



Founded by Shahla Zia

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EDITORIAL

The role of solid, pro-active legislation is manifold. Many classical and modern philosophers believed that the most important role of legislation was deterrence. The theory of deterrence has paved the way for modern day lawmakers who hold on to the same principle when drafting legislation.

Deterrence is defined as use of punishment to deter people from committing crime. There are two types of deterrence, specific and general. Specific deterrence is to deter only the offender from committing any further crimes. General deterrence is designed to prevent crime in the general population. Punishment is an integral part of deterrence and it therefore believed that for deterrence to hold sway punishment must be: a) severe enough to be just. The present day Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929 in Punjab is amended in Sindh, to include harsher punishment for the crime of marrying an underage child; b) certain so as be clear that if a certain crime is committed, it is certain that a specific punishment will be meted out; and c) carried out swiftly enough to deter the crime.

It is understandably argued that social attitude is foremost in changing the position of women in society. However, it can equally be argued that sound pro-women legislation can help form and change social attitude - it being the catalyst for the much-desired change in social attitude. It is through consistent, relevant and progressive public policy and enactment of new laws that social attitude will eventually alter. It may also be that the wave of changing the social

mindset can start with one province, passing a law. The Sindh Assembly set an example by passage of the Domestic Violence Act in 2013. The Balochistan Assembly passed a similar act in 2014. Similarly, Balochistan passed the Protection and Promotion of Breast-Feeding and Child Nutrition Act 2014 in their last year and the Khyber Pakhtunkwa Assembly passed a similar Act in their second year. In Punjab, the law on domestic violence is currently awaiting approval of the provincial legislature.

The ultimate focus of law should be to move from protection of women to a gradual shift towards equal opportunity. This is a long and slow process and feminists still debate of the wide gap between the sexes in the developed world. It is, however, through the strict adherence and obedience to the rule of law that equal opportunity is conceivable.

It has also rightly been voiced that without implementation, legislation is pointless. It is obvious that the primary problem with legislation is its lack of proper and systemic implementation. This does not, however, make legislation in itself futile. It is important to remember that without legislation there is nothing to implement - in order to mend something one must have the tools to fix it. Legislation and its implementation overlap but for effective working on both fronts they must also be separated and worked on and towards independent of each other, so as to not adversely affect one another.

Legislative Performance on Women's Rights Issues During the Second Parliamentary Year 2014-2015

By Benazir Jatoi

The present democratically elected federal and provincial governments in Pakistan have completed second year of their five-year tenure and expectations regarding activism on pro-women policy and legislation is riding high.

The constitutional change in the 18th Amendment devolves powers to provincial governments where major areas of public policy including women's development, health, education, population etc. are now provincial subjects. Therefore, provinces have assumed a more pro-active role in eradicating the imbalance between the two genders during the last two years where a number of bills were passed for protection and relief for women and generally help emancipate women by providing them equal opportunity.

While this is an encouraging sign that provinces are responding to the spirit and dynamics of 18th Amendment, the federal government must not shelve its responsibility towards women's rights issues completely. Autonomy of provinces does not decrease the role of the federal government. It would be premature for the government to assume that no pro-women legislation is required from the National Assembly after the 18th amendment has come into play.

Though no women-specific or women-related law was enacted during the second parliamentary year at the federal level, there has been a flurry of activity

with regard to introducing a number of bills related to women's rights issues and in particular, for checking sexual offences, both at the floor of the National Assembly and the Senate.

Marriage of Girl Child under scrutiny in Sindh High Court

Amna Mithal, a nine-year old school going girl left school in interior Sindh with her maternal aunt's husband. The uncle married Amna against her will the next day, against her parents' wishes or knowledge. Amna's parents filed an FIR in interior Sindh and the case is presently before the Sindh High Court. The legislation in the limelight with regards to Amna Mithal is the Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Act 2013. The Sindh Assembly passed this Act last year, 2014. The Act defines the age of a child for purposes of marriage, it being illegal to marry a person below the age of 18 years. It also clarifies punishment for the person who conducts the marriage ceremony, who is aware of the age of the child. The above is only one example of a case that is presently before the courts, bringing into play a pro-women piece of important legislation that promises relief through protection of the girl child in question and may also do so for others in the future. In addition to protection of women, the legislation also establishes punishment for the offender. —*AF Staff Report, Karachi*

Of these bills the important ones are government bills, which include The National Commission on the Rights of the Child Act 2015 and The Hindu Marriage Act, 2015. The important private member bills include The Torture, Custodial Death and Custodial Rape (Prevention & Punishment) Act, 2014 and The Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 2014, which discusses Article 51 of the Constitution dealing with rights of minorities.

It must be emphasized that very recently an important bill, the Hindu Marriage Bill, which was jointly tabled last year and a similar bill tabled this year by the minister in-charge, will be reviewed by the National Assembly. The two bills propose important rules and regulations for the registration of marriage and rules relating to divorce and issues that stem from these, including custody of children and inheritance, within the Hindu community in Pakistan, in accordance with the Hindu religion. It also proposes an important restriction on the age of marriage - proposing that the minimum age of marriage be 18 years. The revival of discussion of this bill and the legalization of important family law aspects for the Pakistani Hindu community is a welcome development.

In the meantime, the Senate recently passed two important Private Members' Bills; i) The Anti-Rape Laws (Criminal Laws Amendment) Bill, 2013', relates to strengthening of anti-rape provisions of the Pakistan Penal Code, and ii) The Anti-Honour Killing Laws (Criminal Laws Amendment) Bill, 2014, which

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attempts to remove major legal lacunas in the Penal Code with regard to 'honour' crimes. Both bills were tabled by Senator Syeda Sughra Imam (PPP) and were lying unattended before the House for a long time. Both the bills were passed by the Senate unanimously on 2nd March 2015, and were sent to the National Assembly for consideration and approval. When a bill is initiated in the Senate, it is a prerequisite for the same bill to be sent to the lower House, before it can become an Act. Similarly another important Bill, 'The Torture, Custodial Death and Custodial Rape (Prevention and Punishment) Bill, 2014, moved by Senator Farhatullah Babar (PPP), was passed by the Senate on the same day and was sent on to the National Assembly for consideration and approval.

At the provincial level, the Punjab Assembly is ahead of other provincial assemblies with regard to law making on women-specific and women-related issues during the second parliamentary year. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has also passed important Acts with regard to women specific issues in their second year. The Sindh Assembly has not been as pro-active as it was last year. The Balochistan Assembly has not passed any women-specific Act in their second year. Last year they passed three Acts.

