

**February 2019**

***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEB 18<sup>th</sup> TO FEB 24<sup>th</sup> 2019***

## **CALL FOR EFFECTIVE LEGISLATION TO PROTECT WOMEN**

The Newspaper's Staff Correspondent February 21, 2019

HYDERABAD: At a two-day national conference titled 'The Problems of Women and Their Solution in the Light of Teachings of Islam' on Wednesday, scholars asked for effective legislation to address issues confronting women. The event was organised by University of Sindh (SU) department of comparative religion and Islamic culture at Shaikh Ayaz auditorium of the faculty of arts building.

Event chief guest and keynote speaker, Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) Pakistan chairman and former University of Peshawar vice chancellor Prof Dr Qibla Ayaz in his address on 'Early-age marriages in the light of international law' said that in several Islamic states — including Morocco, Mauritania, Oman, Syria, Albania, Bangladesh, Algeria, Tunisia and Iraq — the average age for marriage was around 18-21 years. Pakistan had also joined those ranks by legislating 18 years as the minimum age for both men and women, he added.

"The council had deliberated the issue of appropriate marriage age for women in the greatest possible detail in its recent meetings and had come to the conclusion thereby to recommend to the government and parliament to sensitise and educate public on this issue with a view to [prepare] ground for parliamentary legislation to this effect," he said. He lamented the plight of women even in modern times and attributed it to a lack of education, social apathy and slow-paced implementation of relevant laws, according to a press release.

"While the world still argues about the role, rights, positioning and status of women in society, Islam accords them incredibly high regard, albeit it stresses diverse yet complementary responsibilities for both men and women to perform.

"Islam, addressing all problems a woman is supposed to encounter, provides her maximum economic, social, political and personal cover," University of Sindh Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Fateh Mohammad Burfat said while presiding over the moot.

He cited instances from the Prophet's (PBUH) life in which the Prophet (PBUH) accorded highest honour to his beloved daughter Bibi Fatima Zehra and to his esteemed spouse Bibi Khadijah.

"The nefarious social practices regarding women are all against the spirit of teachings of Islam. We witness happening in society, including honour killing, barter marriages, premature marriages, offering of women as penalty in tribal feuds, forced marriages, and preference of sons over daughters," he said.

He hoped that the deliberations of the moot would hopefully lead to formulating recommendations ushering sustainable resolution of women's problems.

Speaking as guest of honour, Research and Development Foundation head Ashfaq Ahmed Soomro bemoaned the fact that women were not treated at par in most countries around the globe despite all the proclamation to enlightenment and civil liberties.

Others who also spoke included SU's Faculty of Islamic Studies Dean Prof Dr Hafiz Munir Ahmed Khan, department of comparative religion and Islamic culture chairman Prof Dr Bashir Ahmed Rind, Prof Dr M.K. Sangi of the SU's Institute of English Language and Literature.

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<https://www.dawn.com/news/1465011/call-for-effective-legislation-to-protect-women>

**March 2019**

***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAR 25<sup>th</sup> TO MAR 31<sup>st</sup> 2019***

## **PAKISTAN DEMOGRAPHIC AND HEALTH SURVEY 2017-18 SHOWS PROGRESS**

By APP Published: March 31, 2019

KARACHI: The results of the Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (PDHS) 2017-18 indicate improvements in child mortality and maternal healthcare in Sindh. The results were released during a seminar organised by the National Institute of Population Studies (NIPS).

The survey provides estimates at the national and provincial levels for urban and rural areas. The 2017-2018 survey included for the first time data disaggregated by disability status along with age, wealth, educational status and province. The results indicate that families across Pakistan are improving in terms of health and neonatal and infant mortality rates have declined as has under-five-years-age mortality. It reveals that more births were registered to be delivered in a health facility – from 58% in 2012-13 to 72% in 2017-18. The trend of pregnant women getting antenatal check-ups has improved as well, with 78% in 2012-13 to 86% in 2017-18.

The survey also indicates that challenges still prevail and many children across the country suffer from malnutrition. Access and availability to family planning information and services also remains lacking.

The 2017-18 PHDS survey was implemented by NIPS under the aegis of the ministry of national health services, regulations and coordination. It is the fourth such survey conducted in the country since 1990-91 and was conducted in collaboration with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), under the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) Programme. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) also partnered on the project.

USAID Director for Sindh and Balochistan Michael Hryshchyn said the survey should be used to direct efforts for the next five years and not be considered just a report card. Good data leads to evidence-based decision making by government and development organisations.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1940737/1-pakistan-demographic-health-survey-2017-18-shows-progress/>

## **AFTER GHOTKI, ANOTHER UNDERAGE HINDU GIRL ALLEGEDLY ABDUCTED IN BADIN**

By Our Correspondent Published: March 26, 2019

KARACHI: Days after news of the abduction and alleged forced conversion of two underage girls in Ghotki district created uproar, another case has emerged, this time in Badin, where a 16-year-old Hindu girl has allegedly been abducted.

According to an Information Department handout, the Sindh Minister for Minorities Affairs Hari Ram Kishori Lal has taken notice of a news item that went viral on social media regarding the alleged abduction of 16-year-old M\*, who belongs to the Meghwar community, from Tando Bagho of district Badin and directed Badin SSP Sardar Hassan Niazi to register an FIR of the incident immediately and also take necessary steps to protect the girl's family.

The minister also directed the Badin SSP to submit a detailed report of the incident, besides instructing the Minorities Affairs Director Mushtaq Ahmed Soomro to contact girl's relatives and provide them all possible help for her safe recovery.

The incident occurred in Village Dhani Buksh Pitafi on the night between March 16 and 17, according to the FIR registered by the victim's father, Gov Meghwar, in Pangrio Police Station on March 26.

Meghwar states in his complaint that the main accused, Ghulam Haider Thaheem, along with three accomplices, one of whom he recognised as Ghulam Nabi Shah, broke into his house at around 3am, woke up his daughter and dragged her to a waiting vehicle outside and fled with her.

Meghwar asked the police to apprehend the suspects for he feared his daughter would either be killed or be forced to convert and then marry.

Meanwhile, villagers claim that the girl had eloped with a boy of her choice and had converted to Islam in a madrassah in Samaro Tehsil. She had then married of her free will.

According to an affidavit signed by the girl, she has claimed to be 19 years old and has stated that she converted to Islam of her own free will. She has also filed a petition in the Sanghar District Court for protection.

According to the minister, the marriage of underage girls is banned in Sindh under the

The Sindh Child Marriages Restraint Act 2013, adding that it was a criminal act to marry a girl who was below the age of 18 years. Lal said that the Act is being strictly implemented in Sindh.

In this regard, he quoted the incident of 11-year-old Monika, who was abducted from Hala of Matiari district, in which the court ordered to return the girl to her parents on the grounds of the law.

Speaking about the Ghotki case, he said that the two underage sisters were taken to Punjab because of early age marriage restrictions. He asked the federal government to create consensus on the forced conversion law and introduce an early age restriction bill at the federal level so that minorities were provided protection in such cases when they were taken to other provinces.

According to Lal, the Sindh government is working to establish the Sindh Minorities Protection Commission and its draft has been approved by Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah two days ago.

He said that a meeting was also held under the Sindh chief secretary to discuss the commission's operation and make it more effective for the protection of minorities. The meeting was also attended by the Attorney-General of Pakistan, who presented his valuable input, he said. The minister added that the draft of the Sindh Minorities Protection Commission would soon be presented in the Sindh cabinet for approval.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1937713/1-ghotki-another-underage-hindu-girl-abducted-badin/>

## ***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAR 18<sup>th</sup> TO MAR 24<sup>th</sup> 2019***

### **MAN SENT TO JAIL FOR 14 YEARS IN ACID-THROWING CASE**

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Updated March 22, 2019

KARACHI: An antiterrorism court (ATC) on Thursday sent a man to jail for 14 years in an acid-throwing case.

The court found Danish guilty of attacking an air hostess with acid and causing her critical injuries in July 2015 in a Shah Latif Town locality. However, the ATC acquitted three co-accused Malik, Abdul Raheem and Mohammad Ashraf for want of evidence.

The court also directed the convict to pay diyat of over Rs800,000 to the victim and ordered that he would remain in prison even after completing his sentence in case of non-payment.

The prosecution said the victim had reportedly turned down a marriage proposal of one of the acquitted accused and he allegedly paid the three other accused to attack her with acid. Danish, along with his two accomplices, attacked the air hostess.

A case was lodged under sections 324, 336 and 34 of Pakistan Penal Code read with Section 7 of Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997 at Shah Latif Town police station.

Published in Dawn, March 22nd, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1471060/man-sent-to-jail-for-14-years-in-acid-throwing-case>

### **LEGISLATION SOUGHT TO DISCOURAGE CHILD MARRIAGE**

Bureau Report March 19, 2019

PESHAWAR: Speakers at seminar here stressed the need for raising awareness among people about the consequences of child marriage and enactment of laws to curb the practice.

The seminar was organised by Centre for Communication Programmes Pakistan at department of journalism and mass communication, University of Peshawar. A large number of students and teachers attended the event.

Tahir Abbas, the CCPP advocacy specialist, said that the organisation was working to raise awareness about the consequences of underage marriage and push efforts for legislation regarding it. "We are working with different universities to raise awareness about the issue by holding seminars," he added.

Shagufta Hameed, another speaker, said that as per Pakistan Demographic Health Survey, one out of four girls was married before reaching the age of 18 in the country. She added that rural areas had reportedly 14 per cent of the underage marriage cases while the urban areas witnessed 12 per cent such cases.

Speakers say early marriage often results in health complications

She said that underage marriages often resulted in miscarriages, lack of mental health of the young parent, divorces, higher rates of infant and maternal mortality, malnutrition and other health issues.

Early marriages of girls and then child bearing often created health complications, she added.

