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Multiculturalism in Norway needs to be defended

By Naeem Mirza

Serene and peaceful Norway was struck by 'one man's madness' on 22 July in the manner that for a moment it blew off the very reason of human existence. But, in no time the reason resurrected from the debris of death and devastation and prevailed all over Norway in such a grand manner that Norway was standing taller than ever before in the comity of nations and its government and people, somber in sorrow, were holding each other's hands in a rare response of unity against this act of cowardice of a person, who was motivated by an ideology based on hatred, racism and xenophobia, largely inspired by the far right ideologues in some European and Nordic countries.

As violence begets violence, terror breeds more terror and one fundamentalism thrives on the other, the price is enormous and unusually paid by people hardly concerned with the battle of ideologies - in

the name of which all this happens. This anatomy of violence and its correlation with other factors might be true for us in Pakistan, as one incident sparks another making a vicious cycle of incidents one after another; this cyclical violence has developed in our country; and when the other day somebody described my dear country as the 'land of violence', I was speechless. We, Pakistanis, have seen so much violence over so long that we have almost become too cynical and insensitive to it.

But, what happened in Norway on 22 July, 2011 was less discernable, particularly for its nature and scale. The cycle of violence and terror is absent in Norwegian society and psychology. There are political parties and groups in Europe and Scandinavian countries ascribing to far right ideologies which are intolerant and extremist in nature. There had also been some incidents of violence and terrorism in a few countries, on issues related to immigrants. But, no one had exactly foreseen and forewarned the kind

of event which happened on 22 July. That is why, the first reaction of almost everyone after the incident was - 'in Norway' - and the second thought which came gushing in, particularly in the minds of Muslims and Pakistanis was - 'we are doomed' thinking it must have been someone from amongst us.

Since I believe that terrorism has no religion, and no religion sanctions terrorism, it was not heartening to note later that the mass murderer in Norway was from another faith than mine. I discourage the bracketing of any religion with terrorism. But, we also need to discourage and fight naivety. One cannot deny the fact of the emergence of religious extremism, fundamentalism and militant versions of religion across the world. The context of present 'war on terror' in Pakistan and Afghanistan is known to all. But, the bitter reality is that there is no consensus among us in Pakistan on the 'ownership' of this war,

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More democracy is our response to terrorism: Stoltenberg

On Monday, 1st August, Prime Minister of Norway, Jens Stoltenberg, made an address at the Central Jamaat Mosque in Oslo, during the memorial for victims of the tragedy of 22nd July, 2011. Below is the text of his speech.

Dear all of you,

Today the first two victims of the terrorist attacks are being laid to rest.

One of them is 18-year-old Bano Rashid from Nesodden. Her family fled from Iraq in 1996. They found a safe haven in Norway.

Bano did well at school and was planning to study law. She dreamt of a future in Norway's parliament. Her dream was shattered by the gunman on the island of Utøya.

I am full of admiration for her parents, Beyan and Mustafa. This is what Beyan said to the newspaper *Aftenposten*: "The answer is not hatred, but more love."

Today, her family has said farewell to Bano in a ceremony that was both Norwegian and Kurdish.

The other is 19-year-old Ismail Haji Ahmed from Hamar. Ismail was an irrepressible performer and an enthusi-



Prime Minister of Norway Jens Stoltenberg, his wife Ingrid Schulerud, Princess Martha Louise, Crown Princess Mette-Marit and Crown Prince Haakon of Norway look on as thousands of people gather at a memorial vigil on July 25, 2011 in Oslo, Norway.

astic dance instructor. He inspired a great many people. And brought joy to even more.

I mourn Bano and Ismail.

They have given the new expanded concept of the Norwegian "we" a face. We will be one community. Across religion, ethnicity, gender and rank.

Bano is Norwegian. Ismail is Norwegian. I am Norwegian. We are Norway. And I am proud of this. I am also very proud that the Norwegian people have passed the test.

The very heart of our democracy has been attacked. But this has only strengthened our democracy. Brought us closer together. The immediate shock and devastation brought us together.

Later, we came together in protest. We filled the streets with roses and torches and put a protective arm around democracy.

I am inviting the whole nation to come together as the Norwegian "we". The newspapers today are showing pictures of an imam and a bishop embracing each other. This should be a source of

inspiration. We are all Norway. Our fundamental values are democracy, humanity and openness. With this as a platform, we will respect differences, human dignity and equality. And each other.

And we will face the debates. We will welcome them. Even the difficult ones. We will all expect one another to champion the fundamental values of the Norwegian "we".

This is how we will deepen and develop our response to terrorism and violence. The answer is even more democracy. Even more humanity. But never naivety.

It is up to us to write the next chapters of Norway's history. There will be a Norway before and Norway after 22 July.

We have already staked out the course. Norway will be recognisable. The rest is up to us. Standing here on holy ground, it is important to affirm that we respect one another's beliefs.

Against that backdrop, diversity must be allowed to blossom and to colour the picture of the Norwegian "we". This is how we will honour the memory of Bano, Ismail and the others who died in the attacks on Utøya and Oslo.

Punjab budget: a gender myopic document

By Farah Zia

It is not easy to see the Punjab provincial budget from a gender lens. It's an interesting exercise, nonetheless, where the buck keeps rolling - from the government to the non-government sector, from the finance department to PRSP I and PRSP II and; to Gender Responsive Budgeting Initiative to GRAP and so on. In the end, you are as unsure about how gender sensitive the budget actually is as before or never before.

Certain things become clear at a cursory glance though. Being a developing country, hugely dependent on foreign donors, gender is an agenda that we have only partly internalized and for various reasons. This may not be because of lack of commitment purely; there are serious capacity issues that prevent its implementation. It is considered easier for the non-governmental sector to adopt gender as an agenda than the government sector which has to take mammoth decisions and hence the resistance. The order of priorities changes when the security situation is grim or there are massive floods. All energies are geared in that direction without realising that each of these issues has a gender dimension too.

These are the kind of forces that are equally in play at the time of budget-making which is believed to be a technical, figure-related exercise. Thus it is easier to take policy decisions regarding gender equality than engage in a detailed disaggregated budget.

However, the highlights of the Punjab budget that have been made public do not include a single policy decision for achieving gender parity except a generalized allocation of Rs13 billion for gender-based investment. We have heard about the Danish schools and the Yellow Cab scheme as the salient features of the 'development-oriented' and 'people-friendly' Punjab Budget 2011-12 but nothing that shows the commitment of the Punjab Government per se regarding women in particular.

Of course, there are allocations in social welfare, education and health under the existing heads that favour the girl child. The missing facilities in educational institutions, provisions for maternal health, the nurses' capacity building initiatives, LHVs training, the Directorate of Women Development are all aimed at addressing women's needs, we are told.