With the exception of Balochistan, the provincial governments have been more pro-active with regard to women related legislation. For example, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa legislation on regularisation of lady health workers is legislation that promotes and protects a very valuable resource that specifically focuses on women's health care. The Act with regard to promotion and protection of breastfeeding is a very important long-term law that gives light to the health of the mother and breastfeeding child.

Punjab, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have taken positive steps to pass laws with regard to protection of vulnerable places, which includes places of worship and other religious space. Punjab has gone further and added the Punjab Sound Systems (Regulations) Act 2015, which addresses prohibiting the use of certain sound systems in the interest of public order and the prevention of incitement to terrorism.

The Punjab Assembly also passed three very important amendment bills which directly impact women's lives. These are: Punjab Child Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Act 2015 (XII of 2015); Family Courts (Amendment) Act 2015, amending the Punjab Muslim Family Courts Act 1964 (See page 04 for detailed review), and; Punjab Muslim Family Laws (Amendment) Act 2015 (XIII of 2015), amending the Muslim Family Laws Ordinance 1961 (See page 04 for detailed review). Another important

Women Specific Laws Passed by Legislatures (March 2014 - May 2015)		
Parliament (National Assembly & Senate)		
No women-specific Bill became an Act during this period, though the Senate passed three such Bills which were sent to the National Assembly for consideration. The National Assembly did not pass any women-specific Bill during the second parliamentary year.		
Provincial Assembly of Punjab		
Title of Act	Submitted on	Passed on
The Punjab Child Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Act, 2015	06-03-2015	06-03-2015
The Punjab Family Courts (Amendment) Act, 2015	06-03-2015	06-03-2015
The Punjab Muslim Family Laws (Amendment) Act, 2015	06-03-2015	06-03-2015
The Punjab Disabled Persons (Employment and Rehabilitation) Ordinance (Amendment) Bill, 2015	02-03-2015	05-05-2015
The Punjab Social Protection Authority Act, 2015	12-02-2015	06-04-2015
The Punjab Sound Systems (Regulation) Act, 2015	12-02-2015	06-03-2015
The Punjab Security of Vulnerable Establishments Act, 2015	11-02-2015	06-03-2015
The Punjab Local Government Ordinance, 2001	24-06-2014	24-10-2014
The Punjab Local Government Act, 2013	24-06-2014	13-01-2015
The Punjab Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2014	16-05-2014	27-10-2014
Provincial Assembly of Sindh		
Title of Act	Submitted on	Passed on
The Peoples University of Medical and Health Sciences for Women, Shaheed Benazirabad (Amendment) Act, 2015	----	13-04-2015
The Sindh Sound System (Regulation) Act, 2015	----	10-04-2015
The Sindh Commission on the Status of Women Bill, 2015	6-04-2015	13-04-2015
The Sindh Local Government (Amendment) Act, 2015	----	24-02-2015
The Sindh Local Government (Amendment) Act, 2014	----	20-10-2014
Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa		
Title of Act	Submitted on	Passed on
The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 2015	06-04-2015	10-04-2015
The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sensitive and Vulnerable Establishments and Places (security) Act, 2015	06-01-2015	13-01-2015
The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Protection of Breast-Feeding and Child Nutrition Act, 2015	09-01-2015	22-01-2015
The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Regulation of Lady Health Workers Program and Employees (Regularization) and Standardization Act, 2014	24-06-2014	29-06-2014
The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Senior Citizenship Act, 2014	19-11-2014	27-11-2014
The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Protection of Communal Properties of Minorities Act, 2014	08-12-2014	15-12-2014
Provincial Assembly of Balochistan		
No women specific law was passed during this period.		

bill, namely, The Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Bill, 2015, is lying pending with the Assembly.

The Sindh Assembly's amendments to the Local Government Law have further made reserved seats for women and minorities more systemic. The amendments require that lists of candidates for seats reserved for women, peasants, labourers and non-Muslims be submitted officially. If in case of death, resignation or disqualification of a said member, the list will provide the name of the next person that may fill the reserved seat.

Though Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have in the past two years passed some women specific law, the lack of such laws seems to be an emerging trend, which should be monitored closely. It is equally worrying that we have not seen many women parliamentarians introducing pro-women bills. The reason behind this must be further explored.

It is important to note that drafting good, progressive legislation requires certain resources, including funds for research and drafting. Technical and other support

should be given to MPAs and MNAs to encourage a culture of more pro-active bill making. Weaknesses in provincial assemblies with regard to research and drafting should be closely monitored and plugholes closed through funding, technical support, support from civil society organisations and from the federal government. It is important that sound legislation is at the heart of provincial governments.

Overview of Legislative Initiatives

National Assembly

Legislation: There were no women specific legislation passed in the National Assembly.

Government Bills: The Government has introduced two new bills. The Hindu Marriage Act 2015, The National Commission on the Rights of the Child Act 2015 and the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2015. The Criminal Law Amendment Act deals with amendment to the Pakistan Penal Code with regards to child pornography and cruelty.

Private Members' Bills (PMBs): There were four PMBs submitted. Topics

include minorities' voting rights and the torture and rape of women in custodial care. Two of the four PMBs addressed concerns of disable persons - implementing an employment quota, concessional educational fees and public access issues into buildings and public transport.

Senate

Legislation: The Senate passed three women specific bills.

Government Bills: No government bill relating to women related issues were introduced in the Senate.

Private Members' Bills (PMBs): Six PMBs were introduced in the Senate on subjects including custodial rape, rape and anti-honour killings provisions of the PPC. Two other important bills discuss protection against cyber crimes in Pakistan.

Punjab

Legislation: There were ten women-related Acts passed in the Punjab Assembly. The ones directly related to women include introducing stricter

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punishment for marriage to a child, amendments to the family court procedure and reservation of more seats for women in district council seats. Other legislation includes controlling and prohibiting hate speech in public or in any way inciting religious divide that may lead to public disorder.

Government Bills: The Punjab Assembly introduced five new bills. The Fatima Jinnah Medical University Lahore Bill addresses the longstanding demand of the students, alumni and faculty for the college to gain status of a university and thus create the first public sector women's medical university in Punjab. The Punjab Land Revenue (Amendment) Bill 2015 suggests an amendment vital for a woman's right to inheritance.

Private Members' Bills (PMBs): Only one private member bill was introduced, The Child Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Bill 2015, which was later adopted by the government and passed as an Act.