Ms Hameed said that the survey showed that maternal mortality rate in the country was 276 per 100,000 births while the infant mortality rate was 74 per 1,000 live births.

She said that major reasons of child marriages were poverty, crisis situation, incorrect religious interpretations, gap between parents and their children, and the gender roles that had been assigned by society to men and women.

Mohammad Sharif Hazarvi, a religious scholar, told the participants that child marriages were not encouraged in Islamic teachings.

“The Holy Quran says in a verse that besides attaining puberty, someone also needs to be mature enough to earn and sustain his family before getting married,” he said.

He said that someone might achieve puberty at the age of 18 years, but he or she might still not be mature enough to handle the responsibilities of a family and marriage.

Published in Dawn, March 19th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1470510/legislation-sought-to-discourage-child-marriage>

## **WOMEN AND ACCESS TO FINANCIAL SERVICES**

Fahim Adil Updated March 18, 2019

Alexander Hamilton once said, “Banks are the happiest engines that ever were invented for creating economic growth”. Finance shapes the contours of the economic horizon.

Financial inclusion plays an important role in the growth of a nation. Gender is more than the binary of male and female; it is how individuals associate with socially prescribed activities and roles. Women are thwarted by financial exclusion because of not only cultural and social barriers but also other factors that go beyond the scope of these two. Last year in November, Prime Minister Imran Khan approved a five-year strategy to enhance National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS) as part of the PTI government’s agenda. On March 6, Finance Minister Asad Umar affirmed the government’s commitment to enhancing access to formal financial services by priority groups.

Presiding over the sixth meeting of the NFIS, the minister said the government has prioritised the scheme through digitisation, promotion of SMEs and easy access to formal credit for farmers.

Refining the existing delivery system through technology-based solutions alone will not ensure access to financial products by vulnerable groups

Branchless accounts, a digitised mode of banking as opposed to the brick-and-mortar branch network, are pitched as a cornerstone of financial inclusion. They are mostly used for transactional and social welfare disbursements.

Refining the existing delivery system through technology-based solutions and financial literacy alone will not ensure access to appropriate financial products and services by vulnerable groups. The prime function of financial institutions and financial inclusion is ensuring easy access to credit by such segments of society.

From June 2015 to June 2018, the number of branchless banking accounts increased 262 per cent. But the share of women’s accounts in total branchless banking accounts remained flat over the same period. This was partly due to a low female literacy rate. Pakistan ranks eleventh in the world in terms of female illiteracy while there is a 17pc gap between men and women when it comes to mobile ownership.

The barriers that cast women out of economic life emerge mainly from the practices of the formal financial sector.

Account operations of stay-at-home women, who are illiterate in some cases, depend on witnesses.

In order to open a bank account, at least two formal identification documents are required. A huge number of women in rural areas and even in urban centres do not have national identity cards and marriage certificates. It is difficult for them to have these documents due to cumbersome processes, social pressure and a lack of awareness.

Women rarely have access to any form of collateral due to a lack of documentation and many other reasons.

Therefore, they have little access to credit. In an attempt to help female entrepreneurs, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) offered the Refinance and Credit Guarantee Scheme for Women in 2017 at subsidised rates.

The participating financial institutions are provided with 60pc coverage of the outstanding loan amount (maximum limit Rs1.5 million) by the government. However, lending regulations and participating institution’s credit policies still apply to such loans.

Regulations prohibit banks from discriminatory actions on the basis of gender. But a document by Asian Development Bank said that banks ignore women clients due to preconceived views on their creditworthiness, their ‘dependency’ on men and difficulties in gaining information about the borrower’s reliability.

The gender-wise distribution of the gross loan portfolio of the SBP shows that women took 19pc of microfinance loans while male borrowers consumed 81pc of loans. Contrary to microfinance, only 3pc of SME loans are granted to women while 97pc borrowers are men.

An overwhelming number of women work in agriculture and yet only 4pc of gross agriculture advances are granted to them.

Some progress has been made in recent years. For example, 11pc of women were banked in 2015 compared with just 4pc in 2008. The government and regulators still need to give targets to financial institutions to ensure gender-based lending in order to increase financial inclusion.

Women branches set up by some of the banks are a good initiative. The SBP and other regulators should make this feature a part of their branch licence policy for improved financial inclusion.

Women are often not aware of the available financial services. This is true in not only far-flung rural areas, but also urban centres. The government will have to remove legislative and policy-level hiccups and initiate financial literacy programmes at school level for girls.

Published in Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, March 18th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1470187/women-and-access-to-financial-services>

## ***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAR 11<sup>th</sup> TO MAR 17<sup>th</sup> 2019***

### **SCB'S 'WOMEN IN TECH' PROGRAMME LAUNCHED**

RECORDER REPORT | MAR 14TH, 2019 | KARACHI

Standard Chartered Bank (Pakistan) Limited announces the launch of Women in Tech, a global programme aimed at supporting greater diversity in gender representation within technology based entrepreneurship.

Partnering with INNOVentures and the Pakistan Innovation Foundation (PIF), Standard Chartered Women in Tech programme aims to promote the economic and social development of women in Pakistan through innovation or technology led entrepreneurship. This initiative is a global programme.

The Bank will be focusing on capacity building for women-owned small enterprises. The Standard Chartered Women in Tech programme will target female-led entrepreneurial teams and provide them with training, mentorship and seed funding. There will be an open call for participation leading to a final selection of up to top 25 contestants with the most compelling ideas. At the end of the training period, up to five winners will be chosen and each winner will be awarded up to 10,000 US dollars to invest in their business.

The event included an all-women discussion panel that talked about women entrepreneurs; cost of technology in running business and the digital divide.

The panel discussion was led by Dr Shamshad Akhtar, Pakistani development economist, diplomat and intellectual, Jehan Ara, President of the Pakistan Software Houses Association for IT, Shandana Gulzar, Parliamentary Secretary at Ministry of Commerce, Government of Pakistan, PTI's Member of the National Assembly and Rabia Nizami, PTI's Member of the Provincial Assembly (MPA), with Saad Amanullah, Chairman Pakistan Innovation Foundation (PIF), as the moderator.

The panel talked about how it is important for women to access more hands-on training, monitoring long-term engagement to help businesses grow, while funding is important, it is not enough.

Commenting on this launch Shazad Dada, Chief Executive Officer, Standard Chartered said, "I am proud to launch Women in tech in Pakistan today. We are optimistic that this programme will act as a great platform of support for aspiring women entrepreneurs and business owners in Pakistan and help them realise their true potential. It will help identify, grow and bring to the market unique business ideas, while at the same time celebrating women in Pakistan. This initiative builds upon Standard Chartered's focus on increasing women's access to entrepreneurial finance, and supporting adolescent girls and women through capacity building. It encapsulates the essence of the Bank's sustainability strategy of Future makers, enabling the next generation to learn, earn and grow."

The launch of the programme in Pakistan follows a successful rollout of a similar initiative in USA and Kenya by Standard Chartered. The Bank first launched the programme to support women in technology in 2014 at the City College of New York where it created the Women Entrepreneurs Resource Centre. The US programme includes a dedicated workspace, mentorship, coursework and access to an extensive network designed to support entrepreneurs navigating the challenges of starting a business.

The second programme was launched in Kenya in 2017 with iLab Africa (Strathmore University) to support the economic and social development of women in Africa through innovation or technology led entrepreneurship.

Pakistan is the third market selected by the Bank to launch the Women in Tech programme.

## ***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAR 4<sup>th</sup> TO MAR 10<sup>th</sup> 2019***

# **WOMEN RALLY ACROSS PAKISTAN FOR RIGHTS, END TO INJUSTICE**

Dawn Report March 09, 2019

KARACHI: Thought-provoking seminars and protest rallies were held across the country on Friday to mark International Women's Day, which is celebrated by the global community every year on March 8.

Scores of women, men as well as transgender persons came out to participate in the Aurat March staged in major cities of the country, including Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, Multan, Hyderabad and Larkana.

The march was aimed at expressing solidarity with women from across Pakistan and to push for accountability and restorative justice against violence and harassment at the workplace, at home, in public spaces as well as at the hands of security forces.

The participating women demanded economic justice, including implementation of labour rights, and also raised other pressing concerns such as access to safe drinking water and air, protection of animals and wildlife, recognition of women's participation in production of food and cash crops, access to fair justice system, reproductive justice, access to public spaces, inclusion in educational institutions, rights of religious minorities, promotion of an anti-war agenda and end to police brutality and enforced disappearances.

In Lahore, hundreds of women gathered under the banner of "Hum Aurat" at the press club and marched to Al Hamra Arts Council, shouting slogans against patriarchy.

In the federal capital, besides the march, several other events were organised to highlight the sufferings faced by women in the country and their contributions to social development and in various other fields.

The British High Commission hosted a multimedia training session and conference for women journalists and bloggers, in collaboration with the Media Training and Research Centre.

Addressing the conference, Joanna Reid, head of the UK's Department for International Development, said that women were the future of Pakistan and they had the ability to change things.

Besides, Serena Hotels hosted a breakfast morning to celebrate the day and to honour the women from different walks of life, including representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The chief guest was the president's wife Samina Arif Alvi. Federal Ombudsperson for Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplaces Kashmala Tariq was also present.

In Peshawar, several functions were held under the aegis of different government departments and civil society organisations where participants urged the government to ensure implementation of women protection laws and policies without delay.

Aurat Foundation regional chief Shabina Ayaz, Gulalai Ismail of the Aware Girls, activist Sana Ijaz and former MNA Jamila Gilani shared their views about the significance of Women's Day and the need to raise gendered concerns.

In Quetta, the day was observed with zeal and passion as seminars were held and a procession was taken out to mark the occasion.

Major events to celebrate the day were organised by the UN Women in collaboration with the Balochistan government and the Balochistan National Party, separately. Activists of the Women Democratic Front took out a procession.