As per the budget documents, the Punjab Government has announced five new initiatives for social welfare and women's development in the Budget 2011-12. These include establishing Children Homes Faisalabad, Working Women Hostel Sahiwal, Beggar's Home Lahore, Old Age Home Building Lahore and 50 new vocational training institutes. Rs170 million have been allocated for these.

Other initiatives are construction of building of Gehwara Rawalpindi, establishment of Drug Rehabilitation Multan, Implementation of Gender Reform Action Plan, establishment of 7 Model Children Homes and three more old age homes. An amount of Rs285 million has been allocated for new schemes for women empowerment and Rs290 million for new/fast moving schemes of PVTC (Punjab Vocational Training Council). Similarly there are allocations for education, special education and health under the Annual Development Plan that are believed to benefit women as much.

Would it be fair to categorise the above figures as gender-blind? I think it would.

Interestingly, Punjab was the first province where the Gender Responsive Budgeting Initiative (GRBI) of the Government of Pakistan was initiated in 2005 with the support of UNDP and its cost-sharing donors. Punjab was picked along with the centre and three sectors were short-listed to make budget approaches and instruments gender-responsive. These were education, health and population welfare.

The process began with a degree of success, and gender was made a part of Budget Call Circulars. In Punjab, departments were asked to gender-disaggregate all relevant performance indicators. They were supposed to include gender-related goals. GRBI also required a gender budget statement in order to show what the government's programmes and budgets are doing in respect of gender. The programme lasted till 2007 and was not followed or implemented thereafter.

Balochistan budget draws blank for women

By Shahzada Zulfiqar,

Balochistan's budget to the tune of Rs. 164 billion including the development outlay of Rs. 31.2 billion with a deficit of Rs. 6.7 billion for the fiscal year of 2011-12 was presented in the provincial assembly without any particular development scheme for women except up gradation of a couple of schools or colleges.

The total revenue expenditure for the next fiscal year was estimated as Rs. 133.206 billion including Rs. 90.562 billion as compared to Rs. 83.44 billion of current year budget and Rs. 644 billion as Capital Expenditure. The highest allocation of revenue expenditure of Rs. 19.256 billion has been made for Education Affairs and Services while Economic Affairs will get Rs. 18.352 billion in the next fiscal year budget, an amount double than Rs. 9.1 billion of current financial year.

Rs. 17.206 billion was earmarked for General Public Service while Rs.

According to Professor Gita Sen, GRB (Gender Responsive Budget) does not refer to separate budgets for women. It only helps governments decide how policies need to be adjusted, and where resources need to be reallocated. It provides an indicator of government commitment to address women's specific needs and rights to health care, education and employment.

While the government has been successful in improving women's employment in the public sector and their quota in the elected houses, what prevents the Finance Departments to engage in GRB is a relevant question. It turns out this is something that cannot be achieved in the existing framework of budget-making. There is a sense that Finance Departments (not just in Punjab but everywhere in the world) by their very nature are resistant to change and outside influence (like by GRAP for instance).

There is a need to revisit the forms in budget manuals from the point of view of gender sensitivity so that the data that comes out is gender-sensitive. The sectoral guidelines issued by Planning and Development (P&D) Department to all ministries should include gender as a component. But the entire infrastructure as well as the software is archaic. On its part, the Finance Department Punjab claims it cannot afford to be adventurous when there are figures involved.

Truth is that gender-sensitive budgeting requires rare skills involving research and econometrics. Technically, it needs a structural reform. But from the point of view of agenda and policy, there's a lot that

needs to be and can be done. PRSP states that "poverty reduction efforts must address the gender dimension in order to deal with poverty meaningfully." For instance, in education, one reason for the lower enrolment of girls is identified as fewer schools for girls than boys. According to one report, the reasons cited by girls for not attending schools were "parents didn't allow", "too expensive" and "too far". The same report states "The budget as formulated allocates most of the funds for running existing systems, thus since there are more boys' schools they receive more funds..." Seen in this backdrop, this is a gender blind education budget since it does not make more allocations for girls and maintains the status quo.

On the positive side, GRAP (Gender Reform Action Programme) Punjab is functional while the one at the centre is said to have outlived its utility and the Punjab government deserves praise for deciding to continue with it. The Punjab chapter of GRAP may be credited with all the women-specific measures but its aim of mainstreaming gender in public sector systems and processes excludes the budget, it seems.

On a simple read, the budget document does not convey that the Finance and the P&D departments reflect the need for addressing gender-equality issues. Categorical statistics like the percentage of microcredit to women, the percentage of Zakat funds to women, the number of women in public sector employment, ratio of literate males to females etc. would have added a great value to the budget document from the gender perspective.

ive impact on the both sectors.

Some 30,000 women are estimated of total 1.5 lac Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who are forced to migrate from the restive areas of DeraBugti and Kohlu due to military operation.

It is difficult for any one to determine the proportion of budget earmarked for the welfare of women as no government department in Balochistan including Finance and even Women Development has any idea or figure in this regard.

Budget of a country or a province in fact reflects the aspirations of the people, focusing underdeveloped sectors with a gender balance. However unlike other under developed countries or regions, Pakistan and particularly Balochistan could spare very limited resources for its development. Around 20% of total Rs. 164 billion budget 2011-12 is available for development sector and that is too with a budgetary gap of Rs. 6.7 billion.

Sindh provincial budget

By G.N. Qureshi

Sindh's budget outlay for fiscal year 2011-12 is estimated at a record Rs. 457.5 billion in which significant amount has been provided for social welfare in general and women's empowerment in particular. Briefly mentioning, there are already 17 schemes in a run, worth 232.207 million and the number of new schemes for current fiscal year is three worth 85.640 million.

Women's position and their involvement in the economy bear witness to their dynamism and energy, and their quest for pragmatic and political solution. Keeping in view the continued pace of gender equality globally, the Government of Pakistan has started paying special attention to women's empowerment. Not only the government machinery, NGOs and private sector have made for opportune opportunities for women facilitation concerning education, technical assistance, vocational training and small house industries.

This is also done in consonance with meeting targeted 4.2 percent GDP growth rate. Multiple avenues are planned to launch for the women's employment and this is also done in accordance with containing inflation at 12 percent. Previously, various programs have been materialized to train 13,000 women in stitching-tailoring at 350 village based training centers in all the Districts of Sindh. Since ours is an agrarian economy, various domains had already been constituted to train 6700 women as Lady Livestock Workers coupled with provision of tracts of agricultural land to women Haris (peasant women). The chief reason why extraordinary efforts have been taken in this direction is emancipation of women economically so that they may contribute their valuable services as significant segment of society.