Sindh

Legislation: Five acts were passed including the Sindh Commission on the Status of Women Act 2015. The Act provides for the setting up of a Provincial Commission on the status of women for promotion of social, economic, political and legal rights of women. In addition to this The Peoples University of Medical and Health Sciences for Women, Shaheed Benazirabad (Amendment) Act, 2015 and The Sindh Sound System (Regulation) Act, 2015 were also passed by the assembly. No information is available on bills introduced.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Legislation: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly passed six important acts. A very important Act included the regularisation of employment of lady health workers. Another important Act focused on the health of a mother and young children through the promotion and protection of breastfeeding and child nutrition.

Government Bills: The KP government introduced four important bills. Maternity benefits and prohibition of employment of children were those directly related to women and children. Another important law passed is with regards to Hindu property rights.

Balochistan

Legislation: No record available on women specific legislation introduced or any bill introduced in the assembly.

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– *Technical assistance by Wasim Wagha, Manager Resource Services, AF.*

Women Specific Legislation Introduced/Passed by Legislatures (March 2014 - May 2015)			
National Assembly			
Title of Bill	Government or Private Member	Submitted on	Passed on / Status
The National Commission on the Rights of the Child Act, 2015	Government Bill: Minister In-charge	20-04- 2015	Pending
The Hindu Marriage Act, 2015	Government Bill: Minister In-charge	16-03- 2015	Pending
The Disabled Persons (Employment) and Rehabilitation (Amendment) Act, 2015	Private Members' Bill: Sahibzada Tariq Ullah, Sahibzada Muhammad Yaqub, Mr. Sher Akbar Khan, Ms. Aisha Syed	10-02- 2015	Pending
The Special Citizens Bill, 2015	Private Members' Bill: Ms. Belum Hasnain	13-01- 2015	Pending
The Torture, Custodial Death and Custodial Rape (Prevention & Punishment) Act, 2014	Private Members' Bill: Ms. Maiza Hameed	28-10- 2014	Pending
The Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 2014 (Minorities' rights, Article 51 of the Constitution)	Private Members' Bill: Dr. Ramesh Kumar Vankwani and others	21-10- 2014	Pending
The Child Protection System Bill, 2014	Private Members' Bill: Ms. Marvi Memon and others	06-05- 2014	Pending
The Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace (Amendment) Act, 2014	Private Members' Bill: Ms. Asiya Nasir	06-05- 2014	Pending
Senate			
Title of Bill	Government or Private Member	Submitted on	Passed on / Status
The Torture and Custodial Death (Punishment) Bill, 2014	Private Members' Bill: Mr. Farooq Hamid Naek, Dr. Abdul Qayoom Soomro	02-02- 2015	Referred to Standing Committee on Interior
The Torture, Custodial Death and Custodial Rape (Prevention and Punishment) Act, 2014	Private Members' Bill: Mr. Farhatullah Babar	11-08- 2014	02-03-2015 Sent to NA
The Protection of Cyber Crimes Act, 2014.	Private Members' Bill: Mr. Karim Ahmed Khawaja	12-05- 2014	Referred to Standing Committee on Interior
The National Cyber Security Council Bill, 2014	Private Members' Bill: Mr. Mushahid Hussain Syed	14-04- 2014	Referred to Standing Committee on Interior
The Anti-Honour Killing Laws (Criminal Laws Amendment) Bill, 2014	Private Members' Bill: Syeda Sughra Imam	24-02- 2014	02-03-2015 Sent to NA
The Anti-Rape Laws (Criminal Laws Amendment) Bill, 2013	Private Members' Bill: Syeda Sughra Imam	13-01- 2014	02-03-2015 Sent to NA
Provincial Assembly of Punjab			
Title of Bill	Government or Private Members'	Submitted on	Passed on / Status
The Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Bill, 2015	Government Bill: Minister In-charge Mian Mujtaba Shuja ur Rahman	25-05-2015	Referred to Committee on Social Welfare and Bait-ul-Maal
The Punjab Commission on the Status of Women (Amendment) Bill, 2015	Government Bill: Minister In-charge Mian Mujtaba Shuja ur Rahman	25-05-2015	Referred to Committee on Gender Mainstreaming
The Punjab Maternity Benefits (Amendment) Bill 2015	Government Bill: Minister In-charge	22-05-2015	Referred to Committee, Labour and Human Resource
The Fatima Jinnah Medical University Lahore Bill 2015	Government Bill: Minister In-charge	27-03-2015	Sent to Standing Committee on Health
The Punjab Land Revenue (Amendment) Bill 2015 (Bill No. 12 of 2015)	Government Bill: Minister In-charge	06-03-2015	06-03-2015
The Child Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Bill 2015 (Bill No. 11 of 2015)	Private Members' Bill: Mian Khurram Jahangir Wattoo	03-03-2015	Later, merged into the government bill and became a law
Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa			
Title of Bill	Government or Private Member	Submitted on	Passed on / Status
The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Prohibition of Employment of Children Bill,2015	Government Bill: Minister In-charge	24-03-2015	Passed Assent from the Governor awaited
The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shops and Establishment Bill,2015	Government Bill: Minister In-charge	24-03-2015	Passed Assent from the Governor awaited
The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Maternity Benefits (Amendment) Bill,2015	Government Bill: Minister In-charge	09-01-2015	Passed Assent from the Governor awaited
The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Hindu Disposition of Property Bill,2014	Government Bill: Minister In-charge	23-10-2014	Passed Assent from the Governor awaited
Provincial Assembly of Sindh			
No record available of bills introduced			
Provincial Assembly of Balochistan			
No record available of bills introduced			

The Punjab Family Courts (Amendment) Act, 2015

(Amending the Family Courts Act, 1964)

By **Benazir Jatoi**

The Punjab Assembly passed the Punjab Family Courts (Amendment) Act 2015 on 24 March 2015. The Act, however, is widely referred to as the Family Courts Act 1964.

There are 21 changes made in the 2015 amendment Act, which include both procedural and substantive changes. To see the full text of the The Punjab Family Courts (Amendment) Act 2015 (XI OF 2015), please visit AF's website at www.af.org.pk.

The salient features, which are mainly of a substantive nature, of the 2015 Amendment Act are as follows:

This Act is applicable to all of Punjab.