Balochistan Chief Minister Jam Kamal Khan Alyani, speaking at the Women Leadership conference, highlighted the role of women in the society and said that without participation of half of the population of the country, Pakistan could not progress and one could not expect the formation of an exemplary society.

Messages pour in Prime Minister Imran Khan in his message on International Women's Day reaffirmed his government's commitment to providing women a safe environment so that they could contribute to the country's development.

"We reaffirm our commitment to ensuring women a secure and enabling environment to play their rightful role in our nation's development," he said.

Chief of the Army Staff Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa said that the contributions of women on duty in uniform and at household, particularly the ones of martyrs' families, were greatly valued.

“The great Pakistani women have a role and responsibility towards the progress of Pakistan,” he said in a message issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations on Twitter.

Pakistan Peoples Party Senator Sherry Rehman, referring to the Aurat March, drew attention to a number of issues women faced, saying: “I march because women don’t get the same pay or opportunities as men. Because I’m done keeping quiet about sexist jokes, about snide remarks and unspoken collusion to keep women out of decision-making. I march for my less fortunate sisters who suffer daily indignities.”

Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Shahbaz Sharif lauded “the incredible work our women are doing to strengthen their families, communities and the country”.

“The women of Pakistan have come a long way off but a lot needs to be accomplished and soon,” he said.

Published in Dawn, March 9th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1468510/women-rally-across-pakistan-for-rights-end-to-injustice>

## **EQUAL RIGHTS, OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN STRESSED**

By Mohammad Zafar Published: March 9, 2019

QUETTA: Balochistan Governor Amanullah Khan Yasinzai, in a message on International Women’s Day, has said that women and men have equal social, political and economic rights. In a press release, the governor said it was not possible to attain sustainable development and prosperity without the contribution of women, adding that women were treated with immense respect in the Pashtun and Baloch cultures in accordance with our Islamic values and national traditions which strictly prohibited the abuse of women.

The governor also emphasized the capabilities of Balochistan’s women which he lamented had not been adequately utilized due to a scarcity of resources. But he expressed his satisfaction over the performance of women in various provincial departments including health, education and sports which he called a positive sign.

The governor also voiced hope that the province’s women will play their role in the development of the country in keeping with our cultural values.

Balochistan Chief Minister Jam Kamal Khan Aliyani has said that, without providing equal opportunities to women in all sectors, we cannot fulfil our dream of a developed Pakistan. Speaking to the media at a ceremony celebrating the occasion, the chief minister said that simply holding ceremonies on this day would not ensure basic rights for women in our society. What was needed for the development of the country, he emphasized, were practical measures to empower women.

He pointed out that his administration had appointed the first female Secretary in Balochistan and stressed that, with women’s participation, the country can achieve prosperity.

On educational reforms in Balochistan, the chief minister said the current government had declared a state of emergency to make education available to all, a move he claimed that was yielding positive results. He said two to four model and high schools were being constructed in all districts of the province to provide education to both boys and girls.

The Balochistan chief minister has also directed the concerned authorities to establish a fully functional Child Protection Bureau in the province on the lines of one currently operating in the Punjab.

To that end, he has directed the Social Welfare Secretary to expedite the departmental procedure for the establishment of the bureau and to prepare and submit a summary for it to the Chief Minister’s Secretariat within two weeks.

(With additional input from APP)

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1925904/1-equal-rights-opportunities-women-stressed/>

## **STANCHART MARKS INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY**

RECORDER REPORT | MAR 7TH, 2019 | KARACHI

Standard Chartered under its Diversity & Inclusion platform joined hands with British Deputy High Commission and celebrated International Women’s Day. The theme for this year’s event was “Balance for better”. The Bank along with the British Deputy High Commission organized Master class Sessions which were conducted by leading women and men who were specialists in their areas. These master classes were attended by 100 girls and boys from O and A levels of leading schools in Karachi.

The aim was to give the students access to successful professional role models to talk about their leadership and professional development journey to them.

Gender Diversity and supporting women at the workplace has been one of the core objectives of Standard Chartered and British Deputy High Commission.

Commenting on the discussion, Shazad Dada, Chief Executive, Standard Chartered Pakistan said that at Standard Chartered, we strive to be a market leader in the Diversity & Inclusion space by helping women realize their full potential through personal development and supportive workplace practices.”-PR

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/03/20190307452248/>

## **April 2019**

### ***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 22<sup>nd</sup> TO APRIL 28<sup>th</sup> 2019***

## **SBP LAUNCHES CREDIT GUARANTEE SCHEME FOR WOMEN**

RECORDER REPORT | APR 26TH, 2019 | KARACHI

The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has announced the launch of a refinance-cum-credit guarantee scheme for women borrowers to revive the economic activities in the country and support the SBP’s measures for improving access to finance for women entrepreneurs.

Earlier, a Refinance and Credit Guarantee Scheme for Women Entrepreneurs was launched for women of underserved areas and its financing was limited to some districts of the country. However, this time the SBP has decided to extend the scope of the scheme across the country to encourage SME financing to women entrepreneurs.

According to a circular issued Thursday, the scope of the Refinance and Credit Guarantee Scheme for Women Entrepreneurs has been expanded to all the districts of the country with immediate effect.

Under the scheme, banks and DFIs will be required to provide financing facilities to women entrepreneurs to meet credit needs for their businesses.

Under the scheme, refinancing will be provided by State Bank at zero (0) percent to participating financial institutions for onward lending to women entrepreneurs across the country at a mark-up rate of up to 5 percent per annum.

Such loans will also be eligible for 60 percent risk coverage under SBP’s Credit Guarantee Scheme (CGS) for Small and Rural Enterprises.

Financing will be available to women entrepreneurs across the country for a period of up to 5 years, including maximum grace period of up to six months. Maximum financing limit under the scheme will be Rs1.5 million.

Financing under the scheme will be provided for setting up new business enterprises or for expansion of existing ones to women borrowers preferably under the personal guarantee of the borrower.

All commercial banks and DFIs can participate in the scheme. Those banks/DFIs that are currently not availing the facility of CGS can apply for limits to the Director, IH&SMEFD and based on the availability of funds, limits will be sanctioned. However, the guarantee limits allocated to these institutions will specifically be allowed for risk coverage under the subject scheme.

The SBP will allocate limits to PFIs under the scheme on receipt of request from them. The limits will be reviewed on yearly basis. At least 20 percent of the limit will be allocated for lending to women entrepreneurs in Balochistan.

Repayment of loans by borrowers will be made in equal quarterly installments after grace period (if any). The refinance granted by the SBP BSC offices to PFIs shall be recovered, on the due dates as reported in the original repayment schedule, from the accounts of PFIs maintained with the respective office of the SBP BSC.

Where a bank/DFI considers the requests of their borrowers for rescheduling of loans granted under the scheme, the principal amount of refinance shall only be rescheduled in a way that total tenor of refinancing under the scheme does not exceed maximum period of 5 years from the date of original disbursement made by banks/DFIs.

In case of violation of the terms & conditions of the scheme, the State Bank will reserve the right to recover the amount of refinance granted to bank/DFI along with fine at the rate of paisa 60 per day per Rs 1,000 or part thereof for the period of refinance.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/04/20190426467396/>



## **400 WOMEN RECEIVE ENTREPRENEURIAL, AGRI-BUSINESS TRAINING IN BALOCHISTAN**

By APP Published: April 26, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Four hundred women associated with community organisations, agri-businesses and value chain facilitation in underprivileged areas received entrepreneurial and agri-business skills training under an internationally funded initiative.

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the UN in collaboration with the Australian government provided the training to women from the districts of Nuhski, Chagai and Quetta.

The project began in April 2017 and concluded in March with the aim to economically empower the women of the province as well as address the malnutrition issues in women and children by involving a large majority of the population in economic and livelihood activities. In the next phase, the scope of the project will be extended to other districts of the province on the public-private partnership model, said a senior official of FAO.

He said women from 34 community organizations, 25 women agribusiness and value chain facilitators were trained in entrepreneurial skills. He said that the project was initiated with close coordination of Balochistan government's department of agriculture and cooperative, in particular the female extension wing, and the department of livestock and dairy development.

Under the programme, he said the women were provided training about sheep fattening, wool spinning, dying and rug making. They were also given training about chick raising, egg production and seedling production.

Meanwhile, women from these districts were also trained for apricot processing (drying), ghee production and other milk products to enhance their farm income, which had significantly increased their profit ratio, he added. In order to overcome the issues of malnutrition, the FAO had also trained over 5,000 men and women hailing from six most under privileged districts of Balochistan to bring them in economic mainstream.

They were trained under Australia Balochistan Agri-Business Program (AusABBA) phase II, he added. He said that more than 3,069 men and 2,043 women from districts of Nushki, Kharan, Washuk, Panjgur, Ketch and Chagai benefited from the projects that had helped them to increase their income and to meet the household expenses.

These 5,000 beneficiaries were individual families and each family comprised of average seven to nine children and the outreach of the program had covered about 45,000 under nourished population by increasing their income and agriculture produces, she added.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1959801/1-400-women-receive-entrepreneurial-agri-business-training-balochistan/>

### ***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 15<sup>th</sup> TO APRIL 21<sup>st</sup> 2019***

## **UK-FUNDED KARANDAAZ SIGNS ACCORDS WITH WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS**

RECORDER REPORT | Apr 19th, 2019 | ISLAMABAD

The UK-funded KarandaaZ Thursday signed investment agreements with seven women-led businesses to help women's small and medium enterprises in Pakistan. These include New Age Flour and General Mills, Web Work Solution, M-Tex, Lel, Noha Global, Kamal Impex and Saira Rizwan.

The second round of the challenge provided business advisory support to 19 women-led businesses from across the country. Out of those, seven businesses were selected after a competitive process to receive the investment. This investment from KarandaaZ will encourage the culture of entrepreneurship amongst women, enable these women-led businesses to grow and create jobs, and demonstrate that women-led businesses are a viable segment for the financial institutions.