The establishment of STEVTA is another landmark that present Government has remarkably achieved for revitalization of Technical Education and Vocational Training for Human Resource Development. In pursuance of the desired goal for women's empowerment, the present provincial government has allocated substantial amount in current budget 2011-12 that would not only facilitate the woman gender, but also create sufficient job opportunities even for the illiterate let alone the educated ones. Among the social development projects already in run, some of the approved projects for women's empowerment in particular are arguably mentioned here.

Establishment of the community development centers in Sindh worth 49.524 million has been approved for Karachi and Thatta districts. Economic Empowerment support to Urban/ Rural

Orphan girls and handicapped women throughout the Sindh has also been approved against 83.648 million budgets. Another hallmark that deserves commendation is establishment of Darul Amaan at Mohtarma Shaheed Benazirabad (Nawabshah). Its estimated cost is Rs. 47.511 million. Similarly, approval of the establishment of Darul Aman for rehabilitation of the destitute & under privileged women in Mirpurkhas and Jacobabad is another laudable act that government has planned in its capacity in current budget. Furthermore, establishment of community development centers at Karachi, Hyderabad and Sukkur for 'She-Male' worth 83.464 is further enhancement of women's empowerment.

Among the Women's Development Program, some of the ongoing important schemes are remarkably presented here. Establishment of Sales & Display Resource Center at Karachi, establishment of Day Care Center at Karachi, establishment of Women Complaint Cells in Sindh for aiding women in distress, establishment of media cells in the directorate of women's development, baby child care training at all district HQs of Sindh and 18 towns in Karachi, implementation of Gender Reforms Action Plan Sindh, report on trafficking of women in Sindh are some of the milestones reached by the government for women emancipation from the slavery of stereotyped male chauvinistic society.

Besides, establishment of working women hostels will culminate in solving the issue of working women while being away from home. Moreover, establishment of shelter homes in all districts of Sindh, establishment of women development complex at divisional level, Sindh women economic empowerment project, advocacy for women empowerment in Sindh, assistance to poor women victims of violence and atrocities through civil society organisations, women development complex at Sukkur, mediation for women in all divisional HQ in Sindh through institutionalized alternate dispute resolution are some other ongoing accomplishment of the government in similar direction.

The bottom line of every project has been welfare of the women not on the expense of their self-respect, but by making great use of their potential in multifarious spheres of life. For instance, stitching and tailoring provides them with bread and butter by actualizing their energies to earn with self-respect. The gender discrimination is further reduced by the fact that women will have enormous say in social life when they start to having their own livelihood. This would ultimately cultivate feeling of self-confidence in them, which is essentially vital for better performance.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa budget

By Zainab Azmat

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial budget was a long awaited moment especially after the 18th amendment, with high hopes of positive change in the situation of different ministries after devolution. This long anticipated moment finally revealed a picture not different than the one the public has already been used to.

Budget is a document that shows the future expenditure plan of a government. There are two types of budget, current and development. Current budget focuses on salaries, pensions, subsidies and debt-servicing whereas development budget focuses on social service delivery sector. The budget of 2011-12 of KPK has focused on police force, flood rehabilitation and social sector. New public management techniques like third party audit and Medium Term Budgetary Framework are introduced in the budget to make it more realistic, objective, transparent and people-centric.

The provincial government seems more concerned with paying salaries to the staff of the devolved ministries. The ministries devolved after the 18th amendment do not seem to be properly adjusted in the budget leave alone part of women's recognition in the relevant funding of these ministries. For example, the labour ministry is given one amount of fund without any specifics of what that fund is intended for. There is no clarification of benefits for women labour, particularly women home-based workers (who are already in the process of being recognized as labour force). Similar is the case with Ministry for Youth, Department of Women's Development and several other departments.

One of the heaviest portions of the budget has been allocated to Police Department. Whether it is "the shuhada (martyrs) allowance" or purchase of weapons, infrastructure development projects or salary and pension schemes, the Police Department appeared to be getting the status of most-favoured department.

Second important portion is allocated to education and health sectors. Education sector receives the bigger chunk of the fund. The budget covers different aspects of the education sector; such as infrastructure establishment and improvement, teacher training, student scholarships etc. The lack of proper quota for female education is a loop hole in the presented budget. The budget, however, is vague in terms of gender classification and does not clearly show how many of the students would be boys and how many girls or what would be the quota for each gender.

The point of provision of prize schol-

arships for the first ten candidates from government schools in the intermediate and secondary board examinations is a great step for motivation of young students into higher education. However, keeping in view the ratio between boys and girls high schools in the province it is very likely that very few female students would be among the beneficiaries of these scholarships, therefore there is a dire need of gender sensitization of such decisions. For instance, if equal number of scholarships are offered to both the genders, i.e. five scholarships for the top five boys and five scholarships for the top five girls.

Health makes another major portion of the budget. However, the ambiguity with regard to the division of the funds among the different sections of the huge health ministry doesn't go unnoticed. Benazir health program where health support will be provided to hepatitis patients needs to be more gender-sensitive as there is no mention of making it accessible to the women and girl children who are mostly left out in such situations. Health facilities for women needed separate mentioning and provision. There is no clear wording for improvement and funding for reproductive health facilities in hospitals and BHUs for women.

It seems like the budget preparatory team has no concern for gender and gender mainstreaming in the budgeting process. There are times when they seem to remember and just to avoid criticism they mention women and other vulnerable group. However, just a mention of something is not meaningful; and it takes women's empowerment in the spirit of tokenism and not as a real phenomenon. Some examples in this regard are:

"Floods funds whether rehabilitation or preventions are a more of random and don't cover the vulnerable groups".

"Foreign donations are mentioned, but there is no mention of the amount dedicated purely for women and girls development".

"The point of training for 1500 youngsters in different centers of excellence in marketable skills; and the establishment of information technology board for job creation of IT professional", provide us an example of gender-blind budgeting.

Similarly the point of allowance increase for young doctors needs great clarity. No one is sure as to who is the direct beneficiary of the program. How many female doctors will be part of such schemes?

The provincial budget does talk about schemes and projects for poverty alle-

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showing the complexity and enormity of ideological divide. This brings home the need for more debate, more openness, more democracy and more humanity towards critical issues in ours as well as in all societies.

To the satisfaction and pride of all conscientious people of the world, this exactly was the Norwegian response to 22 July: more openness, more democracy and more humanity. This reflects core values of Norwegian society. Anders Behring Breivik is an aberration of the collective Norwegian psyche.

"In essence Breivik attacked the whole Norwegian society for the values it stands for - tolerance, inclusive social democracy and human rights. The attacks have shocked this peace-loving nation and even the King and Queen of Norway openly wept in a Church service for the innocent victims of the attacks. But the response of all Norwegians is composed, dignified and determined, i.e. the nation will never give up its values for fear of acts of terrorism," wrote Farhat Taj, who is a PhD Research Fellow with the University of Oslo, in an article recently.