Dissolution of Marriage

At the pre-trial stage the Family Court will ascertain the precise points of controversy between the parties and attempt a compromise between the parties. If the compromise is not possible the Family Court may frame precise points of controversy and record evidence of the parties. If the attempt for reconciliation fails the court immediately passes a decree for the dissolution of marriage. If the marriage is dissolved through khula the court may direct the wife to surrender the following to her husband:

- surrender up to 50% of her deferred dower; or
- surrender up to 25% of her admitted prompt dower.

If an Order for dissolution of marriage (not through khula) is made, the Court may direct the husband to pay the whole or part of the outstanding deterred dower to the wife. [Section 10 - Pre-trial Proceedings]

When a Family Court orders a dissolution of a Muslim marriage, the court itself shall immediately, and no later than three days, inform the Chairman of the Arbitration Council (Arbitration Council is where marriages are registered) of the decree through a certified copy of the said decree. The Chairman then should proceed as required under the Muslim Family Law Ordinance 1961 as if he has received intimation of a talaq. [Section 21B - Intimation to Arbitration Council].

Maintenance

In an application for maintenance, on the first appearance of the defendant (the defendant here is the husband), the Family Court shall fix an interim monthly maintenance amount for the wife or a child. If the husband fails to pay the said maintenance by the 14th day of each month, the Court may then strike off the defence provided by the

defendant and decide the amount of maintenance taking account all the evidence and supporting documents that were submitted in the plaint. When deciding on how much maintenance is then to be paid, the Court may summon the relevant documentation from any organisation or authority in order to determine the defendant's estate and assets. In the Order given by the Court, it may a) fix an amount higher than the one asked for in the plaint, taking into account time and any other relevant circumstances; b) set an annual increase. If the court does not set an annual increase, it shall automatically increase by 10% annually. [Section 17A - Suit for Maintenance]

Court Procedure with regard to the Defendant, Summons & Evidence

The court informs the defendant of the case filed against him. The defendant is required to file a written statement on a day as prescribed by the court. If the defendant fails to appear before the court to file his written statement the court may take into account the reasons for failing to appear and grant another date, not exceeding fifteen days from

that date. If the defendant is in breach of the next date of appearance, the court has the power to strike off his defence and the decision reached by the court will only take into account the merits of the plaint and the law. [Section 8 & 9- Intimation to Defendant and Written Statement]

A Family Court has the power to summon any witness to appear before it and give evidence. If a person disobeys the summons order and fails to appear before it, the court may, after giving the witness an opportunity to explain, fine him/her to a fine of Rs. 5000/-. [Section 15 - Power of the Family Court to Summon Witnesses].

Witness statement of either party may be recorded through audio or video recording. [Section 11 (1A) - Recording of Evidence].

Power and Jurisdiction of the Family Court

The Family Court is considered the Judicial Magistrate of the first class when dealing with matters under the Muslim Family Law Ordinance 1961 and the Child Marriage Restraint Act

1929. The Family Court can take notice of complaints of Union Council, Arbitration Council or an aggrieved party, except in cases of contempt. [Section 20- Family Court as Judicial Magistrate].

The Family Court has jurisdiction to hear matters with regards to personal property and belongings of a wife and a child living with his mother and any matters arising out of the nikahnama. Previous Family Law amendments have already granted the Family Courts jurisdiction over issues with relation to dissolution of marriage, dower and dowry, maintenance, restitution of conjugal rights, custody/visitation with regard to children, guardianship and jactitation of marriage. [The Schedule, Part 1 (section 5- Jurisdiction)].

Decisions of the Family Court are appealable to the High Court except where the Order of the Family Court is regarding:

- a) dower or dowry which is less than Rs.100,000/-.
- b) Maintenance of Rs. 5000/- or less per month. [Section 14 - Appeals]

The Muslim Family Laws (Amendment) Act, 2015

(Amending The Muslim Family Laws Ordinance, 1961)

The Punjab Assembly adopted and passed The Muslim Family Laws (Amendment) Act 2015 on 23 March 2015. The Act, however, is widely referred to as the Muslim Family Law Ordinance 1961.

The Amendment Act 2015 makes 8 changes to the 1961 Act, which include both procedural and substantive changes. To see the full text of the The Muslim Family Laws (Amendment) Act 2015 (XIII of 2015), visit AF's website at www.af.org.pk.

The salient features, which are mainly of a substantive nature, of the 2015 Amendment Act, are as follows:

This Act is applicable to all of Punjab.

Registration of Marriages & Nikkah

The Union Council may grant licenses to one or more persons to become Nikkah registrars. [Section 5(2) - Registration of Marriages]

The person that performs the Nikkah shall be responsible to ensure that all the questions in the Nikkah form have been accurately filled in, with specific answers from both the bride and bridegroom recorded. [Section 6 (2A) - Polygamy]

If the person responsible for performing the Nikkah fails to do the above (fill out the full Nikkah forms properly and accurately) he may be punishable to imprisonment for a term that may extent to one month and a fine of Rs. 25,000/-. [Section 6(4)(i) - Polygamy]

Polygamy

The husband is required to submit an application requesting permission to take another wife. Both parties must nominate a representative each, to put forward their views, before a decision is made by an Arbitration Council. The 2015 amendment Act states that a person who does not follow through on this procedural requirement may be punishable to imprisonment for a term that may extent to three months and a fine of Rs. 100,000/-. [Section 6(4)(ii) - Polygamy]

If a man enters into another marriage without the permission of the Arbitration Council, in addition to the already existing payment of the entire dower, may also be punishable to imprisonment for a term that may extent to one year and a fine of Rs. 500,000/-. [Section 6(5)(b)].

Maintenance of child

In circumstances where a father fails to maintain his child, the mother or the grandmother of the child may request an Arbitration Council to be set up to issue a certificate which specifies the exact amount the father is required to pay towards maintenance of the child. [Section 9 (1A) - Maintenance]. – *By Benazir Jatoi*

Landmark Pro-women ECP Decision: Lower Dir By-Election

By Waseem Ahmad Shah

The long and arduous struggle by civil society activists and women's rights organizations, which have advocated for political mainstreaming of women, bore fruit on June 2, 2015, when the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) delivered a landmark judgment. For the first time in the history of the country, the ECP declared an election to a constituency null and void on the ground of depriving women of their right to vote. The issue of women disenfranchisement has always remained a major concern for human rights bodies and social activists, and the judgment of the ECP has drawn a lot of appreciation.