Head of DFID Pakistan Joanna Reid said that women empowerment is at the heart of the UK's work in Pakistan and through KarandaaZ's Women Entrepreneurship Challenge, they have supported women all across the country. "I am delighted to see the growing segment of women entrepreneurs who are ambitious, innovative and dare to experiment for the growth of their businesses to become leaders in their fields. Economies will only thrive when women get the same opportunities as those of men. DFID Pakistan believes in empowering women and is passionate in achieving the goal of a prosperous and inclusive Pakistan."

Joanna Roper, the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office's Special Envoy for Gender Equality, said the head of DFID. "The UK government is committed to promoting gender equality around the world. Supporting women's empowerment is critical to building stable and vibrant economies, and enabling women to reach their potential. I am delighted to see how the Karandaaz is supporting women entrepreneurs in Pakistan, and I look forward to seeing more women participating in the economic development of Pakistan." CEO Karandaaz Ali Sarfraz said that women entrepreneurship challenge is now successfully entering its third year and we will soon be opening the call for applications for the 2019 cohort. "We are very impressed with the quality of applications we received this year and are confident that there are many promising women entrepreneurs across Pakistan who can benefit from this year's programme," he added.

Chairperson Karandaaz Board Dr Shamshad Akhtar said that women's equality and empowerment is one of the sustainable development goals and is integral to all dimensions of inclusive and sustainable development. No development plan can be effective unless there is a focus on women. Commitment of all stakeholders such as policymakers, development partners and formal financial sector along with mobilisation of sustained and responsive financing options are a key for the economic empowerment of women.

"I believe that initiatives such as the Karandaaz's Women Entrepreneurships Challenge play an important role in highlighting and supporting the potential of women in Pakistan," she added. According to UNDP Pakistan, there have been important advances in gender equality in Pakistan in recent years. Pakistani women today are more likely to participate in the labour force and decision-making and access to health and education services than their mothers and grandmothers.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/04/20190419465740/>

## **MAY, 2019**

### ***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 6<sup>th</sup> TO MAY 12<sup>th</sup> 2019***

## **FO BACKS CHINA STANCE ON ISSUE OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING, CAUTIONS AGAINST 'SENSATIONALISING' CASE**

Naveed Siddiqui Updated May 12, 2019

Beijing has offered Islamabad "all possible cooperation" over the reported existence of a transnational Chinese gang in Pakistan suspected of involvement in fake marriages and human trafficking of girls, according to Foreign Office (FO) Spokesperson Dr Mohammad Faisal.

"The relevant authorities from both the governments are in close contact on this issue," the spokesperson said in a press release. "The government of China had offered all possible cooperation on the issue, which was highly appreciated. Both sides are closely coordinating their efforts."

Dr Faisal said that "a Chinese team visited Pakistan recently and held meetings with our law enforcement officials."

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Pakistan Missions in China are closely monitoring the situation and extending all possible assistance to Pakistani citizens who may have any complaints on the subject," he added.

While supporting Pakistan's crackdown against those who "commit crimes under the banner of cross-border marriages", Chinese Embassy in Pakistan had on Thursday denied that Pakistani women who stayed in China after marriage with its nationals were "forced into prostitution or organ sale."

It had branded media reports regarding the particular charges as "fabricated and rumours", adding that its probe had found no evidenceto back the claim.

The FO spokesperson today appeared to endorse the Chinese embassy's statement, saying that "it is essential to avoid sensationalism" and that "sensitive matters should be reported only on the basis of established facts."

Dr Faisal underlined that "Pakistan and China are 'all-weather strategic cooperative partners' and their friendship enjoys strong public and institutional support in both countries".

"Both sides remain committed to strengthening this abiding friendship and strategic partnership in all dimensions," he added.

The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has over the past fortnight arrested scores of Chinese nationals and their suspected local abettors from various parts of the country in connection with its investigation into a transnational gang

allegedly involved in contracting fake marriages between Chinese men and Pakistani women, who are later forced into prostitution and the illegal organ trade.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1481686/fo-backs-china-stance-on-issue-of-human-trafficking-cautions-against-sensationalising-case>

## **WOMEN TRAFFICKING: HOW THE GANG STARTED OPERATION IN FAISALABAD**

Saleem Mubarak Updated May 09, 2019

FAISALABAD: A Chinese man, who came to Pakistan in connection with the execution of a power project in Haveli Bahadar Shah in Jhang, allegedly established a gang for smuggling Pakistani Christian girls to China against Rs1.8 million to Rs3.5 million per girl.

During the last few days, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) raided various locations in Faisalabad, Lahore and Rawalpindi and arrested some gang members, including Chinese nationals and their Pakistani accomplices.

A special intelligence report of a law enforcement agency mentions that some Chinese nationals had rented out a house in Eden Garden for a monthly rent of Rs30,000. They lived here in connection with some development project that had been completed about nine months ago, but they continued to stay back. They were even provided security by local police.

Following completion of the project, the report said, the Chinese had formed a gang led by Xin Xianhai, who was smuggling Pakistani Christian girls from under-privileged families to China after getting them married to Chinese nationals.

Xianhai invited his brother-in-law, Wang Peng, to Pakistan in August 2018, who is also an active member of the gang. Xianhai, his wife and her father are running a marriage bureau in China from where they sent pictures of Chinese men through messaging application WeChat to their local agents who then shared those pictures with Christian families to convince them for the marriage. The gang received Rs1.8m to Rs3.5m from a Chinese national for his marriage. Ringleader Xianhai and Peng traced Christian girls through their local agents. The agents were paid Rs50,000 to Rs70,000 if a marriage was fixed and then Xianhai would visit churches in underdeveloped areas along with police security and the agents. During their visit, they assured the Christian families that the Chinese men were Christians and not Buddhist.

The prospective grooms would bear all the expenses of the wedding, the intelligence report says, adding that they also provided financial assistance to their 'in-laws'. The report mentioned that the Chinese bridegrooms would come to Faisalabad and stay in the Eden Garden house. They paid Rs5,000 to Rs10,000 as daily rent to Xianhai till they returned to China with their 'wives'.

One of the agents, Tariq Masih of Warispura, managed to fix weddings of Sobia Muqadas of Nazir Colony with Ling Chaochen on Dec 10, Hina Sabir of Shamsheer Town, Sargodha, with Hung Hua on Dec 9, Maria with Jiang Hai Bin on Oct 13 and Mariam with Chin Chin Cown on Nov 5.

Another girl, Natasha Robin, of Ibn-i-Maryam Colony married Lee Changli on Sept 23. She remained in China for a couple of days and then returned to Pakistan claiming she was being forced into objectionable activities. Upon refusal, she was subjected to torture, the report stated.

The report further said that another agent, Nadeem, also received hundreds of thousands of rupees for identifying Christian girls for Chinese 'bridegrooms'. He arranged the wedding of Saira of Nawabanwala with Dong Hya Hain, however, the "couple" parted ways soon. Saira sought divorce and returned to Pakistan. Noreen Kanwal's wedding was also fixed with Xin Xianan on Jan 3, 2018, and Samia's with Chen Yi Bin on Aug 3.

Not only Pakistan, but some other countries had also discovered women being trafficked from there to China.

The Human Rights Watch (HRW) mentioned in one of its reports that hundreds of Myanmar women and girls were tricked into travelling to China through promises of employment only to be sold off to Chinese families as brides and held in sexual slavery often for years. Those who escaped often had to leave their children behind. Journalists documented similar forms of bride trafficking from Cambodia, Laos, North Korea, and Vietnam, it mentioned. In a statement issued on April 26, the HRW called on China and Pakistan to take action to end bride trafficking following increasing evidence that Pakistani women and girls are at risk of sexual slavery in China.

The FIA sources said that some Chinese nationals and their accomplices had been arrested during a marriage ceremony, which was underway at a hotel in D Ground, People's Colony a couple of days ago. Those arrested were interrogated during which they revealed that the gang had sound connections with the locals.

They said their local connections had been playing an instrumental role in convincing under-privileged Christian parents to marry off their daughters to Chinese nationals who they were told were wealthy.

More gang members would be arrested in the coming days, the sources claimed.

Published in Dawn, May 9th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1481118/women-trafficking-how-the-gang-started-operation-in-faisalaba>

## **FIA INTENSIFIES CRACKDOWN ON CHINESE GANGS BEHIND FRAUD, WOMEN TRAFFICKING**

Dawn Report Updated May 08, 2019

LAHORE/RAWALPINDI: Over a dozen more Chinese nationals and seven locals were arrested while a few Pakistani girls were rescued on Tuesday amid an intensified crackdown on the gangs involved in fake marriages with Pakistani girls for trafficking them to China allegedly for organ removal and sexual exploitation.

Ten Chinese nationals along with their three local accomplices were arrested in Lahore, while another three Chinese nationals and four locals were held during separate raids in Islamabad and Rawalpindi on charges of fraud, forgery and women trafficking.

The arrest of the 20 suspects came a day after 11 members of a Chinese gang were taken into custody by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) in Lahore amid reports that over 90 Pakistani women, many of them belonging to less privileged Christian families, have already been trafficked after being trapped into fake marriages.

As the sex and human trafficking scam came to light, federal Interior Minister retired Brig Ijaz Ahmad Shah took notice of the issue directing the officials to engage ambassadors and government officials in the matter while chairman of the Senate standing committee on interior Rehman A. Malik sought a detailed report from relevant officials on the issue within the next three days.

20 suspects, including seven locals, arrested in separate raids

On Tuesday, an FIA team raided a couple of houses in a neighbourhood near the Allama Iqbal International Airport where they arrested nine Chinese men and a woman along with their three local accomplices. During the raids, which were conducted under the supervision of Deputy Director Jamil Ahmad Khan Mayo, the FIA team also rescued two Pakistani brides.

“Acting on the information obtained from the Chinese nationals held a day ago, we arrested 10 more Chinese for their alleged involvement in trafficking Pakistani girls to China,” a senior official told Dawn.