Norway's response towards hatred was love and compassion. The Prime Minister of Norway, Mr. Jens Stoltenberg, in one of his memorial addresses, while emphasizing on core Norwegian values, warned against naivety. He said: "We will all expect one another to champion the fundamental values of the Norwegian 'we'". This is how we will deepen and develop our response to terrorism and violence. The answer is even more democracy. Even more humanity. But never naivety".

Naivety in its extreme form, i.e. the 'state of denial' is also our (Pakistan's) major problem. We are immersed in it for several decades and we must now wake up; first accept the grim reality about the existence of hard-core extremists and their ideologies everywhere around us and then find political and democratic ways to deal with them. These ideologies are inimical to Pakistan's integrity and pluralism. These also contravene the philosophy and ideals of our Founding Fathers.

Fighting 'naivety' in Norway by Norwegians may also not be easier as debates on multiculturalism are already raging in several important European capitals. However, since pluralism and gender equality (feminism) are the essence of mainstream socio-political and cultural processes and discourse of most European and Scandinavian countries, the ideological debates may result in early consensus on whether multiculturalism is a 'salad bowl' or a 'melting pot' for

diverse ethnic and cultural communities or nations in a particular demographic entity. The debate is already on among key European leaders on whether multiculturalism should be enriched through better integration of immigrants into the rest of society or a common national identity among all citizens should be chiseled out.

The debate, may take any form or direction, no one is going to condone Breivik's action, it is hoped. This has had already happened where several politicians and thinkers described as sympathizers to his cause in his 'manifesto' have condemned and dissociated themselves from Breivik's act.

His ugly action, however, has brought to the fore the dangers lurking behind the 'far right thinking in Europe and Scandinavia' particularly in the context that how fatal it could be if not checked timely and wisely. Only more debates on multiculturalism and openness on critical issues related to it would eliminate Breivik remnants. Though I believe Breivik's charge-sheet against the ruling Labour Party on multiculturalism and feminism became his own indictment the moment Labour leadership expressed determination to defend and preserve the unique model of Norwegian multiculturalism.

Norwegian multiculturalism has to fight on many fronts, but two turfs would be more important. The ideological debate with right-wing parties and its ideologues would be main battle. Secondly, the Norwegian battle to preserve its multiculturalism would also necessitate re-visiting its strategies on integration - now symbolized by Norwegian 'we'.

One turf of this battle of minds should be 'immigrant communities'. This is time that the 'Pakistanis, who form the biggest immigrant community in Norway, realize with complete metamorphosis of heart and mind that they are Norwegians. They should think, behave and act like Norwegians, not because that they have Norwegian nationality; because, Norwegians today are trying to present the best possible options of social integration.

They should be model citizens of Norway. Several of these Pakistan-born people are holding high positions in government and public services. They are from the first generation of Pakistani immigrants to settle in Norway. Now, Norway is homeland to their second and may be third generation. They are Norwegians, not Pakistanis, by their own free will. Norway has given them everything - self-respect above all. However, there are several issues which need to be addressed.

"And yet there is also a concern about the Pakistanis in Norway. One reason

is that majority of the Pakistanis in Norway marry someone from Pakistan. This means that new Pakistanis keep coming to Norway who know nothing about the country and its value system. This challenges the process of integration of the Pakistanis in Norway. This is a matter of concern for many in Norway. Secondly, the Muslim identity of the Pakistanis comes across as their dominant identity at the cost of all their other identities rooted in Pakistan. This is seen in wider Norwegian society, like elsewhere in the west, in the context of the fear of Islam generated since the 9/11 attacks," observes Farhat Taj, out of her experiences about the Norwegian society.

My question is rather straightforward. Why these Pakistani Norwegians, who are born in Norway, do not marry where they live? They could do so among their own community, though I always feel that cross-breeding is historically a healthier phenomenon. Anyway, let this be the children's choice. If children, under the 'biological determinism' do not have choice on their birthplace, parents, colour, gender, culture and religion; they must at least be given the choice to make independent decisions - about marriage partner, education, job etc. -, when they are adult. Let trust on the younger generations' ability to make correct decisions be one salient feature of the 'model of integration' under multiculturalism.

This discussion has strong underpinnings of gender and feminism. Girls bear the brunt of discrimination when it comes to marrying someone through one's own choice and free will. Deviation from this fundamental right, which has been given to adult Pakistani boys and girls by religion and the constitution, is the first step in wrong direction.

This results in 'forced marriages'. If the boy, under his parents' influence or may be out of his own patriarchal lust, marries an 'obedient-type' girl back in Gujrat, the poor girl would be an alien to a new environment. Or an educated girl is forced to marry someone back in 'hometown', same would be the case with the usually 'less-educated and civilised' boy. This mismatch, usually the forced one and the kind of it, are odd pieces which will never fit into the bigger and complex puzzle of multiculturalism, Norway is trying hard to complete and preserve.

Norway's s Action plan for the integration and social inclusion of the immigrant population contains measures in four focus areas: work, childhood and adolescence, education and language, gender equality, and participation. Efforts in these areas are crucial if work on social inclusion is to succeed. The Action Plan, among other measures, is meant to ensure

that everyone who lives in Norway should have equal opportunities to contribute to and take part in the community welfare.

"There is an ongoing debate in Norway about whether the integration of immigrants is successful or not. A new European study demonstrates that Norway succeeds in many areas, and we are pleased to have this confirmed, said Mr. Bjarne Håkon Hanssen, the Norwegian Minister of Labour and Social Inclusion, several months before the recent Oslo and Utøya carnage. "We are particularly satisfied with top rankings in the areas of immigrants' participation in society and working life. The study confirms that it is necessary to have a continuing focus on integration. We have therefore decided to strengthen the government's Action Plan," said Mr. Hanssen.

One must not forget that Breivik's manifesto is a powerful criticism of feminism and multiculturalism. He is clearly anti-multiculturalist. His manifesto illustrates his conviction and revulsion that liberal, pro-immigration policies throughout Europe are allowing a "demographic jihad" that will lead to a European Muslim majority in the next several decades. "Of course the Norwegian killer's ideology, spelled out in mind-numbing detail in his 1,500-page online manifesto, is both repulsive and absurd. Its main focus is hatred of Islam and Muslims - who he wants deported from Europe - rooted in a self-proclaimed Christian conservatism," writes Seumas Milne in The Guardian a few days after the carnage in Oslo and Utøya.

"In fact, however deranged the bombing and shooting might seem, studies of those identified as terrorists have shown they rarely have mental illness or psychiatric abnormalities. Maybe Breivik will turn out to be an exception. But whether his claim that there are other members of a fascistic Christian terror network still at large turns out to be genuine or not, he has clearly fostered enthusiastic links with violent far right groups abroad, and in Britain in particular", observes Seumas Milne.

