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■ **THIRD ANNUAL REPORT LAUNCHED**

Strategy for controlling violence against women demanded

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Islamabad

Experts have called for evolving a comprehensive strategy to control the overall situation of violence in the country in order to make substantive improvement in combating Violence Against Women (VAW).

They were speaking at a seminar organised to launch the third annual report of violence against women in Pakistan titled 'Violence against Women in Pakistan: A Qualitative Review of Statistics for 2010' by Policy Data Monitoring Programme — Violence against Women (PDM-VAW) of Aurat Foundation (AF).

The report indicated that the country faced 8,000 incidents of violence during the year 2010. Based on the reported cases in a majority of newspapers of Pakistan, no FIR was registered in a large number of incidents, reflecting the citizens' lack of confidence in police.

Out of a total 8,000 incidents, as many as 5,492 cases of violence were reported from Punjab; 1,652 from Sindh; 650 from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 79

from Baluchistan and 127 from Islamabad. The figures of Islamabad are alarming given the smaller population and high security maintained in the capital. In past three years, the number of reported cases of violence 24,119.

The data analysis of 2010 reflects a decrease of 6% as compared to VAW cases reported in 2009. The report mentions that the decrease in figures is due to the fact that the recent natural catastrophe in the country not only damaged the main infrastructure of most of the flood affected districts, but also led to the loss of valuable official, judicial and crime records.

"Moreover, as the media's focus was also shifted in highlighting the relief activities throughout the country, the women related issues were less reported," mentions the report. The collected data represents the reported incidence of violence against women from 113 districts of Pakistan i.e. 36 districts of Punjab; 23 of Sindh; 26 of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; 23 of Baluchistan, Islamabad Capital Territory and federally and provincially administered areas.

The FIR status of the gathered data reveals that 3,650 cases reported were registered while 1,118 cases were not registered. The remaining 430 cases have no information about whether or not the cases been registered or not.

National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) Chairperson Anis Haroon chaired the seminar whereas Assistant Inspector General of Police Islamabad Ehsan Sadiq presided over the session. The findings of the report were presented by Dr Rakhshanda Perveen, founder Director of Creative Anger and the author of the report.

Anis Haroon said that the Domestic Violence Bill is still in the process and after devolution of women ministry to provinces, it will be up to the provinces to pass this vital legislation in the respective provincial assemblies. "Another way is to pass a resolution in the provincial assembly to give these powers to the National Assembly. In such situation, the bill will be implemented only in the provinces that gave this authority to the National Assembly," she clarified.



Dr Rakhshanda Perveen addressing the launching ceremony of a report on violence against women by Aurat Foundation in Islamabad. — Hanif Khattak

She said that no religion allows VAW and urged media to hold accountable the legislators who give arguments against this law. She said that 90% of the domestic violence cases are no reported. "The cases that are reported become victim of faulty police investigation," she pointed.

Anis said that Punjab government has excused from taking up the responsibility of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Crisis Centres. Briefing the participants about her consultation with the representatives of Punjab government, she said that they have genuine concerns about these centres.

"Since past 20 years, the staff of these centres was not regularised by the women ministry and they are not consid-

ered government employees. Another mistake done by the federal ministry was that they never consulted provinces before establishing a centre. Due to that reason, majority of these are located near Darul Amaan, another set up built for the same purpose of providing relief to violence victims," she said.

She stressed to lobby for the regularisation of crisis centre staff members and urged to government to penalize and criminalize the parallel judicial systems like jirgas, panchayat etc. Anis pointed out that the Gender Crime Cell that was established in the Interior Ministry to deal with the cases of VAW has become almost defunct.

Aurat Foundation Chief Operating Officer Naeem Mirza

shared some major features of the report. He said that the 50 district of the Pakistan that are on the top in VAW cases, are in fact on the same position since 2008. He said that Karachi has shown less violence as compared to other big cities. "That does not mean that Karachi is more women friendly city. It could have happened due to the prevalence of other forms of violence in Karachi has overshadowed the VAW reporting."

Ehsan Sadiq said that although the situation of violence against women is not encouraging, however it is encouraging that most of the cases of VAW are now getting registered which indicates a positive. He suggested that in order to change the face of police institution, the government shall in-

crease the number of women in police department. For sustainable change in police department, he stressed to introduce overall reforms in the department.

Tahira Abdullah said that the statistics revealed in the report were just tip of the iceberg and the report title should mention that these were just the reported cases of VAW in the country. In her comments, she highlighted the need to connect poverty mapping of the country with the prevalence of VAW in different parts of the country.

"It is equally important to relate and compare the trends of population and feminisation of poverty in the country with these findings to come up with the sustainable future strategy," she said.