On 7 May 2015, seven candidates contested the by-election in the provincial assembly constituency of PK 95, Lower Dir. Out of these the major contest was between Mr Aizazul Mulk of Jamat-e-Islami and Haji Bahadur Khan of Awami National Party. The concerned returning officer on May 9, 2015 declared Aizazul Mulk as the winning candidate by securing 20,288 votes against 16,439 votes received by Haji Bahadur Khan. The total number of votes in the constituency was 140,743 out of which the total number of female votes was 53,817.

It was reported in the print and electronic media that out of the entire female population, in any of the 85 female polling stations, not a single vote was cast. The ECP took suo moto notice of the alleged disenfranchisement and on May 8, 2015 issued notices to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Secretary, the District Returning Officer, PK-95, and all the contesting candidates to explain the circumstances under which the disenfranchisement of female voters had occurred in the constituency.

Subsequently, protest demonstrations were held in Islamabad, Peshawar, and other cities against this unconstitutional step of barring women from participating in the electoral process. Several applications were also submitted to the ECP by various individuals and organizations requesting it to declare the election void and order a re-election in the said constituency. On threadbare evidence, the matter was heard by the ECP comprising the Chief Election Commissioner, Justice (Retd) Sardar Mohammad Raza Khan, Justice (Retd) Muhammad Roshan Essani, Justice (Retd) Riaz Kiyani, Justice (Retd) Shahzad Akbar Khan and Justice (retd) Fazalur Rehman. The Commission heard counsel of some of the contesting candidates and some individuals in person.

The witnesses examined by the ECP included the Ms. Shabina Ayaz, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa regional head of Aurat Foundation (AF), Ms. Khawar Mumtaz, the chairperson of the National Commission on the Status of Women, Ms. Bushra Gohar, ex-MNA of ANP Ms Bushra Gohar, Ms. Tahira Abdullah and Ms. Shad Begum, well-known activists, Mr. Sikandar Zaman, regional head of South Asia Partnership of Pakistan (SAP-PK) and Ms. Ayesha Saeed, MNA, Jamat-e-Islami. Except Ms Ayesha Saeed all other witnesses alleged and condemned the disenfranchisement of 53,817 female voters. Ms Ayesha claimed that the females abstained from voting of their own free will.

During the course of hearings by the ECP women applicants pleaded the case passionately. The findings of AF's fact-finding mission to the area and the daring visit to Lower Dir by Shabina Ayaz from AF to collect evidence made it a perfect case to win. Senior Advocate Mohsin Akhtar Kiyani, who appeared on AF's behalf, presented strong arguments asserting that the fundamental rights of women as guaranteed by the Constitution have been violated. He said the ECP had full mandate to exercise its authority prima facie on the basis of an admitted fact that women en

masse were deprived from voting. He further pleaded that this does not require any further evidence. He proved this point with a number of citations finally arguing that this is not merely a case of an election dispute but a constitutional matter of national importance.

The ECP did not examine the reasons for the disenfranchisement of women, rather it expressed a concern that such disenfranchisement had taken place. They observed: "This may be cleared to all that the Commission, for the moment, is more interested in the disenfranchisement of female voters rather than who specifically is the person having used undue influence. There are only two possibilities before us. Either the female voters abstained from casting their votes of their own free will or they were influenced by external forces, who so ever they might have been."

The Commission observed that the total number of female voters was 53,817 (say about 54,000 in round figure) and not a single female vote was cast out, which amounted to 38 to 39 percent of the entire electoral strength. The Commission in clear terms observed that no election anywhere contested can be so attributed if 38/39 percent of voters, all females coincidentally, are deprived of their fundamental and constitutional right.

The Commission stated: "A question would arise in the mind of any person, having the smallest of prudence, as to why about 54000 of females of backward area with complete lack of communication could think alike across the area extending over 50 X 30 KMs. It is impossible for us to believe that 54000 ladies in Lower Dir think alike. Coincidences do not occur so frequently and those that occur in such frequency, are not coincidences."

They further added that the strong and irrefutable presumption was that the male population had agreed to deprive the female population from their right to vote. "Telepathy is a recognized state of mind. But it is also hard fact that it cannot be created among 54000 adult persons who certainly think differently. If ten female voters of a polling station abstained, claiming such abstention as of free will, it might be accepted to be true by a person of ordinary prudence but no person having the slightest of logic and judicial approach towards the matters would accept that 54000 ladies unanimously thought of abstention, without any external force. We take strong judicial notice of the fact that females were deprived by the males."

The Commission went further and did not endorse a judgment reported in PLD 1966 Karachi 312, which had observed that an agreement between all the contesting candidates to bar female voters from casting their vote, would not amount to undue influence. "With due deference we do not endorse this view because the casting of vote by females is a right of females and males cannot enter into a one-sided agreement, having influence over the females. This is certainly an undue influence. We do not subscribe, in principle, to any agreement by males regarding exercise of right of vote by the females," the ECP observed.

Importance of the ECP Verdict: The disenfranchisement of women has always been an issue of concern in the general elections as well as local government elections in certain parts of the country, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The general participation of women in the political process has also concerned civil society organizations as the forces averse to political mainstreaming of women always remain active to maintain the status quo. Vested interest groups and individuals have found a way of creating controversy around matters relating to women's participation in elections in parliament and local councils

and women's right to vote. It has often falsely been in the name of religion or custom behind which vested groups have hidden, in order to limit the mainstreaming of women in political participation. The disenfranchisement of around 54000 female voters during the by-elections on May 7 2015 in PK-95 is a clear manifestation of the mindset, which is against giving civil and political rights to women.

Similar concerns continue to surface from time-to-time in the local government elections and general elections. While in the past written agreements were signed by notables of areas as well as election candidates to bar women from voting, with the passage of time verbal agreements have allegedly been entered into so as not to leave any trace behind of their illegality.

A similar issue surfaced during the 2013 by-elections when the Peshawar High Court (PHC) took notice of barring women from casting votes in several polling stations in NA-5 Nowshera and NA-25 Lakki Marwat constituencies. A two-member bench of the high court on Aug 26, 2013, ordered re-polling in those polling stations where women had not cast votes or where very negligible votes were cast. However, the Supreme Court of Pakistan on September 17, 2013, set aside the said judgment on technical grounds following which the ECP issued notification of the two successful candidates from those two National Assembly constituencies.