This makes the battle harder and may be painful in years to come. The humanity, however, will make a mistake if it did not defend, preserve and strengthen pluralism and multiculturalism, irrespective of its models and methods, as several social and cultural scholars have pointed out that future global society could only sustain and progress if it would remain on the wheels of multiculturalism, i.e. peaceful co-existence of diverse cultures.

Norway is facing hard time in its fight to preserve its principles and values. Norway must not be left alone in this fight. —*The writer is associated with Aurat Foundation.*

EDITORIAL

When the British left India they claimed that their colonial system would never be replaced by independent Pakistan and India because their subjects will never be able to find a better system to maintain law and order. This proved true when the Acting Sindh Governor Nisar Ahmed Khuhro signed three ordinances, on July 6, 2011; one which restored the commissioner system, the second that replaced the 2001 local government system with the 1979 ordinance and; also restored the 1861 police system. The government claimed the step was taken in order to resolve Karachi's deteriorating law and order situation. The Government of Indian Punjab took a similar decisions and for similar reasons in January 2010, when it introduced commissioner system in three mega cities - Amritsar, Jalandhar and Ludhiana to meet, as they claimed, their "dynamic and complex law and order and internal security requirements because of their fast urbanization, huge floating populations and migration resulting in fast changing demographic profile of residents".

The decision of Sindh government may be taken, at the best, as a desperate effort to control the everyday massacre of innocent citizens in Karachi, however, it is far from looking for a sustainable democratic alternate of local governance system to address the very basic human rights of water, sanitation, health and people's consent for democratic governance. This colonial system, on the other hand, lacks space for the composed historical struggle and achievement of women's political empowerment incorporated in the 2001 local government system. Over the years, the local government system has proven to be the nurseries for political leadership, particularly the women leaders in promoting the rights of the traditionally marginalized groups of women. Reverting to the commissionerate system in Sindh would, thus, derail the process of encouraging public participation in running government affairs at local level.

The revival of local government system has become inevitable in the backdrop of devolution of power under the 18th Amendment. It would ensure the spirit of devolution of powers to the public. The civil society organizations in the country demand that the Sindh government's decision be immediately reversed and all provincial governments shall hold local government elections and bring back this third tier of governance. Let us forget that the local government system was introduced by military governments, and hence, create public ownership with democratic norms. Democracy can do any magic if owned by people.

Acid Control and Crime Prevention Bill passed

The National Assembly on 10 May, 2011 unanimously passed 'The Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention Bill 2010' which recommends 14-year to lifetime imprisonment sentence and fines up to Rs 1 million for those who commit the crime.

The crime of splashing acid on women was becoming common and the main reason appears to be the lack of proper legislation, a statement on objects and reasons for the presentation of the bill said, adding that there was no law to regulate the manufacture, supply and access to acid. The purpose of the bill is to control the import, production, transportation, hoarding, sale and use of acid to prevent the misuse of acid and provide legal support to acid and burn victims.

The bill was introduced last year by MNAs Marvi Memon, Begum Shahnaz Sheikh and Advocate Anusha Rehman in a bid to prevent growing incidents of violence against women. After much scrutiny, the committee of women development had approved the bill last month further amending the

Pakistan Penal Code 1860. The amendment in Section 336-B states, "Whoever causes hurt by corrosive substance shall be punished with imprisonment for life or imprisonment of either description which shall not be less than fourteen years and a minimum fine of one million rupees."

The new insertion in Section 336-A states, "Whosoever with intention or knowingly causes or attempts to cause hurt by means of a corrosive substance or any substance which is deleterious to human body when it is swallowed, inhaled, come in contact or received into human body or otherwise shall be said to cause hurt by corrosive substance."

Marvi Memon thanked the parliamentarians particularly women lawmakers for the passage of the bill. Bushra Gohar said that the parliament had fulfilled its duty. She also expressed the hope that the Upper House of parliament would also pass the bill unanimously. Dr Azra Fazal Pechuho, Fauzia Ejaz and Fauzia Wahab said that the bill would help control incidents of acid crimes against women.

SC questions existence of parallel judicial system

The Supreme Court of Pakistan on 27 May, 2011, taking strong notice of an incident of Wani or Swara (exchange of females as compensation to settle feuds) observed that how could a parallel judicial system was still existing in Sindh province through jirga system.

A three-Judge bench of Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, Justice Muhammad Sair Ali and Justice Ghulam Rabbani on a plea moved by Samar Minallah regarding a case of Swara/Wani in Sukkar area, ordered the trial court to proceed in the case and decide it within three months after submission of challan. Disposing of the case, the bench directed that the progress report should be submitted before the Registrar office.

Advocate General Sindh Abdul Fatah Malik apprised the bench that four people were murdered in 1999 but a nine-member jirga settled the issue recently by ordering that 12 girls aged between 8 to

15 years should be handed over to by the tribe of murderers to the aggrieved families, besides imposing a fine of Rs 2.7 million.

He apprised that two member of the jirga including father of four girls and son of chieftain (Wadera) were arrested while the others had fled. He said wadera Muhammad Murad was also arrested by the police.

Malik said in Sindhi dialect 'tanu' accusing someone of a crime was considered a great insult and the girls were given in lieu to remove such blame. Aitzaz Goraya, DPO, apprised the bench that they had been making efforts for the arrest of the accused. He said they had also recorded statement of Irshad, a 15-year old girl.

Samar Minallah, a human rights activist, appeared on behalf of swara victims, and said that the custom was violation of PPC 3(10)(a) and a judgment of Sindh High Court.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa budget

From Page 3

viation and socio-economic development; the word "women" pops up in the contents of these schemes too. But the fact that most of the women population is not educated and unaware of the complexities of loan documentations et.; this makes access to the schemes nearly impossible for them making the allocation and the schemes gender blind, especially in "Bacha Khan Khapal Rozgar scheme" where the loans will be given on first come, first serve basis.

An exemplary gender-sensitive scheme in the budget is Bacha Khan Hunarmand Rozgar Scheme where a provision in the form 30% quota of the total loan is set for women. It would have been better if such steps had been taken while introducing new schemes in the budget and allocating funding to different ministries.

Ministry for Women Welfare and Development appears to be a marginalized component of the provincial budget. After the 18th amendment the Ministry of Women should have been dealt with more carefully. The situation of women development is equal to zero in the province. Unfortunately after devolution of power and ministries, women still is the neglected group. The Ministry of Women mentioned

in the budget and budget speech is a visible proof of the lack of dedication and commitment for true development of women in the province. The Ministry of Women is supposed to start a few vocation skill centers in KPK and provide training. Even in the Ministry for Women Development, the initiatives like monthly stipends for skilled workers and unemployed postgraduates, equipment provision to 540 special people are unclear in the context of gender as to how many of these beneficiaries will be females?

