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Annual statistics of violence against women (VAW) launched by Aurat Foundation (AF) on Tuesday show 6.74 per cent increase in the incidents of VAW in the country as 8,539 women became victims of violence in the year 2011 as compared to 8,000 in 2010.

The Fourth Annual Statistics of Violence Against Women compiled by the Aurat Foundation mentions notable increase in some forms of violence. For instance, sexual assault increased by 48.65 per cent, acid throwing increased by 37.5 per cent, 'honour' killings by 26.57 per cent, and domestic violence increased by 25.51 per cent.

Out of total 8,539 cases, 148 were reported in Islamabad, 6,188 in Punjab, 1,316 in Sindh, 694 in KPK, 198 in Balochistan. The collected data represents the reported incidence of violence against women from 113 districts of Pakistan (Punjab, 36; Sindh, 23; Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, 26; Balochistan, 28), Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) and Federally and Provincially Ad-

■ AURAT FOUNDATION'S ANNUAL STATISTICS

6.74% increase in incidents of violence against women

ministered Areas.

The number and percentage of the cases of abduction/kidnapping tops the list VAW with 2,089 such cases reported in 2011. Murder combined with 'honour' killings total to another ugly figure of 2,280 with 1,575 murders and 705 'honour' killings.

Out of total 148 incidents of VAW reported in Islamabad, there were 34 cases of murder; 27 of abduction/kidnapping; 21 cases of domestic violence; 8 of rape/gang rape; 5 cases of sexual assault; 9 incidents of suicide; 2 case of acid throwing and 42 cases of miscellaneous nature.

The report shows notable decrease in the number of reported cases in Sindh and Balochistan in the second half of 2011 but the AF staff credits depleting law and order situation in these two provinces for this decline. "Increase in the cases of target killings and kidnapping for ransom in Sindh and Balochistan attracted the attention of media which led to more media reporting on overall violent situation as compared to VAW incidents," points out the report.

The study mentions that another reason for less reporting in Sindh was due to the dam-

age done by unexpected floods in July 2011. The floods not only damaged the main infrastructure but also led to the loss of official judicial and crime record. "The natural catastrophe greatly disturbed the reporting mechanism of VAW cases in the province."

The annual statistics were shared with the media in a press briefing organised by the Violence against Women Watch Group, AF. The briefing was addressed by the National Coordinator of the Programme Rabeea Hadi and members of VAW Watch Group including Arifa Mazhar, Dr Ghulam Mustafa Solangi, Shazia

Lishari, Tahira Noor and Rabia Aslam.

The report shows that the reported cases of violence against women in 2009 were 8,548 whereas in 2008 the number was 7,571. "This reflects that by and large the incidents of violence against women in the last four years were in the same range. The trend also depicts a kind of a status quo indicating that neither state is doing enough to eliminate this violence nor society is responding to curb the uncivilized behaviour," said Rabeea Hadi.

She termed the figures as merely 'tip of the iceberg.' "The

data collected by our staff is based on cases reported in media. It is an open fact that majority of violence against women incidents are not reported in the media," she said.

The report shows that most of the perpetrators of violence against women were the close relatives of the survivor or the victim such as husband, brother, cousin, father, uncle, father and mother in law, brother in law, son or step son.

It also reflects that in large number of incidents, the FIRs were not lodged against the perpetrators which reflect the lack of confidence among citizens over law enforcing agen-

cies. Among the total 8,539 incidents, FIR was registered in 6,745 cases whereas no FIR was registered in 911 cases and there was no information available in 883 cases. The biggest number of unregistered cases was noted in Sindh province where FIRs were not registered in 605 cases and no information was available in 75 incidents among the total 1,316 reported cases.

In the process of collecting data, the AF also observed some emerging trends that, it considers, can aggravate the situation of violence against women in the country in future. "One such trend was noticed in Balochistan where, in most of the cases of Siah Kari (honour killing), the women were killed on the orders of Jirga but the same Jirga let the men live after the exchange of heavy amount in terms of compensation."

At the same time, the report considers it heartening to note that 2011 witnessed some landmark women-related legislations passed unopposed in the National Assembly and Senate. The report demands effective implementation of these legis-