In 2001, Aurat Foundation filed writ petitions regarding the disenfranchisement of women in a few constituencies of district Swabi. The petitioners alleged that women were stopped from voting through different coercive measures including agreements reached between contesting candidates. The petitioners requested the Peshawar High Court to declare those particular election results null and void. A two-member bench of the court decided the petitions on Mar 17, 2004 and dismissed the four writ petitions on technical grounds but clearly pronounced that the practice of barring women voting was unconstitutional. The bench made several important observations in its verdict, including that in line with Article 17(2) of the Constitution every citizen has the right to participate in political life, and has the right to vote, regardless of one's gender.

Keeping in view the history of women's disenfranchisement, the ECP judgment of 2nd June 2015 is of immense importance. Declaring the election void sends a clear message, that a woman's right to vote is a constitutional and legal right and cannot therefore be ignored with blatant impunity.





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Aurat Foundation makes available emerging discussions and debates related to the organization's areas of work. The views presented here reflect those of the author and do not necessarily always reflect the views of the organization.

UN CSW Reflects 20 Years of Beijing Declaration

AF Staff Report

The 59th session of the Commission on the Status of Women took place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 9th to 20th March 2015. Representatives of member states, UN entities and ECOSOC accredited Non-Governmental Organizations from all regions of the world attended the session. The CSW focused on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action including challenges that affected its implementation, the achievements of gender equality and the empowerment of women. It undertook review of progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, twenty years after its adoption at 4th world conference on women in 1995.

The Beijing +20 Review included the outcomes of the 23rd special session of the UN General Assembly, the first five year assessment conducted after the adoption of the platform for action. The session also addressed opportunities for achieving gender equality and empowerment of women in the post 2015 development agenda. The 59th Session of the CSW marked the 20th anniversary of Beijing+20 Platform for Action and individuals, groups, organizations and delegations from all over the world participated in the event, setting a new record this year with more than 1,100 NGOs and a total of 8,600 representatives securing registration.

The 59th Session of the Commission consisted of two kinds of events/sub-sessions; one where permanent missions and UN entities discussed their respective countries and the situation of women rights and the second where NGOs from different countries arranged side/parallel events. The government sessions were restricted to general entries and only government officials and UN officials were



Delegates of 59th UN CSW Session, UN Headquarters, New York

allowed to participate in those events. As opposed to the sessions arranged by governments, the parallel events of NGOs were open to all participants. However, owing to the huge number of participants only those with prior registration were allowed to participate in the side/parallel events.

Pakistan was represented by both a government delegation and a delegation consisting of representatives from civil society organizations. The government delegation participated in the 59th session of UN/CSW consisted of the following members, Advisor to Prime Minister Barrister Zafar Ullah Khan, Chairperson National Commission on the Status of Women, Khawar Mumtaz, Chairperson Provincial Commission on the Status of Women, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Neelum Toru and Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Law Justice and Human Rights, Shehzad Ahmed.

The NGO delegation included four representatives from Aurat Foundation, Prof Farkhanda Aurangzeb, Asim Malik, Rabeea Hadi and Mumtaz Mughal; Nabeela Malick (UNFPA), Saliha Ramay (Rozan), Tabinda Sarosh (Shirkat Gah), Nighat Saeed Khan (ASR) and Ayesha Imtiaz (Ahaan). The team

from Aurat Foundation organized a parallel event in joint collaboration with Collective for Research and Training on Development- Action (CRTD.A) and Women's Learning Partnership (for further detail see box below).

The objectives of the 59th CSW Session were:

- To undertake a review and appraise the implementation status of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as well as the outcomes document of the 20th special session of the General Assembly held in March 2000.
- To analyze current challenges that affect the implementation of the platform of the action and realization of women and girls full and equal rights and fundamental freedoms.
- To access the achievements of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls throughout their life cycle.
- To ensure the acceleration of implementation of Platform for Action and Beijing Declaration.
- To use opportunities in the post 2015 development agenda for the integration of gender perspective into economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

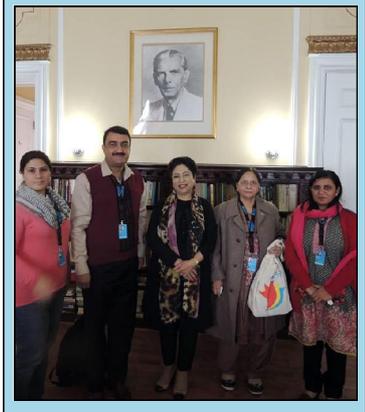
- Re-affirm the commitment to ensure the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into the preparations and coordinated implementation.
- Follow up to all the major UN conferences and summits in the development, economic, social, environmental, humanitarian and related fields, so that they collectively contribute to realization of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls.

Wide range of examples with varying shades of gender equality in South

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AF team calls on Pakistan's Ambassador to UN

Aurat Foundation's team also held a meeting with Dr. Maleeha Lodhi, Pakistan's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN to brief her on the recommendations in the civil society statement on the Political Declaration. The ambassador was briefed on the work carried out by Aurat Foundation as well as about major women's rights issues and challenges faced by women in Pakistan.



Review of Governance and Compliance for Pakistan and Lebanon



Ms. Saliha Ramay, Ms. Rabeea Hadi and Lina Abou Habib at the panel discussion

During the 59th Session of the CSW, Aurat Foundation organized and jointly collaborated a parallel session with Lebanon's Collective for Research and Training on Development- Action (CRTD.A) and Women's Learning Partnership. The theme of the session was titled "Country Reflections on the Beijing Platform for Action: Government Compliance and Way Forward, Case Studies from Pakistan and Lebanon. The event gave a detailed account of the women rights' status in Lebanon and Pakistan and the pro-women legislations specifically in Pakistan. Aurat Foundation's Ms. Rabeea Hadi, Director

issues faced by women in politics, women parliamentarians and women in the workplace. Gaps and loopholes in legislation and implementation of laws were also pointed out.

The speaker went on to highlight the positive contributions of Pakistani women such as the only girl Nobel Laureate Malala Yousafzai, for voicing the right of girl's education, Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy for her Oscar on the documentary which shone light on the sensitive topic of acid crimes against women in Pakistan and the numerous other women in public

Advocacy and EAW, presented "Issues of State Machineries for Women, Politics and Laws in Pakistan", which began with a thorough background and contextual outlook of women in Pakistan.

Ms. Rabeea discussed the

space and public service for their commitment and dedication towards emancipation and equality for women in Pakistan, despite challenges and adversity. Ms. Lina Abou Habib analyzed the situation of Lebanon in perspective of the Beijing+20 declarations and the country response to international commitments. Ms. Saliha Ramay, Co-chair for the EAW Alliance in Pakistan briefed the participants about management of survivors of violence in Pakistan, situation of shelter homes and challenges faced by women and children during redress and access to justice. Ms. Wafaa El from Morocco moderated the event.