Upon first look, the budget gives a look of a document that has incorporated gender, however, after thorough study of the document it becomes clear that document is not part of a "gender-sensitive planning" nor does it reflect a clear gender perspective. Nonetheless it is a great effort on part of the finance department team, which had prepared the budget in such pressure times, with the province hit by militancy, floods and the situation after the 18th amendment at hand.

Their effort is appreciated but it is hoped that in future more consideration will be given to developing a gender-sensitive budget for the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. —*The writer is Lecturer Institute of Management science Peshawar*



**LEGISLATIVE
WATCH**



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Swara---a bridge over troubled waters

By Samar Minallah

Over a period of time a proactive advocacy campaign has helped in the uncovering of cultural practices such as Swara, Vanni or Sang Chatti, from the shadows of silence, denial and taboo, as a fundamental human rights abuse.

A culturally sanctioned form of violence, Swara, Vanni or Chatti is an indigenous means of alternative dispute resolution mechanism whereby disputes (often resulting from murders) are resolved by the traditional peace keeping institutions without having to invest time and money in lengthy judicial processes. The price of this dispute settlement is paid in the form of women/girls from the family of the aggressor who enter the house of the bereaved family by way of unceremonious wedlock, to remind the aggressors of the injustice their men bestowed upon the bereaved family.

Access and dispensation of justice are problematic issues in Pakistan's governance paradigm. The situation is particularly alarming at the level of the district judiciary where the "common" people approach courts to get justice. In other parts of Pakistan as well, a large number of the members of civil society express their confidence in the panchayat system in case of a dispute. This level of resort to parallel justice as a viable means of conflict resolution is due to lack of faith in the effectiveness of the formal institutions. It further leads to a certain segment of society even handing over their daughters to make amends for crimes if so decreed by the jirgas. People from rural areas generally find it difficult to access the formal justice system because of the prohibitive costs and delays associated with litigation.

The police are viewed as partial in favoring the influential. Hence, people prefer to have their disputes resolved locally through the jirga. Even if some do approach the formal legal system, they are often forced to abandon it due to impediments. From an informal community based body that was meant to settle small claims, the 'jirga', or council of tribal elders has in Pakistan, been allowed to emerge as a powerful force protecting the interests of the powerful. This all male body is often called upon to adjudicate on matters pertaining to women whose views are never sought.

Since our democratic institutions are dominated by feudal chiefs or Sardars who themselves conduct jirgas in their localities, how can one expect that they will legislate against these vices which will ultimately restrain their own powers and influence over the weaker section of the society.

Back in 2002, in 'Aba Khel Vanni Case (2002)' in Mianwali, Nawab of Kalabagh played a vital role in the decision of handing over eight girls as com-

pensation to resolve an age old dispute.

A jirga decreed Mukhtaran Mai from Meerwala to be punished for an alleged crime committed by her brother. In Haripur, in this day and age a woman is paraded naked on the orders of the jirga for an alleged crime committed by her son.

In June 2006, an incident took place in Kashmir where five minor girls were to be handed as compensation to the rival party. Again, a parliamentarian and the District Nazim were part of the members of the tribal council.

According to a research report 'Honour Killings'; murder in the name of honour is in many instances based on taking revenge from the enemy or to grab land or to earn money from a rich man by accusing him as Karo. Under the decision of the jirga chief, the life of the accused is spared in return for a big amount of money. The jirga therefore has become an important part of this lucrative affair.

The jirga system was undoubtedly a viable way of handling administrative work in the past, but now it is becoming synonymous with culturally sanctioned forms of violence against women like Swara also called Khoon Baha, Vanni and Sang Chatti in other parts of Pakistan.

The fact that no such cases are brought to formal judicial processes, that is they are neither reported to the police nor taken to the courts for legal prosecution, leaves the offender unaccountable. Therefore, to a certain extent, it is viewed as acceptable to demand women as compensation. Such a mindset continues to support social acceptance of this practice. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has the right to an effective remedy by competent national tribunals/or violations of their human rights.

Jirgas do not use established legal procedures nor can they be referred to as competent national tribunals. Instead of doing away with them there have been moves to revalidate the jirga system in the past. The Sindh government gave the directive- for the drafting of the Sindh Amicable Settlement of Disputes Ordinance (SASDO) 2004. This was done despite a ruling by the Sind High Court (SHC), Sukkur bench on April 24 2004, which explicitly banned the holding of jirgas in the province and declared them illegal and unconstitutional. This was directly aimed at undermining the SHC verdict, and giving jirgas a legal cover. In the past, jirgas have been held in government Circuit Houses, residences of high government officials in complete defiance of the SHC orders.

Allowing parallel systems of justice like jirgas and panchayats to operate

with impunity denotes the fact that judiciary or judicial systems and the law applicable to the rest of the country is not available to the vulnerable. These tribal courts flourish with the blessings of the local police and civil administration that are happy if the crimes are not recorded. Feudal lords, politicians, police, the bureaucracy and parliamentarians all join hands to keep the tribal justice system alive and flourishing.

Raising the question of validating Swara/Vanni/Chatti on a traditional peace building premise has not met with any success. The notion that Swara has taken root as an effective alternative dispute mechanism for blood [murder] is therefore seriously questioned here. While analyzing the judicial premises on Swara, again there is clear evidence for containment and aversion to this practice. The Pakistan Penal Code has criminalized "Swara" in a 2004 amendment. Now under Section 310 PPC, entitled compounding of qisas (Sulh) in Qatl-i-amd the code declares:

"In the case of 'qatl-i-amd', an adult sane 'wali' may at any time on accepting 'badal-i-sulh' compound his right of qisas (Provided that a female shall not be given in marriage or otherwise in badal-i-sulh)."

This means that the aggrieved party, i.e. the wali of the murdered person, may if she/he so wishes, forgive the murderer and accept compensation provided that a female shall not be given in marriage or otherwise as badal. Section 31 O-A contains the punishment for the giving of a female in Badl:

"Whoever gives a female in marriage or otherwise in badal-i-sulh shall be punished with rigorous imprisonment which may extend to ten years but shall not be less than three years". Therefore the penal code is clear on the issue of what constitutes the crime. It states unequivocally that a female given in exchange for murder constitutes the crime of "Swara".

Whether this act is done with the consent of both the parties, or it is done with the consent of the female herself, it stands criminalized. According to Islamic jurisprudence a punishment should have four characteristics. It should be punitive, retributive, reformative and a deterrent. Swara does not have any of these desired features, because the criminal himself goes free and instead, an innocent girl pays the price. According to Islam, there is no vicarious liability.

Every soul must bear the burden of his/her own actions. 'Nikah' (the marriage contract) is a social contract. Here consent based on free will is mandatory. Moreover, if a girl herself is not willing to marry someone, then the nikah or marriage will be considered 'void ab initio'. The key compo-

nent of any marriage is consent and willingness of the spouses. However, in such marriages, the marriage is forced upon the woman, making it completely unacceptable.