The suspects were being interrogated, he said, hinting at further arrests in the coming days.

The FIA swung into action on reports that some Chinese nationals were allegedly involved in sexual exploitation and organ selling of the Pakistani girls they took along with them as brides to China. Last week the FIA had arrested two such Chinese bridegrooms while contracting marriage in Faisalabad. The FIA said the Chinese gang would target poor families, mostly Christians, in different cities of Punjab. “The gang would bear all expenses of the marriage and also give cash and gifts to the bride’s family,” it said.

Extending the scope of their ongoing crackdown on the gangs to Rawalpindi and Islamabad, the anti-human trafficking cell of the FIA conducted raids in the twin cities and arrested seven suspects, including three Chinese nationals.

The FIA later sent a report to the Ministry of Interior, while the Chinese embassy in Islamabad was also informed about the arrests.

Speaking to Dawn, the deputy director of the anti-human trafficking cell in Rawalpindi, Kamran Ali, said the raids were conducted on the complaints lodged by two Pakistani girls, Tayyaba Gul and N. Benish Rasheed, with the FIA director general.

Both victims of fake marriage narrated to the FIA DG how they were being exploited by a gang led by Chinese nationals, he said. Subsequently, Mr Ali added, the FIA DG ordered a crackdown for which the FIA Islamabad Zone director constituted a team under his supervision.

He said three Chinese nationals, including their gang leader Song Chuaoyang, along with Sajid, the facilitator, Rafiq Hussain, the translator, were arrested. He explained that the FIA team during a raid in Islamabad's sector E-11 arrested two suspected couples Guyong Da along with Saima Mustafa, and Fusing Bu along with Saba Jahangir. Besides, the FIA also seized copies of marriage certificates from their procession.

Mr Song, the suspected gang leader arrested by the FIA, had already tempered with his birth record in China to show himself as Muslim. The Chinese arrested by the FIA had travelled to Islamabad on the "visa-on-arrival" facility and had been residing in Sector E-11, the FIA sources explained.

They said the Chinese nationals used to claim themselves as Muslim with the help of fake conversion certificates in a bid to cheat the Pakistani families.

As many as six fake marriages came to light during FIA's investigation as the Chinese nationals maintained their marriage with Pakistani girls for two to three months and later divorced them. "As many as four divorce cases have also surfaced so far," a senior official of the FIA said, adding that two or three more women were likely to be arrested in connection with the fake marriage scam.

According to the sources, two couples comprising Chinese bride grooms and two Pakistani girls had flown to China only a few days ago from Islamabad International Airport, however, they were allowed to travel as there had been no intimation from any law enforcement agency to stop them from travelling.

Only a day ago, the FIA had arrested eight Chinese nationals, including a woman, along with their four local accomplices in Lahore. The FIA had also rescued four Pakistani brides who were later handed over to their families. When the FIA deputy director was asked whether there was any police official involved in the fake marriage scam, he said it was yet to be confirmed, as investigation was under way to arrest other gang members.

The FIA registered two separate FIRs against the Chinese suspects and the local facilitators. The FIA also traced two to three local women who arranged marriages for the Chinese men though efforts were on to arrest them.

Preliminary investigation by the FIA showed that the Chinese men paid cash and gold ornaments to the Pakistani facilitators for marriage with Pakistani girls.

Published in Dawn, May 8th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1480973/fia-intensifies-crackdown-on-chinese-gangs-behind-fraud-women-trafficking>

## ***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 13<sup>th</sup> TO MAY 19<sup>th</sup> 2019***

### **MUHAFAZ FORCE COPS GANG RAPE YOUNG GIRL**

Shakeel Anjum May 19, 2019

RAWALPINDI: In a shocking incident three police constables (Muhafaz Force) of Rawalpindi Police abducted a 22-year-old girl from a posh area at around 2 a.m. on May 16, 2019, and allegedly gang raped her for the next two hours in the rear seat of the official police vehicle before dropping her off near her hostel located at the Commercial Centre, Satellite Town at around 4 am.

The three Rawalpindi Police constables were accompanied by a young civilian. They were identified as Constable Muhammad Naseer, Constable Rashid Minhas, Constable Muhammad Azeem and civilian young Amir Sikandar. All the four were arrested and their medical tests have been conducted already.

According to the details of the horrifying incident as revealed by the young girl in the First Information Report (FIR) she stated: "she, along with a friend, identified as Umair Azam Kiyani had gone to a posh area for outing and to have 'sehri'. "We were stopped by a white Toyota Corolla car, bearing registration no: ADB-332, in which four persons were riding. "They dragged us out of our vehicle and forced me to sit in their car on gun point while threatening my friend Umair Azam Kiyani to go away. "They drove off to some distance before parking the vehicle on a road side and put dark blinds on the windows and raped me one by one in the back seat of the car. Later, they dropped me off at the Commercial Centre near my hostel. Before freeing me, they also snatched Rs30,000 and a gold ring valued at Rs12,000." They also asked her to stay in contact and even dared to feed a contact number in her cell phone while hurling threats of dire consequences if she reported the incident.

She said she was too ashamed of what had happened to her and terrified as well and it took her a whole day to pick up courage and compose herself to approach the police to file an FIR. The FIR was registered at the Raawat Police Station under sections: 376B, 367A and 382 PPC. Unfortunately, this is not the first time that such an incident has occurred. Back on 22nd May, 2005 a 15-year-old girl was raped by Islamabad Police officials inside the Shehzad

Town Police Station and even earlier a 17-year-old girl was gang raped by police in Sialkot. At that time even the then President Gen Pervez Musharraf was shocked over the incident and had ordered a high level inquiry. It was learnt that the culprits were sentenced to different terms of imprisonment and fines. However, at least in one case, the police managed to force the victim to drop the charges.

Reacting to the incident, the City Police Officer (CPO) Captain (retd) Faisal Rana, ordered immediate arrest of all the culprits and hold a departmental inquiry besides registering the FIR against them. When contacted, the CPO Captain (r) Faisal Rana said the police immediately responded to the complaint and all the four persons, including three Pindi Police Muhafaz Force officials and one civilian were arrested. "We have already conducted the medical of the victim as well as the four perpetrators and the case has been referred to SP Investigations for strongest possible action against them. The minimum departmental action against them would be dismissal from service. "Their crime is not of ordinary nature.

They have shattered the people's confidence in the police force. The police are the protector of life, property and honour of the masses. If the police itself is found involved in such heinous crimes, then whom the people will lay their confidence in and seek protection from criminal elements in the society," the CPO Rawalpindi said while talking to 'The News.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/473132-muhafaz-force-cops-gang-rape-young-girl>

## **TWO SISTERS 'MARRIED' TO CHINESE MEN EVENTUALLY SAVED**

Abid Mahmood Updated May 13, 2019

**NAROWAL:** As the Federal Investigation Agency steps up its crackdown on a Chinese gang involved in deceiving under-privileged Pakistani girls and marrying them off with Chinese nationals on various false pretexts, two such cases have emerged from Narowal where the 'marriages' took place in January but the parents of the girls refused to let them go with their Chinese 'husbands'.

Labourer Faryad Masih, a resident of Cheenay Saggale village, said priest Babu Javed, a resident of Abid Town near Narowal Grid Station, used to visit their house for prayers and religious rites. Faryad is a brick kiln worker and has six daughters and a minor son.

"In December 2018, Javed convinced me after my repeated refusals to send my daughters Isha alias Asia, 17, and Sunita, 16, to Islamabad to get them married to Chinese men, saying my daughters will go to China and I will get business, a new house and cash and a car. I became greedy and agreed," he began explaining what went down.

Parents realised they were tricked, refused to let daughters leave for China

He further said Javed came to his house on Jan 3, 2019 and asked him to take his wife Nasreen and the two daughters to Islamabad immediately. "We reached Islamabad at 8pm. Javed took us to a huge house where Isha was married to Le Ze Dang and Sunita to Chen Sing Biao. There were about 25 to 30 Chinese nationals in the house, the security was very tight and many of them carried weapons on them."

Following the 'wedding', Faryad said, he and his wife were sent back to Narowal. "When we told our relatives about the wedding, they told us we have handed over our daughters to human smugglers, who will sell them in China."

Faryad's wife Nasreen said: "We told Javed that the girls may have been married but we will send them to China from our home in Narowal. At first, he hesitated, but later agreed. On Jan 15, he brought our daughters home and said they'll leave for China in a week. We hid our daughters and decided we won't let them go."

The girls' maternal grandfather, Inayat Masih, said Javed returned a week later to take the girls along with three Chinese men and a woman. He claimed that Javed had sold his granddaughters to the Chinese for Rs1.6 million. "We sent back the Chinese with the help of local influentials and elders. The Chinese would take girls to China with the help of Pakistani facilitators through fake wedding documents and force them to work as sex workers," he explained. One of the girls, Isha, narrated her ordeal, saying that Javed took her and her sister to Islamabad on the pretext of jobs, but forcefully married them off to Chinese men, threatening that if they didn't sign the marriage documents they would be killed.

Faryad further tried to justify why he initially made the mistake of trusting Javed. "I became greedy due to the life we live in poverty. I thought I have spent my life in poverty, but my daughters should live a comfortable one."

He added that a couple of weeks ago he had filed a case in local court for dissolution of marriage. He also demanded Prime Minister Imran Khan take action against human smugglers and their facilitators so that no other poor family was swindled.

Published in Dawn, May 13th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1481924/two-sisters-married-to-chinese-men-eventually-saved>

## **FIA KEEPING CLOSE TABS ON CHINESE WHO MAY BE BEHIND BRIDE TRAFFICKING IN SINDH**

Imran Ayub Updated May 13, 2019

KARACHI: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has widened the scope of its probe into the recently discovered “bride trafficking” racket and initiated an “intelligence-based” action in Sindh where a number of Chinese have already been caught for stealing data from banks and their customers through skimming devices, it emerged on Sunday.