The session concluded with both countries bringing forward recommendations to take steps and compliance measures to come closer to their commitments to Beijing and other international commitments. The broader objective of the event was to link regional advocacy campaigns and groups on women's rights issues with their international counterparts.

– AF Staff Report

Global Civil Society Critiques CSW's Political Declaration

A Political Declaration was adopted by governments at the 59th session of the CSW, on 9 March 2015, coining a blueprint for future strategic governance and compliance. It is a well meaning document yet lacks heavily on basic concerns of women globally. The Political Declaration has been analysed and criticized by global civil society organizations. A statement critiquing the declaration has been endorsed by 957 CSOs around the world. The civil society statement is reproduced below:

Twenty years after the adoption of Beijing, this version of the Political Declaration is not what women need.

There has been tremendous progress toward gender equality and the realization of the human rights of women and girls. However, many of the gains that women and girls have made are under threat and women and girls worldwide face extraordinary and unprecedented challenges, including economic inequality, climate change and ocean acidification, and rising, violent fundamentalisms. At a time when urgent action is needed to fully realize gender equality, the human rights and empowerment of women and girls, we need renewed commitment, a heightened level of ambition, real resources, and accountability. This Political Declaration, instead, represents a bland reaffirmation of existing commitments that fails to match the level of ambition in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and in fact threatens a major step backward.

As women's organizations, feminist organizations, and organizations that work to achieve the full realization of the human rights of women and girls, we demand a Political Declaration that:

- **Expresses unequivocal commitments toward fully realizing gender equality, the human rights and empowerment of women and girls.** The term "realize gender equality, empowerment and the human rights of women and girls" should be used throughout the political declaration. The goal of ensuring the full enjoyment by women and girls of all of their human rights and fundamental freedoms is cross-cutting and emphasized throughout the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, not just in one chapter. In the Beijing Declaration alone, the goal of realizing the human rights of women and girls is affirmed in paragraphs 8, 9, 14, 15, 17, 23, 31, 32. Furthermore, the Platform for Action explicitly recognizes that gender equality is a matter of human rights (para 1) and in paragraph 2 states "As an agenda for action, the Platform seeks to promote and protect the full enjoyment of all human rights and the fundamental freedoms of all women throughout their life cycle." Governments cannot pick and choose when to respect, protect and fulfill the human rights of women and should not do so in this declaration.
- **Commits to accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,** along with the outcomes of the 23rd United

Nations General Assembly Special Session, the Beijing+10 and Beijing+15 political declarations, the agreed conclusions and resolutions of the Commission on the Status of Women, as well as regional-level declarations on gender equality and the human rights of women and girls.

- **Commits to universal ratification and implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women** and regional-level treaties on the human rights of women and girls and gender equality.
- **Recognizes the critical and unequivocal role women's organizations, feminist organizations and women human rights defenders have played in pushing for gender equality, the human rights and empowerment of women and girls.** Without feminist organizations, there would be no Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, nor progress in its implementation. Progress has occurred not because of the benevolence of governments, but because feminist organizations and women human rights defenders have fought for it, every step of the way. The attempt of governments to marginalize the role of these groups is an affront to women, everywhere.
- **Commits to create an enabling environment and resources** to allow women's organizations, feminist organizations and women human rights defenders to be able to do their work free from violence.
- **Recognizes and commits to address the emerging challenges that are setting back our fight for equality** and the realization of the human rights of all women and girls. These include increasing fundamentalisms, violent extremism, increased number of displaced persons, increasing inequalities within and between countries, and climate change and ocean acidification, among others. The evidence is clear: women and girls suffer the disproportionate impact of these challenges and without real commitment to address them, gender equality and the full realization of the human rights of women and girls is a pipe dream.
- **Ensures real accountability for governments** including detailed measures to reform and strengthen public institutions to address the structural causes of gender inequality; ensuring an enabling economic environment for women's rights and gender equality beyond sector-specific

financing and gender-responsive budgeting; creating national, regional and international systems that hold State and non-State actors, including multilateral institutions, to account for their role in perpetuating gender inequality and violations of the human rights of women and girls; and affirming the principle of international solidarity as the basis for international partnership between States for just, sustainable and equitable development.

- **Affirms the strong linkages between Beijing, Post-2015 and the Sustainable Development Goals.** Realizing gender equality, empowerment and the human rights of women and girls will be critical for the success of the post-2015 development agenda. The Political Declaration should state unequivocal support for the stand-alone gender equality goal and targets as defined by the Open Working Group; recognize the centrality of gender equality, empowerment and human rights of women and girls for sustainable development; Commit to fully implementing the SDG on gender equality and women's empowerment and ensuring a gender and human rights perspective throughout the post-2015 development agenda; and commit to gender-sensitive targets and indicators and ensure that gender is integrated into the means of implementation, financing and mechanisms for review, monitoring and accountability.
- **Recognizes the links between the human rights of women and girls and development.** The Political Declaration must reaffirm the links between the human rights of women and girls and development, particularly as women and girls disproportionately are affected by the consequences of under-development. None of the three pillars of sustainable development - economic, social or environmental - can be achieved without the full participation of women and girls and without all of their human rights being fulfilled. When 61 million children, more than half of them girls, have no access to education, when 35% of women have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence, and when 1 in 3 girls in the developing world are married by 18, there is a clear failure of development and a serious denial of human rights.

Anything short of this, would be a political failure at a time when significantly more effort is needed to achieve the goals of fully realizing gender equality, the human rights and empowerment of all women and girls everywhere.

UN CSW Reflects 20 Years of Beijing Declaration

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African Region, South American Region, South East Asia Region and Asia Pacific were thoroughly discussed by the participants of the session, which enabled experience-sharing around violence against women, social exclusion of women and their absence in decision-making positions. Equal opportunities to women without discrimination also remained a critical focus of discussions. Pro-women legislation around the world especially in Asia Region was appreciated as a positive move towards formal gender equality yet need for

implementation of these laws was stressed as a challenge by UN member States and NGO representatives. Trafficking of women and children, forced migration and rising poverty index also emerged as common features of the discourse.