In essence, the 'Swara' arrangement amounts to zina-bil-jabr, and women forced to marry under this custom need the protection of law. The said custom is in direct violation of section 6 of Offences of Zina (Enforcement of Hudood) Ordinance, 1979. The custom of swara is violative of Article 9 of the Constitution. Right to life enshrined in the said article guarantees right to marry with free consent.

On May 31st 2006, on the demand of the jirga members in Shikarpur Sindh, Mohammad Ramzan pledged to hand over his daughter Heer (nine) and one year old Kareema as compensation for eleven buffaloes within three days. The handing over of the girls was halted after the case was brought to the notice of the Honourable Supreme Court.

In June 2006, in Buner, a two months old girl was taken to a jirga where she was given in marriage to a one year old boy. The verbal solemnization was conducted by the imam of the mosque. Buner police later arrested the jirga members and the imam.

Despite, the fact that 'Swara', 'Vanni' 'Sang Chatti' and 'Irjaai' are still being practiced in different parts of Pakistan there is still hope. Since, the custom was challenged in the Supreme Court of Pakistan in 2004, till today more than 70 girls have been saved from being forced by the 'jirgas'.

A struggle initiated in 2003 has transformed into a campaign of the civil society. A video produced by Aurat Foundation in 2003 against the custom of Swara is still being used as a tool to educate the masses and the policy makers on the dark side of the custom. The documentary helped in breaking the silence at a time when 'Swara' was not even a criminal offence.

The change is gradual, but it is there. We have to believe in change to bring about change. On 28th of May 2011, 12 minor girls were saved from being handed over as 'sang chatti' in Sukkur, Sind. The Supreme Court directed the Sukkur District Police Officer to arrest all remaining accused involved in giving away, under the tradition of Sangchatti, 12 teenaged girls and Rs2.2 million as compensation to the families of four murdered people. Sukkur DPO told the court that two out of the 18 people of the jirga arrested. Yes, laws are important but we as a civil society have to own up such causes and continue raising our voices and pushing change. Change comes slowly but the fact that we are moving in the right direction is itself a ray of hope. — *The writer anthropologist and documentary filmmaker*

Silver Jubilee Celebrations of Aurat Foundation

A journey through 25 years of struggle for women's human rights and empowerment



Aurat Foundation, a national women's rights organisation, was founded in 1986 by two rights activists Nigar Ahmad and Shahla Zia (Sitara-e-Imtiaz), along with a few other colleagues. Over the years it has come to be recognized nationally and internationally as a leading civil society organisation working for women's human rights and empowerment with a broad vision of a just, democratic and humane society in Pakistan.

The work of Aurat Foundation, spanning over a quarter of a century, is a national experience of resolute struggle of women's rights activists which resulted in transforming the political landscape of Pakistan by bringing to fore women's rights issues on the national agenda; and internally, transforming the scope of the organisation from a two-room information house, in Lahore in 1986, to a major support organisation today with one of the largest citizens' networks and grassroots presence in over 120 districts of Pakistan and AJK.

Aurat Foundation presently has 73 Citizens' Action Committee for Women's Rights at the district level; about 2600 Information Network Centres for Women at the grassroots level and; 110 District Coordination Committees for national campaigns and social mobilisation drives, in addition to its Groups of 50 Women Leaders in 30 districts; its Legislative Watch Groups and Violence Against Women Watch Groups in federal and provincial capitals. Several prominent women parliamentarians in national and provincial legislatures and a large number of former women councillors are members of these groups and committees.

Aurat Foundation, through its pioneering programmes and initiatives like "Political Education Programme for Women", "Advocacy and Action Programme for Women" and "Legislative Watch Programme for Women's Empowerment" imparted information and knowledge, developed skills and raised confidence of women and men belonging to different walks

of life, particularly women in decision-making bodies and political parties. Recently, it has gone into a new role of grant-making under Gender equity programmes to award grants to civil society organisations and other state and semi-state institutions working for women's empowerment.

Aurat Foundation has inspired a generation of activists, both women and men, in local communities and has gained their trust over the years. Therefore, Aurat Foundation has enormous capacity to mobilise local groups, networks and communities for quick action on local and national level campaigns. Some say that Aurat Foundation "mobilises local groups at the speed of light".

Aurat Foundation's policy and law reform input to successive governments relating to national development plans and national reports to international conventions and human rights instruments, Muslim family laws, law on 'honour' crimes, amendments in Hudood Ordinances and domestic violence bill have earned it recognition and credibility among governments, legislatures, political parties and a

number of national institutions.

Since Aurat Foundation was born out of the women's movement that began in early eighties to reclaim democratic rights of all citizens, including women, it stands by its earliest conviction that democracy alone can save Pakistan and lead it to a common destination of equality, peace and prosperity.

Aurat Foundation has its headquarters in Islamabad and four regional offices in the provincial capitals - Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar and Quetta - with over 120 employees. It is a major support organization for civil society organizations, federal, provincial and local governments and political parties, among other public and private institutions.

Aurat Foundation's mission is to cre-

Mission Statement

To create, facilitate and strengthen civil society networks and groups for promoting trust and collaboration to mobilize public pressure for women's empowerment and people-centered development.

Aurat Foundation
www.af.org.pk

Congratulations

To you Nigar and Shahla, to your families and friends, staff and supporters for making history by creating such a wonderful institution for the women of Pakistan and working so tirelessly, selflessly and fearlessly all these 25 years



Your and our mission has been and will continue to remain building:

A peaceful and prosperous Pakistan, where all citizens live with self-respect and dignity, enjoying equal rights in a just, democratic and humane society

Let us resolve to continue this mission

From Aurat Foundation's Board of Governors, Members of Citizens' Action Committees, Information Network Centers, Women Leaders Groups, Legislative Watch Groups, & well-wishers in Pakistan and abroad

ate, facilitate and strengthen civil society groups and networks for promoting trust and collaboration among citizens to mobilize public pressure for women's empowerment in the country. The culture of 'caring and sharing' in the organisation and a women-friendly environment has glued the staff and the organisation together in an inseparable bond, with the commitment to stand together in hours of trial.

It works with key objectives of reinforcing commitment to gender equality and equity and developing women's sustained capacity to participate in all areas of governance and social sector development. Aurat Foundation has imparted information and knowledge, developed skills and raised confidence of members of its networks and groups and other stakeholders through capacity-building, advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns and information-dissemination.

AF's founders and directors are the pioneers of women's rights movement in Pakistan. Its activists were founding members of Women's Action Forum (WAF). AF has been part of various mass movements in the country for rights of marginalized communities, women and religious minorities.