A senior official told Dawn that the FIA-Sindh had already received a communiqué from its headquarters in Islamabad to be vigilant, outline its strategy and identify vulnerable areas where actionable information was available in line with the recent scandal.

The issue was taken more seriously here because parts of Sindh, including Karachi, had a history of criminal activities which allegedly involved Chinese nationals, he added.

“We are definitely vigilant here and keeping an eye on all relevant quarters and areas in this regard,” said FIA’s Sindh zone Director Sultan Khawaja. “The racket has been busted in Punjab where in fact in some cases victims approached the authorities which led to further investigation and detection of a gang. Here we have not received any complaint, but still we have started our job and making intelligence-based moves.”

A senior officials says the agency has so far received no complaint from any part of Sindh

The FIA in Punjab has so far arrested 39 people, mostly Chinese, and recovered some six girls in a case pertaining to fake marriages with Pakistani girls for trafficking them to China allegedly for organ removal and sexual exploitation. The arrests were made in Islamabad, Rawalpindi and Faisalabad where the FIA also rounded up local facilitators of the Chinese gang. The series of arrests came a week after the Human Rights Watch said Pakistan should be alarmed by the recent reports of trafficking of women and girls to China. It said the allegations were disturbingly similar to the pattern of trafficking of “brides” to China from at least five other Asian countries.

The Chinese embassy in Islamabad has also raised the alarm over the illegal, cross-border match-making services that are often a front for human trafficking. Last month, it issued a statement condemning reports of the existence of bureaus orchestrating illegal marriages.

“China is working together with the Pakistani government and law enforcement agencies to track these illegal marriage centres,” their statement said.

After multiple arrests and collaboration with the Chinese authorities, the FIA believes that still the members of the gang may be operative and it cannot call the “case closed”.

“It lies under the anti-human trafficking cell of the FIA but, as I said, we are currently in the process of gathering all relevant information and data from different sources,” said Mr Khawaja of the FIA. “Fortunately we have not found any victim in Karachi or any other part of the province, but obviously we are taking it as a national level case so we are doing a few things considering the recent history of skimming scandal.”

Around half dozen Chinese nationals were arrested in Karachi over the last couple of years for their alleged involvement in stealing data of private banks from their ATMs through skimming devices. During the course of investigation, a private bank had confirmed hacking of its 559 accounts whose over Rs10 million was “stolen” through the fraud.

Published in Dawn, May 13th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1481886/fia-keeping-close-tabs-on-chinese-who-may-be-behind-bride-trafficking-in-sindh>

## **PESHAWAR MOTHER FEARS FOR DAUGHTER MARRIED TO CHINESE NATIONAL**

By Shahzeb Khan Published: May 13, 2019

PESHAWAR: The nexus of fake weddings with Chinese men has raised its head in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) as well with news reports prompting a mother to come forward, claiming that she has not heard from her for the past two months.

F\*, who hails from the Christian community, told The Express Tribune at the Peshawar Press Club on Sunday that her 19-year-old daughter R\* had married a Chinese national, 24-year-old Su Benji from Shandong on February 27 in Peshawar this year.

After their marriage, F said that her daughter and her husband moved to Islamabad. But it has been three months since they have heard from them.

“We have not been allowed to visit China despite repeated requests,” she stated.

The worried mother added that after reports emerged recently that a possible gang could be operating in an organised manner to lure and trap girls, marry them, take them to China where they are either forced into prostitution or are harvested for organs.

“After the fake Chinese marriage scams surfaced in Punjab and Islamabad, we are worried about the whereabouts of our daughter who has been married to a Chinese national but we have not heard from her ever since she moved to the federal capital,” she said, adding that they have also made repeated requests to the women who had helped make the match.

F conceded that their Chinese son-in-law had paid them Rs150,000 as expenses for the marriage ceremony. She further said that unlike some of the other cases, where the Chinese men appeared as suitors and lured women by befriending them online, in their case a member from their community approached them and presented the marriage proposal.

I have also tried to register a first information report (FIR) in Islamabad to trace my daughter, but neither the police nor the Christian community helped me, she claimed.

It is pertinent to mention that this is the second complaint relating to marriage with Chinese nationals in K-P.

In recent weeks, dozens of Chinese nationals along with their Pakistani facilitators and some Chinese-Pakistani couples have been apprehended from different parts of the country by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) over alleged attempts to traffic Pakistani women to China.

Some other Pakistani women, who had married Chinese men but have since returned to their homes — including one from China — reported of domestic abuse at the hands of their husbands.

Published in The Express Tribune, May 13th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1971614/1-peshawar-mother-fears-daughter-married-chinese-national/>

### **JULY, 2019**

### ***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 22<sup>nd</sup> TO JULY 28<sup>th</sup> 2019***

## **CJ CALLS FOR REFORMS FOR PRO-WOMEN ENVIRONMENT**

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter July 26, 2019

LAHORE: Lahore High Court Chief Justice Sardar Muhammad Shamim Khan said on Thursday essential reforms were needed in social, economic and judicial sectors to foster creation of a socio-cultural and economic environment conducive to women's safety and autonomy.

He was speaking at the opening ceremony of a workshop on Gender Based Violence at the Punjab Judicial Academy in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank and the Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan.

The chief justice said there must be a fundamental change in societal attitudes and particularly in men's perception of women's status. Courts were working in cases involving gender based violence with an informed approach keeping in view all aspects of the matter.

He called violence against women a grave violation of human rights, saying its impact spanned from immediate to long-term multiple physical, sexual and mental consequences for women and girls, including death.



The chief justice said the violence left negative effects on women's general well-being and prevented them from fully participating in society. "Violence not only has negative consequences for women but also for their families, the community and country," he added.

He said the social protection of women was enshrined in Article 25 and 34 of the Constitution of Pakistan and the country was also a signatory of various regional and international treaties seeking to protect women's rights and promote gender equality.

Chief Justice Khan said a strategy to prevent violence must also promote nonviolent means to resolve conflict. He said passing laws to criminalise violence within family relationships was an important way to redefine the frontiers of acceptable behavior.

However, he said passing or amending laws on paper was not enough to ensure change, but their strict implementation could be a considerable asset in helping women to protect themselves from violence.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1496199/cj-calls-for-reforms-for-pro-women-environment>

## **IVANKA TRUMP INTERESTED IN WOMEN DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN PAKISTAN**

The Newspaper's Correspondent July 28, 2019

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump's daughter and adviser Ivanka Trump has expressed interest in setting up women development projects in Pakistan, the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development announced on Saturday.

Ms Trump expressed this desire in a recent meeting with Minister of State for Overseas Pakistanis Syed Zulfiqar Abbas Bukhari in Washington.

Her husband Jared Kushner, who assists President Trump on foreign policy issues, also attended the meeting.

Mr Bukhari and Ms Trump agreed on increasing cooperation between Pakistan and the US on various fronts, the ministry said.

Earlier this month, Ms Trump spearheaded an initiative to give more financial power to women in the developing world.

Last week, the initiative announced its first batch of grants — \$27 million for 14 projects in 22 countries — mostly in Africa, Latin America and Southeast Asia.

At a recent group discussion in Washington, Ms Trump said that the economic empowerment of women "is smart" for nations that want development assistance and "critically important" for a country's national security.

"If you look at the countries that have high levels of gender discrimination, 80 per cent of them have experienced armed conflict in the last 20 years," she said.

According to his ministry's press release, Mr Bukhari told Ms Trump that he was grateful for her interest in empowering Pakistani women. "We will create opportunities for human development through Pak-US cooperation," he said.

"Relations between Pakistan and the United States are moving in the right direction and together we will work towards empowering our men and women," the prime minister's adviser added.

Various programmes for provision of jobs, vocational training and entrepreneurial opportunities to young Pakistanis, and economic development were discussed during the meeting.

It was not immediately clear when the meeting between Mr Bukhari and Ms Trump took place. Mr Bukhari had accompanied Prime Minister Imran Khan during his maiden visit to Washington earlier this week. The visit was seen as a means to rekindle Pakistan-US relations.

Taking to Twitter after the visit, the premier had appreciated Mr Trump for "his understanding of Pakistan's point of view", his wonderful way of putting the entire delegation at ease and for showing him around the White House.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1496655/ivanka-trump-interested-in-women-development-projects-in-pakistan>

## **AUGUST, 2019**

### ***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 05<sup>th</sup> TO 11<sup>th</sup> 2019***

## **RURAL WOMEN'S ROLE IN DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES DISCUSSED**

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter August 09, 2019

KARACHI: Despite certain challenges, the European-funded Sindh Union Council and Community Economic Strengthening Support (SUCCESS) programme being carried out in eight districts with government support since 2015 has produced significant results in increasing health insurance coverage to the rural poor, empowering women at the union council level and improving access to public services in villages.

This information was shared at an event titled Policy and Advocacy Dialogue on Health, Local Governance and Women Empowerment held on Wednesday at a local hotel.

Hosted by Rural Support Programmes Network, the dialogue aimed at encouraging public debate and competition for improved outcomes for rural women and families in health, local governance and building empowering systems across political, economic and social structures.

The dialogue comprised three sessions with government ministers and leading experts looking into studies on these three themes to identify recent gains, revisit challenges from previous years and highlight the emerging opportunities in rural development for women created by SUCCESS in Sindh.

The panellists for the session on micro health insurance (MHI) included deputy director of Sehat Sahulat Programme Dr Sonia Riaz, director, health policy and management at Aga Khan University Dr Shehla Zaidi and Saima Zafar representing Jubilee General Insurance.

During the discussion, it was pointed out that the availability of MHI cards given to 192,500 rural households under the programme encouraged communities to access qualified doctors and rely less on quacks.

Those who used cards also reported to have saved their critical assets such as livestock from high cost (both economic and social) of borrowing from landlords and money lenders.