As a major document, the CSW adopted a 'Political Declaration' at the opening session. The political declaration penned 13 points to lay out the future strategy for better compliance to the Beijing Declaration. It also encompassed the progress and advancement made in the field of women's empowerment

and development. As per the information available on the official website of UNCSW the draft of the political declaration was submitted on March 05, 2015, well before the start of the 59th Session. The website further states that it was based on informal consultations; however, the declaration was not shared with the participants in a formal setting for their feedback.

The political declaration aroused critique and concerns by the global civil society which was reflected in the Civil Society Statement (see above).

Another important document to come out of the session will be the Post 2015 Development Agenda. The United Nations is in the process of defining the post 2015 development agenda including the finalization of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which will set the agenda for the next 15 years. The process of finalizing the agenda is at a crucial stage with the two final inter-governmental negotiations to be held in July 2015. It is extremely important for Pakistan to participate actively in the process to ensure national priorities are reflected in the agenda.

Experience-sharing on Legislative Business and Issues

AF Staff Report

Bhurban (Murree): AAWAZ voice and accountability programme held a 'National Consultation on Critical Issues of Concern for Women and Need for Legislation, on 3 April, 2015, at Bhurban, Murree. The agenda of the national consultation included status of current and pending legislation, identification of issues for proposed amendments and new legislation, challenges and opportunities for legislations process.

Women parliamentarians and member of leading political parties present in the two-days sensitization workshop and the national consultation included Ms. Shaista Pervaiz, MNA, PML-N, Ms. Kishwar Zehra, MNA, MQM, Ms Jamila Gilani, former MNA, and Provincial General Secretary ANP, Ms. Shaheen Shafeeq, MNA, PML-N, Ms. Musarat Ahmadzeb, MNA, Independent, Ms. Nafisa Inayatullah Khan Khattak, MNA, PTI, Ms. Sorth Thebo, MPA, PML-F, Ms. Nusrat Seher Abbasi, MPA, PML-F, Sindh Assembly, Ms. Asia Naz Tanoli, MNA, PML-N, Ms. Aisha Syed, MNA, JI, Ms. Shazia Ashtaq Mattu, MNA, PML-N, Ms. Shahida Akhtar Ali, MNA, JUI-F, and Ms. Surraiya Asghar, MNA, PML-N, and Mr. Shehryar Afridi, MNA, PTI, Mr. Tariq Ahmed Khan, Secretary Information QWP, Ms. Nabila Hakima Khanm MPA, PTI, Mr. Shaukat Basra, Secretary Information PPP, Mr. M Ali Rashid, MNA, MQM, Ms. Munaza Hassan, MNA, PTI, Ms. Tehseen Fawad, MPA, PML N, Dr.



Ms. Shaista Pervaiz speaking during the two-days sensitization workshop. On her left, Ms. Kishwer Zehra, Ms Jamila Gilani, on right Mr Muhammad Mushtaq.

Farid Piracha, Deputy Secretary General, JI, Ms. Sadia Sohail, MPA, PTI, Ms. Naeema Kishwar, MNA, JUI and Ms. Fariah Emad, MNA, PML N.

Two-day Sensitization workshop on Legislative Business

After the 2013 General Election, 211 women parliamentarians were elected to the National and Provincial assemblies of which 144 elected women were elected for the first time.

Specifically with these parliamentarians in mind, a two day sensitization workshop on "Legislative Business and Role of Parliamentarians in Pro Women Legislation" was organised by Aurat Foundation and held on 1-2 April, 2015, Bhurban, Muree. The workshop was organized under its 'Gender Based Violence - Advocacy and Capacity Building' programme supported by Trocaire, Australian Government and Australian Aid.

Mr. Muhammad Mushtaq, Joint Secretary (Legislation), National Assembly, gave a detailed presentation on drafting and Rules of procedures and Conduct of Business in the National Assembly. Ms. Maliha Zia, Manager Law and Gender, Aurat Foundation, spoke on legislation and role of parliamentarians, women spe-

cific legislation in Pakistan, and shifting from legislation to implementation.

Dr Rakhshinda Parveen, Consultant and Founder Creative Anger by Rakhshi, discussed the ethical, political tactics and strategies required for such alliance building. Mr. Younas Khalid, Chief Strategy and Policy Officer, Aurat Foundation, spoke about the sustainable development goals and how these goals were chosen.

Mr. Naeem Mirza, Chief Operating Officer, Aurat Foundation, outlined the reality that achievements on pro-women laws would not have been possible without the active support of women political workers from grassroots. Ms. Rabeea Hadi, Director Advocacy and Ending Violence against Women, Aurat Foundation, said that Aurat Foundation strives hard to provide knowledge, information, and access to resources and institutions.



Participants of the national consultation after the concluding session

'Will not forget, nor let be forgotten'

On 16 January 2015, one month after the Peshawar school massacre, a vigil was organized at the Parliament House, Islamabad, on 16 January 2015. It was well attended by CSOs and individuals from all walks of life. The message was loud and clear - we will not forget, nor let be forgotten, and, we will not tolerate extremism and terrorism until victory.

Prominent among the parliamentarian were Federal Minister Mr. Pervez Rashid (PML-N), Ms. Azra Pechoo (MNA PPP), Ms. Shazia Marri (MNA PPP), Ms. Afzal



Vigil in front of Parliament House, Islamabad



Vigil in Lahore

Chan (MNA PPP), Senator Ms. Rubina Khalid (PPP), Ms. Zehra Fatmi (MNA PML-N), Mr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui (MNA MQM), Senator Mr. Tahir Mashadi (MQM), Senator Mr. Afrasiab Khattak (ANP), Ms. Bushra Gohar (ANP), Mr. Meraj Khan (MPA QWP), Ms. Anisa Zeb Tahirkheli (MPA QWP), Mr. Zamurad Khan (PPP).

The vigil was organized by TEAM PAKISTAN, a group of concerned citizens, formed in the wake of '16/12 Army Public School' massacre to collectively fight against terrorism and extremism in major cities of Pakistan and abroad. Similar protest were also organized in all provincial capitals.

Aurat Foundation signs MoU with Women Parliamentary Caucus

The Women Parliamentary Caucus (WPC) and Aurat Foundation signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Tuesday, May 19, 2015. Under this MoU, the parties have agreed to collaborate, on a non-exclusive basis, with each other, to address critical issues of concern for women including eradication of gender based violence. They will hold joint conferences and briefings according to a mutually developed schedule and will hold discussions on existing pro women laws, procedural and implementation gaps and required actions.



Ms. Shaista Pervaiz, Secretary WPC and Ms. Rabeea Hadi, AF, with others at the signing ceremony