AF also contributed in launching and strengthening main NGO coalitions in the country, e.g. Pakistan National Forum, Joint Actions Committees, Pakistan Social Forum, Sustainable Agriculture Action Group, Insani Haqooq Ittihad (Islamabad-based), Aman Ittehad, People's Resistance (Karachi-based), Alliance for Protection of Human Rights (Peshawar-based) and All Balochistan Political Women Forum (Quetta-based). —*Staff Report*

MoWD devolution supported



Anis Haroon speaking at the seminar.

Islamabad: Speakers and participants of a seminar, mainly from the civil society, supported the devolution of Ministry of Women's Development to provinces and demanded that the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) should be given the role and functions of the devolved ministry which relate to policy-making, legislation and coordination to ensure uniformity in laws and policies on women's rights issues in the country.

Aurat Foundation organized the seminar on Friday, June 17, at a local hotel in order to share and discuss various aspects of 18th Amendment with members of civil society and media. The event, titled as '18th Amendment: Opportunities and Challenges for Provinces and Women', was presided

over by Anis Haroon, Chairperson, National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW). Jami Chandio, Executive Director Center for Peace and Civil Society, Rehana Hashmi, Executive Director Sisters Trust and Consultant with UN Women were the main speaker on the 18th Amendment.

Anis Haroon further said, "provinces are more knowledgeable and competent than Islamabad. All the confusion lies in the federal capital, because some vested interests here do not want to transfer power and resources to the provinces". She said that devolution of MoWD would open up new opportunities for provinces to do lot more for women.

Jami Chandio, Executive Director Center for Peace and Civil Society, in his presentation said that under 18th Amendment, 102 clauses of the Constitution Pakistan have been amended. One major significance of 18th Amendment is that it has reversed the centralization of state institutions which was done by British colonizers. The amendment has effectively ensured the provincial autonomy.



Tariq Malik, Deputy Chairman NADRA and Naem Mirza, COO Aurat Foundation signing the MoU; on their right is Mir Alam, Chief COO NADRA; Simi Kamal, CoP GEP, Gareth Aicken, Country Representative, The Asia Foundation, Younus Khalid, Director M&E Aurat Foundation and Bushra Jaffar, DCOP GEP are seen in the back row.

NADRA, Aurat Foundation sign MoU

In order to help unregistered women in getting their computerized national identity cards (CNICs), Aurat Foundation signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with National Database Registration Authority (NADRA), on July 19, 2011, at NADRA office, Islamabad. Naem Mirza, COO Aurat Foundation, and Tariq Malik, Deputy Chairman NADRA signed the MoU. Mir Alam, Chief COO NADRA, Simi Kamal, Chief of Party Gender Equality

Programme (GEP) and Younus Khalid, Director M&E Aurat Foundation also participated in the MoU signing ceremony.

According to the agreement, Aurat Foundation would provide grants through competitive process to local NGOs and community based organizations to mobilize their resources to achieve the objective in collaboration with NADRA. The project would increase women's and their access to social, economic and political rights.

GEP launches scoping studies

The Gender Equity Program (GEP) of Aurat Foundation launched scoping studies on mainstreaming research on gender interventions, on June 7, 2011, at a local hotel, Islamabad. These studies identify current status of knowledge and actions on gender issues and address gaps surfaced in the post-August 2010 floods.

The studies include - 'Effects of the 2010 Floods on Women in Pakistan', 'Gender Based Violence in Pakistan', 'Women's Empowerment in Pakistan', 'Capacity of Pakistani Organizations to carry out Gender Equity Initiatives', and 'Gender Equity-Justice and Governance in Pakistan'. Catherine Johnson, Senior Advisor, Democracy and Governance, USAID, participated as chief guest. Simi Kamal, Chief of Party (CoP) Gender Equality Programme, while briefing the audience about the rationale behind scoping studies, said that women lack information of and access to relief and compensation services.



Simi Kamal speaking at the GEP scoping studies launch event; on the stage (L to R) Catherine Johnson, Dr Alya Khan and Dr Rakhshinda Parveen.



Yasmeen Rehman and Mehnaz Rafi (in the centre) at the report launching in Lahore (Right). Tauqeer Fatima Bhutto, Sharmilla Farooqui, Khushbakht Shujaat, Humera Alwani, Dr Masuma Hasan and Mehtab Rashdi at the Karachi launch.



Annual report on violence against women launched

Aurat Foundation's 'Policy Data Monitor - Violence Against Women (PDM-VAW) programme launched the annual report of violence against women in Pakistan during 2010. This was the third consecutive report, titled 'Violence Against Women in Pakistan: A Qualitative Review of Statistics for 2010', launched at its head office in Islamabad and four regional offices in Karachi, Quetta, Lahore and Peshawar simultaneously on July 5, 2011.

Karachi: Notable delegates, invited for the event at Karachi included Tauqeer Fatima Bhutto, Provincial Minister for Women's Development, Sindh, Sharmilla Farooqui, Information Secretary-PPP, Sindh, Khushbakht Shujaat, MNA-MQM, Humera Alwani, MPA-PPP, Sindh Assembly, Dr Masuma Hasan, Member AF's BoG, and Mehtab Rashdi, Executive Director Hum TV. The women legislators also demanded the empowerments in the female police force that has been pending since the Benazir Bhutto era.

Quetta: The report launch at Quetta was attended by the members of VAW Watch Group, members of civil society organizations, lawyers and media persons. Saeed Ahmed, Regional Director, Human Rights Balochistan, Aysha Wadood, Gender Advisor, Ministry of Women Development, Balochistan, and Noor Elahi Bugti, Bureau Chief, SAAMA TV Balochistan, were the main speakers.

Lahore: Yasmeen Rehman, member National Assembly and main mover of the pending 'Domestic Violence Bill 2009', participated as the Chief Guest, for the report launch at Lahore. The resource persons to reflect on the content of the annual report on violence against women included Mehnaz Raffi, former MNA and renowned women's rights activist, Salman Abid, Director SPO, and Fouzia Viqar, Director Shirkat Gah, Lahore.

Peshawar: Peshawar office of launched the on violence against women same day. Shabina Ayaz, the

Resident Director, Peshawar office, officially launched the report. She said that the data of violence was alarming. This was particularly so as most of the offenders were husband and other family members. The participants of the seminar were concerned that due to increasing terrorist activities and military operations in Khyber-Pakhtunkhaw, cases of violence against women could not get registered, particularly in FATA region.

Islamabad: Anis Haroon, Chairperson, NCSW, chaired the seminar at Islamabad, said that mega violence in Pakistan like terrorism is one of the major reasons that is dumping the issue of violence against women under the carpet. Ehsan Sadiq, Assistant Inspector General (Operations) suggested that in order to change the face of police institution, the government should increase the number of women in police department. The findings of the Report were presented by Dr Rakhshanda Perveen, founder Director of Creative Anger and the author of the Report.