However, challenges still remained in better utilisation of the insurance facility. These included affordability to travel to panel hospitals, seasonal migration, low literacy, superstition and unavailability of CNICs.

Panellists were of the view that sustainability of health insurance schemes couldn't be achieved through donors alone; both private and public sectors needed to be involved.

In the following session on women's empowerment, which included chairperson, Sindh Commission on the Status of Women Nuzhat Shirin and associate professor at the Institute of Business Administration Dr Asma Hyder as panellists, it was pointed out that social mobilisation approach had helped women's mobility and reduced restrictions on girls' education in Sindh.

"Community governance tiers under SUCCESS, all owned and managed by women, are serving as a bridge between grass-roots communities and line departments responsible for effective public service delivery," said Durreshawar Mahmood, one of the authors of the study on women's empowerment.

A number of these departments were already routing their services through these well-structured community institutions, eg CNIC registration, polio vaccination, livestock immunisation, tree plantation and reopening of schools and health centres, she added.

Women Development Minister Shehla Raza chairing the session announced setting up of a group of all female MPAs of Sindh Assembly to oversee human development programmes being implemented in different districts and report on their progress.

"This would bring in ownership of elected representatives in pacing up the results and ensure that innovative ideas are replicated across Sindh," she said.

Panellists in the session focusing on local governance highlighted challenges pertaining to the sustainability of these governance structures post-SUCCESS funding.

Dr Abid Mehmood from Cardiff University quoted the example of Wales where it took the government 10 years and three million pounds to get their disadvantaged communities involved in policy-level discussion.

Some of the recommendations presented to the government during the detailed analysis of the programme included expansion of partnerships with wider civil society and development organisations and integration of health insurance coverage in all ongoing poverty reduction programmes in Sindh.

The government of Sindh, it was said, should use this opportunity to closely monitor the inputs, outputs and outcomes, and identify ways to sustain SUCCESS activities post-2021, when the programme would end.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1498832>

## **GOVT DRAFTS POLICY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, GIRLS**

By APP Published: August 11, 2019

**ISLAMABAD:** A model policy on violence against women and girls has been drafted to help address all forms of violence against them as well as honour killing.

Remedial measures have been proposed in this draft policy which would help promote women's rights in the country.

Also a model policy on Home Based Workers (HBW) including women has been drafted to recognise and accept HBWs through legislative and administrative action, accord legal equality, focus on their needs, concerns and demands, sources at Human Rights Division said.

The sources said the government gives immense importance to protection of women rights in the country and has taken steps in this regard.

Under legislatives reforms, the major laws have been promulgated including: Criminal Law (Offences relating to Honour Killing) Act, 2016, Hindu Marriage Act, 2017 and Women in Distress and Detention Fund (Amendment) Act, 2018. Board of Governors of the Fund has recently been notified to operationalize the fund.

The Bills under process are: Legal Aid and Access to Justice Authority Bill, 2019, Christian Marriage and Divorce (Amendment) Bill, 2019 and Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Bill, 2019.

The sources said National Action Plan to improve human rights situation in the country prepared by Ministry of Human Rights is being implemented in collaboration with relevant stakeholders. The plan sets protection and empowerment of women as a priority area for interventions including national policy guidelines on Gender Based Violence; review of all discriminatory legislation against women, establishment of new crisis centres for women and strengthening of existing centres /services at district level.

A helpline 1099 which operates throughout Pakistan has been established to offer legal advice, redressal and referral mechanism, the sources said and added a group of 213 pro bono lawyers have been registered with the Helpline from all over the country to provide legal assistance.

It also conducted national training throughout Pakistan for sensitisation and capacity building of prosecutors and court officials on women specific laws by creating awareness and responsiveness.

The other step included: Shelter home, Family Protection and Rehabilitation Centre and Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Human Rights Centres for Women in Islamabad provide free legal, psychological and medical aid to women victims of violence including women having fear of honour killing; Commemoration of national and international days to raise awareness among public regarding women's rights.

Besides, independent national and provincial Commissions on Status of Women (except Balochistan) have been established to monitor women rights in the country.

A research study has also been carried out to review and identify legal provisions for harmonisation of legislation in line with constitution of Pakistan, international commitments and human rights obligations and to provide recommendations for subordinate legislation to be enacted/amendments in the PPC and CrPC.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2032868/1-govt-drafts-policy-violence-women-girls/>

***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 14<sup>th</sup> TO 18<sup>th</sup> 2019***

**ADB APPROVES \$25M LOAN TO SUPPORT WOMEN-LED SMES**

By APP Published: August 18, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$25 million syndicated loan to support the lending operations of one of Pakistan's microfinance service providers.

The Kashf Foundation provides loans to low-income households and women-led micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). The loan will help expand women's access to finance in Pakistan and empower them economically. There is a need to improve access to finance in Pakistan, particularly for women in low-income communities as well as women-led enterprises. "An inclusive financial sector is essential for Pakistan's sustainable development," said ADB Investment Specialist Tina Rohner.

"ADB's partnership with Kashf Foundation will help address this issue and provide much-needed financial products for MSMEs led by women, which have the potential to contribute significantly to the country's growth and development."

Access to finance is very limited in Pakistan, with only 21.3% of adults and only 7% of women over the age of 15 having bank accounts in fiscal year 2017, according to available data. This situation is particularly acute for MSMEs and individual borrowers, especially women-run microenterprises, as these entities receive only about 7% of total bank credit to the private sector despite contributing around 40% to gross domestic product. MSMEs account for about 98% of all enterprises in Pakistan, employing more than 80% of the non-agricultural labour force. ADB's assistance comprises an A loan (to be funded by ADB) of up to \$15 million and a B loan of \$10 million that will be funded by commercial co-financiers including international impact investors.

The assistance will expand Kashf Foundation's lending operations and market base, giving MSMEs access to long-term financing.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2036261/2-adb-approves-25m-loan-support-women-led-smes/>

## ***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 19<sup>th</sup> TO 25<sup>th</sup> 2019***

### **SOUTH ASIAN CHAPTER OF WOMEN IN GLOBAL HEALTH LAUNCHED**

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter August 21, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection Dr Sania Nishtar on Tuesday launched the first Women in Global Health (WGH) chapter in South Asia.

Addressing the launching ceremony, held at a local hotel, she said that women were 70pc of global health workforce but they held only 25pc of senior and leadership roles.

"The percentage is even less in Pakistan and there is a recognised need for introducing gender sensitive workplace policies for attracting and retaining female health workforce in the labour market. This is critical for achieving the government's commitment to universal health coverage," she said.

Dr Nishtar also revealed that out of the 103 million women in Pakistan, nearly 60 million were in an economically productive age. However, the percentage of women in the labour workforce is only 22.54pc.

"We are introducing a number of initiatives under the "Ehsaas" Programme that are aimed at promoting gender mainstreaming and empowering women," she said.

WGH was established in 2015 as a global movement with the mission to achieve gender equality in global health leadership.

The global movement aims to achieve 50-50 in global health at top leadership positions, in governing boards and representation in events, panels and roundtables and create a robust WGH network, establishing national chapters at country level.

Within three years of its origin, WGH received membership from over 70 countries and has established national chapters in Germany, US, Sweden, Norway and Somalia.

While talking to the audience, member social sector at the Planning Commission Dr Shabnum Sarfraz said although women outnumber men in the country's medical, dental and allied health schools, more than half never end up practicing. Ironically, they are labelled as 'doctor brides'.

"Concerns over feminisation of health workforce are also a frequent topic of discussion but the need for gender inclusive workplace policies to retain the female health workforce is rarely raised as a possible solution," she said. She said that at present 30pc of the seats in medical, dental and allied health institutions, both public and private had been occupied by men.

However, the percentage of practicing women in the health sector is 49.4pc in medicine and 67.7pc in dentistry, she said, adding 88pc of the nursing workforce is females and 100pc of the lady health workers who are the vital community health workforce providing healthcare services at the door steps of the rural community.

Country Director Population Council Dr Zeba Sattar said it was vital that the contribution of the women to the health workforce was recognised and they were given the due respect.

She said it was important to involve them in policy and decision-making process.

Talking on the occasion director at P2 Impact Associates, which is actively supporting the WGH Pakistan Chapter, Dr Roomi Aziz said that chapter would be organising leadership events, policy and strategy dialogues and would also undertake cross cutting research for generating data on gender issues of female health workforce to guide programme interventions and policy reforms.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1500681/south-asian-chapter-of-women-in-global-health-launched>

## **PWD INITIATES ACTION ON WORKPLACE HARASSMENT CASES**

By Our Correspondent Published: August 22, 2019

**QUETTA:** The Population Welfare Department (PWD) on Tuesday notified a committee to look into workplace harassment cases in compliance with the Balochistan Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2016.

In an official handout issued here, it was said that the PWD was committed to taking steps for the implementation of the Act.

The committee, known as the Departmental Harassment Inquiry Committee, had been formed under Rule 3 (1) of the Balochistan Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2016 and will scrutinize and recommend complaints and cases to the relevant forum with the primary objective of providing protection to women at their workplaces.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2039127/1-pwd-initiates-action-workplace-harassment-cases/>

## ***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 26<sup>th</sup> TO Sep 1<sup>st</sup> 2019***

### **20,000 TRAFFICKING, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES REPORTED IN '18**

Kalbe Ali August 28, 2019

**ISLAMABAD:** Around 20,000 cases of human trafficking and domestic violence occurred in the country last year and 92 per cent of the cases related to women and girls, experts highlighted at a seminar held here on Tuesday.

The seminar was informed that women and girls were disproportionately impacted by human trafficking problem, and global estimates indicated that women and girls constituted up to 80 per cent of people trafficked globally and more than 60 per cent of those trafficked belonged to Asia.

The seminar titled "Together to combat trafficking of women and girls" was organised by the UN Women Pakistan, in collaboration with National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) and Kashf Foundation.

