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8,539 women victimised in 2011

Violence against women touches new heights

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ISLAMABAD - According to a study, 8,539 women became victims of violence in 2011 and there was an overall 6.74 per cent increase in reported cases of Violence Against Women (VAW) in the country as compared to 2010 highlighting the fact that women continued to be victimised in the name of honour; dispute settlement and personal gains throughout the year.

The findings were shared at the launch of the fourth annual statistics of Violence Against Women report by Aurat Foundation (AF) Tuesday. The research that is based on media reports gives an overall glimpse of the situation of violence against women in the country in 2011.

The report shows that 8539 women became victims of violence in 2011 and there was an overall 6.74 per cent increase in reported cases of VAW in the country as compared to year 2010. The figure was 8000 in 2010, in 2009 the incidents remained 8548 and in 2008 these incidents were 7571. Out of total 8539 cases of violence, 6188 incidents were reported in Punjab, 1316 in Sindh, 694 in Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa, 198 in Balochistan, and 148 in Islamabad.

In some forms of violence there has been notable increase. 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.

In a large number of incidents, the First Information Re-

ports (FIRs) were not lodged which reflects lack of confidence among citizens to approach police in case of such incidents, said the study. "Among the total 8539 incidents, FIR was registered in 6745 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 1316 reported cases".

The report said though there was decrease in the reported cases of VAW in Sindh and Balochistan in the second half of the year but the decrease in reporting was a result of depleting law and order situation in these two provinces. 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.

Another reason for less reporting in Sindh was due to the damage 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 number and percentage of the cases of abduction/kidnapping tops the list with 2089 such cases reported in 2011 with a very high proportion of 24.46 per cent. Murder combined with 'honour' killings total to another ugly figure of 2280, constituting 26.70 per cent of total crimes against women, with

1575 murders of women (18.44 per cent) and 705 'Honour' killing of women (8.25 per cent).

There were 827 shameful incidents of rape and gang-rape in 2011 with 9.68 per cent. There were 758 cases of suicide by women (8.87 per cent) in 2011. There were 110 cases of sexual assault (1.28 per cent); 29 burning & acid throwing incidents in each category (0.33 per cent); and offences of miscellaneous nature were 20.98 per cent of total with a figure of 1792 cases of violence in four provincial regions and Islamabad.

Rabea Hadi, National Coordinator, PDM-VAW Project speaking on the event said in the process of collecting data some emerging trends were observed that, if allowed to continue, will further aggravate the situation of violence against women in the country. 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.

The speakers said this shows that by and large the incidents of violence against women in the last four years were in the same range with some increase and decrease and the society has not witnessed any radical departure in its trends in the unfortunate commission of crimes against women. This reflect a kind of a status quo also indicating that neither state is doing to eliminate this violence nor society is responding to curb uncivilized behavior.