women Beneficiaries

This segment of the event consisted of women beneficiaries of the UN sharing their success stories. Please see below for a testimony from Attiya Naseer.

Respected Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalam-o-alaikum!

My name is Attiya Naseer and I am a home-based worker. I am married with four children. Unfortunately, my husband ran into some trouble a few years ago, with the result that the responsibility to support the whole family fell on my shoulders.

I am a graduate and I studied Psychology and Philosophy. Yet circumstances forced me to work in the informal packaging industry to support my children. I started a small packaging business at my own house with two other women. We packaged oil, candles, henna and other products. I have been doing this work for 9 years now. My husband has now joined us in this business also.

Despite being educated I was unaware of the laws specific to women workers. Most women I know were equally ignorant of these important issues. This changed when I was trained under one of GEP's projects. My co-workers and I learnt about many useful things such as International Labor Organization Convention, the rights of home-based workers and laws against harassment at the workplace.

Knowing all this gave us the courage to raise our voices for our rights. We realized how dangerous silence could be. I am very glad that I learnt these essential things and I am now teaching them to other women as well.

I want to give a message to all women today. I want to say that you can achieve all that you want through courage and awareness. Know your rights and fight for them, just as I have done.

Thank you!

This was followed by Fazeelat, a social worker, group leader and home based women worker also sharing her success story and thanking the UN for positively impacting her life.

Mime Performance by National College of Arts Students

The next performance was a mime by the students of National College of Arts (NCA). It focused on the story of a young girl leading a happy life until she is married off. After this her life drastically changes for the worst. She is verbally and physically abused by her husband and in-laws. The mime ends with her gaining the strength and fortitude to fight for her rights.

The performance was very well received by the audience who whole-heartedly clapped once it had concluded. Please see Annex C for pictures from this performance.

Panel Discussion

The panel discussion which was conducted in Urdu was moderated by Ms Simi Kamal, Chief of Party – GEP. Ms Kamal asked each panelist to share their experiences of working in their respective sectors. The panelists that took part in the discussion are given below:

- **Humera Azam Khan** - Ms Humera Azam Khan has been serving as Joint Secretary Administration at the Ministry of Human Rights since 2014. She has previously served as Deputy Secretary at the Ministry of Commerce, Deputy Secretary at the Ministry of Industries and Production and Deputy Secretary at the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan. Ms Khan received her Master's in English Literature from the University of Punjab, Lahore.

Ms Khan stated that the number of women in services has increased and the culture in the federal government has changed. She encouraged more women to join so that the number of women further increases. Speaking in reference to some of the hurdles Ms Khan faced in this sector, she said that women had to work harder in order to prove themselves.

- **Nazish Brohi** - Ms Nazish Brohi is a researcher and consultant in the social sector. She has extensive experience in analysis, evaluation, policy formulation and program development in the areas of gender, violence, conflict, human rights and democratization. She is well-known for her contributions to the struggle for equal civil rights and social action.

Ms Brohi said that in order to see change we must view it at the cellular level. For instance, women are now joining different sectors and their roles have also changed. She attributed the rise in violence as a reaction to this change. Ms Brohi also shed light on the research she is conducting on the *Jirga* system in Pakistan. She informed the audience that 90% of cases that go to the *Jirga* are related to women. However, women are not permitted to attend *jirgas* or present their cases. *Jirgas* are all male exclusive pseudo-judicial systems. Ms Brohi's message to women for International Women's Day was please respect yourself.

- **Misbah Khalid** - Ms Misbah Khalid is a veteran TV director, producer and actress. She is known for serial Meray Paas Paas (2007), Lux Style Awards (2006) and Nestle Nesvita Woman of Strength '09 (2009). Misbah's drama serials touch upon women's struggle in our socio-cultural context.

Ms Khalid spoke of the Television Rating Point and admitted that viewers these days want to watch women being physically abused. As far as gender equality is concerned, she felt that men need more education than women. Unfortunately, producers in the Pakistan television industry do not feel that it is their social responsibility to change society. As a result, they do not find it important to portray women as empowered members of society.

- **Bina Sultan** - Ms Bina Sultan is a well-known designer who has been creating waves in the local and international markets, through fine tailoring and intricate design. Her work is edgy and innovative. She combines modern aesthetics with indigenous crafts of embroidery to create her recognizable style. She incorporates fine art into her designs, making it her own unique forte. The marked features of her creations are a blend of Asian elegance and contemporary cuts. She designs casual, formal and bridal wear.

Ms Sultan joined the fashion industry a decade ago. She said that raising her children as a single mother has been very difficult in Pakistan as women have to struggle a great deal. She also spoke about the work she had done in the past with home based women workers and USAID.

- **Sana Mehmood** - Sana Mahmud is Captain of the National Women's Basketball Team, having recently led the team to the South Asian Games held in India in February

2016. She is also former captain of the Pakistan National Women's Football Team, and has the honor of leading the team to their first international victory and semi-final berth in the SAFF women football championship in Bangladesh in 2010. She is an avid sports woman and has conducted research on the impact of sports on the self-esteem of sports women in Pakistan. Her keen interest in the subject resulted in her pursuing a masters in international development with a focus on sport, gender and development from the United States.

Ms Mahmood stated that the biggest challenge for women athletes in Pakistan is finding safe spaces. She further added that a mindset change is required in Pakistan regarding women and the key to getting more women to join sports lies in encouraging them.

