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# 'Domestic violence on the rise in southern Punjab'

**By Our Correspondent**

LAHORE: To highlight the importance of strategic alliances amongst civil society organisations for systematic and holistic promotion of women rights agenda, the Aurat Foundation (AF) organised a panel discussion at a local hotel on Sunday under its USAID-funded Gender Equity Programme (GEP).

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Azra from Bahauddin University highlighted the rising trend of domestic violence in southern Punjab and the urgent need of sensitisation and legislative measures to curtail it. Similarly, Dr Ra'ana Malik from Punjab University shared the findings of their research on customary practices prevalent in the society that seriously violates women's human rights.

Mukhtar Mai (Mukhtar Mai Women Organization), Kishwer Sultana (Insaan Foundation Trust), Mohammad Waseem (Interactive Resource Centre) and Shaista Khalid (Community Support Concern) shared their experiences

of psycho-social and economic rehabilitation of the survivors of gender-based violence.

According to a press release issued, besides the panel discussion, the day-long activities featured launch of Women Legislative Agenda by AF's Awaaz Project and Sufi musical evening where Indian singer Hans Raj Hans presented the classical poetry of renowned saints.

The event held under the auspices of GEP's Pakistan Gender Coalition (PGC) was part of the activities to commemorate National Women's Day, which is commemorated across the country on February 12 to mark the struggle initiated by women's right activists against the anti-women policies and legislation by military dictator General Ziaul Haq.

On that historic day, women activists had gathered at The Mall, Lahore, in 1983, to protest anti-women legislation but they were stopped from proceeding to the Lahore High Court and baton-charged and tear gassed.