

Monday, February 17, 2014

Strategic alliances among civil society organisations stressed

Staff Report

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

The event, held under GEP's Pakistan Gender Coalition (PGC), was part of the activities organised by the Aurat Foundation to commemorate National Women's Day in Lahore. Currently there are 154 partner civil society organisations and government institutions connected through the PGC. Besides the panel discussion, the day-long activities by Aurat Foundation under the banner of "Aurat Yakjehti Mela" featured launch of Women Legislative Agenda by AF's Awaaz Project and Sufi musical evening, promoting love, compassion and kindness where Indian folk and Sufi music singer Hans Raj Hans tugged the spiritual strings of the hearts of those present in the audience with classical kalaam of renowned Sufis of the region.

The National Women Day 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 General Ziaul Haq. Women activists gathered at the Lahore Mall on February 12, 1983, to protest anti-women legislation and were stopped from proceeding to the Lahore High Court and baton-charged and tear gassed. Speaking on this occasion, Dr Azra from the Bahauddin University (BZU) reflected over the increasing trend of domestic violence in south Punjab and the urgency for the sensitisation and legislative measures to curtail it.

Dr Ra'ana Malik from the Punjab University (PU) shared findings of her research on customary practices, prevalent in society that seriously violate women's human rights. Mukhtar Mai (Mukhtar Mai Women Organisation), Kishwer Sultana (Insaan Foundation Trust), Mohammad Waseem (Interactive Resource Centre) and Shaista Khalid (Community Support Concern) shared their experiences of psychosocial and economic rehabilitation of the survivors of gender-based violence. Psychosocial rehabilitation, theatre for sensitisation and advocacy efforts under Gender Equity Programme of Aurat Foundation for promotion of social justice and peace are also the main emphasis points of their activities.