- **Samina Baig** - Samina Baig is the first Pakistani woman and the third Pakistani to climb Mount Everest. She is also the youngest Muslim woman to climb Everest, having done so at the age of 21. Samina is also the first Pakistani woman and the first Muslim to climb the seven summits

Ms Baig stated that women are capable of working in any field so long as they put their minds to it. The most important ingredients for success are working hard and trusting yourself. Additionally, as a message for women on International Women's Day, Ms Baig stressed the need for mothers to raise well-mannered boys.

Remarks by Chairperson of National Commission on Human Development

Ms Razina Alam, Chairperson of National Commission on Human Development, stated that Islam has given women many rights. However, the misinterpretation of Islamic teachings has resulted in women being deprived of those rights. Ms Alam said that raising awareness via radio and television regarding pro-women legislation is of paramount importance. She expressed her joy on meeting some of the most empowered women in Pakistan who were part of the panel discussion that took place earlier.

Before concluding her brief remarks Ms Alam spoke briefly about her book, "*Suno Meri Pyari Beti*" or Listen, My Dear Daughter that has received critical acclaim globally. She encouraged the audience to read her book and also presented copies of it to UN Women and GEP.

Musical Performance by Gypsy Women

This segment of the event consisted of a musical performance by a Gypsy Group from Lahore. The artists included Sitara Kiran, Zeba, Akram and Ikram.

One of the most enticing aspects of this musical performance was that the singers were actual gypsy women.

The musical group, unfortunately, only had enough time to perform two songs as the program had started late and it was time to conclude the proceedings. The audience thoroughly enjoyed both performances with some even getting up to dance.

Vote of Thanks

Ms Anjum Riaz-ul-Haque, Board Member of AF, offered some brief remarks during the vote of thanks. She congratulated the Gypsy Group from Lahore on a wonderful performance and thanked the audience for taking out time to attend the event. Before concluding she attributed the success of the women's movement to the audience present at the event.

Once the event had concluded, the audience was asked to take out some time and see Saima Salauddin's photograph exhibition and have tea.

Annex A – Invitation



Planet 50 - 50 by 2030, Step it up for Gender Equality

PROGRAM COMMENCES AT 3:00 PM

- Registration / Seating
- Welcome remarks by Mr. Jamshed Kazi, Country Representative, UN Women Pakistan
- Remarks by Special Guest
- National Perspective on Women's Movement/ struggle by Professor Aliya , Dean of Social Sciences, Quaid e Azam University and member Aurat Foundation Board of Governors
- Testimonies of two beneficiaries
- Theatre performance
- Panel discussion with four eminent women from different walks of life
- Musical performance
- Concluding remarks by Ms. Melissa Rosser, Director, Office of Stabilization and Governance, USAID
- Vote of thanks by Mr. Naeem A Mirza, Chief Operating Officer, Aurat Foundation

NOTE: Please bring this card along or print of the email invitation

Annex B – Agenda

PROGRAM COMMENCES AT 3:00 PM

- Registration / Seating 03:00
- National Anthem 03:15
- Welcome remarks by Mr. Jamshed Kazi, UN Women Country Representative 03:20
- National Perspective on Women's Movement by Mr Naeem Mirza, COO AF 03:25
- Testimonies of beneficiaries: Fazeelat, UNW, Attiya Naseer, AF-GEP 03:35
- Theatrical performance by students of National College of the Arts, Rawalpindi 03:45
- Panel discussion with Humera Azam Khan, Nazish Brohi,
Misbah Khalid, Bina Sultan, Sana Mehmood and Samina Baig 03:55
04:15
- Musical performance by Gypsy Group from Lahore 04:20
- Concluding remarks by Senator Razina Alam, Chairperson NCHD 04:25
- Exhibition of photographs by Saima Salahuddin, who focuses on women's issues 04:30
- Tea

Our card's design incorporates elements recognizable as connected to women's struggles in Pakistan and globally. Various shades of purple represent women's empowerment and GEP, whereas the stems, leaves and flowers symbolize the growth and prosperity we want to see in context to women. The flower, Jasmine used in the graphic is our national flower whilst the UN Secretary General's campaign UNiTE to End Violence Against Women uses the colour orange to symbolize a brighter future without violence.

The silhouettes signify gender equality. Butterflies were added in remembrance of the Mirabal Sisters, four Dominican women who actively opposed the dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo and three of whom were assassinated in November 25, 1960.

Annex C – Pictures



Mr Jamshed Kazi, UN Country Representative for Pakistan, addressing the audience on International Women's Day on March 8, 2016.



Mr Naeem Mirza, Chief Operating Officer – Aurat Foundation, addressing the audience on International Women's Day on March 8, 2016.



GEP celebrating some of the inspiring women of Pakistan via a panel discussion on International Women's Day.



Designer Bina Sultan speaking of the struggles she has faced as a single woman in Pakistan.



Senator Razina Alam, Chairperson of National Commission on Human Development speaking on International Women's Day.



Fazeelat, a beneficiary of UN Women, shares her success story with the audience on International Women's Day.



The mime performance by National College of Arts students on International Women's Day.



The mime performance by National College of Arts students on International Women's Day.



One of the singers of the Gypsy Group from Lahore performing on International Women's Day.



Akram and Ikram, the musicians of the Gypsy Group from Lahore, playing the *Tabla* and *Harmonium* on International Women's Day.



One of the singers of the Gypsy Group from Lahore performing on International Women's Day.