A representative of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) informed participants of the seminar that Pakistani women were not only being trafficked from poverty-stricken areas of southern Punjab and Balochistan, but also from major cities such as Karachi, Lahore and Faisalabad.

He said that recently some young Pakistani women were also trafficked to China on the pretext of marriage.

Experts were of the view that the issue was of immense importance and, therefore, it needed to be tackled at all levels, including by raising awareness among the masses.

Jamshed Kazi, the Country Representative of UN Women Pakistan, said that Pakistan had prioritised protection of women's rights as human rights. He said that strategies had been developed to combat violence against women, but there were more challenges that need to be tackled.

"One of these challenges is trafficking of women and girls, which rarely gets the attention it deserves. In order to successfully tackle this serious problem, we need to work towards changing social norms and behaviour in a transformative way," he said.

He said that in order to create awareness among the masses about this problem one such initiative was a TV drama serial on trafficking of women and girls recently shown on a TV channel.

Speakers including officials, diplomats, representative of civil society and media persons highlighted difficulties they were encountering to ascertain the exact number of girls and women trafficked in the country for domestic labour, forced marriage or sexual exploitation etc.

However, they said, available data indicated that traffickers were not always strangers but they could be family members, friends or acquaintances.

"Victims of trafficking are often lured on the pretext of better employment, marriages, better economic prospects or simply kidnapped from outside their houses or public places for this purpose," they said.

The age of women and girls trafficked ranged between two years and 50 years, the seminar was informed.

The speakers also highlighted that such crimes needed to be curbed to further progress in delivering Sustainable Development Goals by Pakistan.

The seminar comprised two panel discussions. The first discussion was on the topic of "Trafficking of women and girls in Pakistan – a discussion on the issue, legislative framework, and what is being done to address it".

Panelists for this session were Khawar Mumtaz, Chairperson of the National Commission on the Status of Women; Dr Riffat Sardar, Chairperson of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Commission on the Status of Women; Riaz Janjua of Anti-Human Trafficking Circle of Federal Investigation Authority (FIA), and Maliha Zia Lari, lawyer and human rights activist of Legal Aid Society, Karachi.

Experts during the discussion noted that survivors of the trafficking required protection, help and support, access to remedies, and safe return and re-integration into their communities with dignity and respect. The participants said that law-enforcement agencies and other service providers must be prepared and able to adequately respond to the issue and support survivors and work in border communities to mitigate the impact of these crimes.

The second panel discussion focused on "Shaping Mindsets through Media".

Panelists for this discussion were Roshaneh Zafar, Managing Director of Kashf Foundation; Moneeza Hashmi, TV and media personality; Amina Mufti, dramatist; and Saman Ahsan, Portfolio Manager, Governance, Human Rights and Ending Violence against Women, UN Women Pakistan. TV host Tauseeq Haider was moderator.

The participants of the discussion agreed that drama serial was an important medium which could progressively change mindsets towards the problem.

[https://www.dawn.com/news/1502018/20000-trafficking-domestic-violence-cases-reported-in-](https://www.dawn.com/news/1502018/20000-trafficking-domestic-violence-cases-reported-in-18?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+dawn-news+%28Dawn+News%29)

[18?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+dawn-news+%28Dawn+News%29](https://www.dawn.com/news/1502018/20000-trafficking-domestic-violence-cases-reported-in-18?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+dawn-news+%28Dawn+News%29)

## **‘OVER 130,000 WOMEN TRAINED IN DIGITAL SKILLS ACROSS ASIA PACIFIC’**

ITRAT BASHIR SEP 1ST, 2019 LAHORE

In partnership with local organisations, Facebook, a leading social media platform, is working in Pakistan to provide women entrepreneurs with the tools, training and resources that can help them secure funding and grow their businesses, said Beth Ann Lim, head of Community Affairs at Facebook, Asia Pacific. "Under our 'She Means Business' (shemeansbusiness) programme, launched last year in Pakistan, we are offering digital skill training and network community building that will help women in their businesses," she said during an interview with Business Recorder, here on Saturday.

She further said that the flexibility offered by digital technologies is enabling a new generation of women entrepreneurs around the world to make positive contributions to their families and communities. "However, women still face a number of obstacles such as a lack of funding and networks that can help them grow and scale. With this partnership, we want to nurture current and future generations of Pakistani women business leaders by providing access to a series of workshops and online learning tools," she added. According to her, 'She Means Business' programme is active in 21 countries, including Pakistan, and they have trained more than 130,000 women in digital skills across Asia Pacific. It runs in collaboration with business leaders, civil society, NGOs and the public sector.

This initiative started on International Women Day on March 8, 2016.

"Small and median businesses are backbone to so many economies and one particular area we wanted to support was women businesses; women entrepreneurs facing challenges need help in starting their businesses. Women are a part of marginalized community around the world who do not have the same access to tools or mentorship or finances. Hence we came up with a programme to help lift up women entrepreneurs. "Hence, we launched the programme in Asia Pacific that has gone global. In short span of time, almost four years, we have gone in to over 21 countries. This is very amazing; we have trained over 120,000 women in person and online," she added.

In Pakistan, they launched this programme last year with Punjab Board of Information Technology (PBIT) and this month they have partnered with Women Chamber of Commerce and Industries at aim of reaching out to its 3000 members.

"We invest in our partnership; our objective is to train 20,000 women by 2021 and for this we will continue to build partnerships. We work with organisation that shares our vision. We have partnered with PBIT and WCCI; we will also offer our programme to student entrepreneurs at business schools," she added.

Talking about the programme, she said that according to their recent research, three in four women believe that social media can help grow their businesses, but they do not know the usage of social media tools. "There are many avenues in social media to enhance their businesses," she added.

According to her, they impart training in person and teach them best case practices, usage of photos videos and Facebook tools for customer services; they also have a free online training resources. In-person training sessions also provides women entrepreneurs an opportunity to interact with fellow entrepreneurs, which allows them build a network to exchange challenges they face and ideas. She saw a powerful element in women entrepreneurs; once they establish their businesses, they hire other women. "Thus, I think it is very important to support female entrepreneurs; when they succeed with their businesses, they give back to their community.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/09/20190901514726/>

## **SEPTEMBER, 2019**

### ***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEP 2<sup>nd</sup> TO 8<sup>th</sup> 2019***

## **FINANCE MINISTER STRESSES EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN**

By Our Correspondent Published: September 7, 2019

QUETTA: Balochistan Minister for Finance Zahoor Ahmed Buledi emphasised women empowerment in order to utilise their capabilities for development of the province and the country.

He expressed these views while addressing a ceremony of Women Economic Empowerment Council at a local hotel.

The occasion was attended by Parliamentary Secretary for Development Women and Law Mahjabeen Sheeran, Development and Women Department Secretary Sahira Attah, Livestock Secretary Dostain Jamaldini and women representatives of United Nation, Civil Society and Women Chamber of Commerce.

The minister said that efforts are in progress to set up endowment funds for women.

"Development and Women Department have been ignored in past causing problems for women in the way of progress," he said.

Buledi added that incumbent government intends to empower women for which efforts are afoot to issue funds to Development and Women Sector to bring it par with other departments. The role of women is significant for the progress of the province, the minister said.

Briefing about the initiatives of the provincial government, he said, "Three Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) have been signed which marks history for the women of Balochistan."

Sheeran said that the priority of Balochistan Awami Party is to ensure the empowerment of women as it has allocated funds under the provincial Public Sector Development Program (PSDP).

Talking about development in the sector, she said, “Development and Women Department is working on establishing women’s hostels, setting up markets for women and providing separate transport for women aiming to promote women in each sector for the progress of the province.”

She hailed the directions of Balochistan Chief Minister Jam Kamal Khan of taking measures to ensure development and empowerment of women.

Stressing the role of women, Jamaldeni also addressed the ceremony. “The role of women is vital for the development of the province,” he said.

The secretary added that the Livestock department has decided to provide chickens to women specially the widows so that they would be able to initiate small businesses for their livelihood.

The provincial government has allocated Rs1.87 billion to initiate various projects to empower and facilitate women enabling them to play their role for the development of Balochistan.

According to a government official, the provincial government is taking steps to introduce women endowment fund in Balochistan to empower women financially and make them self-sufficient.

“The government will set up a woman market to create business opportunities for them so that they could sell their handmade products,” he said.

The official added that the market would also provide opportunities to unemployed women.

Emphasising role of women for the development of society, he said, “The government will establish hostels for working women in every divisional headquarters.”

He added that the government has already earmarked Rs600 million in the current Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) for the purpose.

The official said that the government has expedited the development work of women directorate in Quetta added that the progress is possible through empowering women.

“Effective legislation is underway to empower women along with the initiative of inheritance bill already been passed to provide share to women in inheritance,” he said.

Besides, the women harassment bill has been passed to create a safe environment for them at workplaces. The government has taken strict action against domestic violence.

The government would also build Baby Care centres to facilitate women, he added.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2051237/1-finance-minister-stresses-empowerment-women/>

## ***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEP 9<sup>th</sup> TO 15<sup>th</sup> 2019***

### **OVER ONE-THIRD OF CRIMINAL CASES ARE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: REPORT**

Tooba Masood Updated September 14, 2019

KARACHI: In the case of Pakistan, which ranks sixth on the list of the most dangerous countries for women, it is not possible to change gendered social norms regarding domestic violence by only focusing on legal reform, according to a recent **report** published in the Journal of International Women’s Studies.



“Women are subjected to violence that includes acid attacks, female genital mutilation, child marriage, forced marriage and female infanticide,” said the report titled ‘Not accepting abuse as the norm: local forms of institutional reform to improve reporting on domestic violence in Punjab’ that is co-authored by Maryam Tanwir, Shailaja Fennell, Hafsa Rehman Lak and Salman Sufi.

The report looks at reforms in Punjab, where legal structural obstacles and discriminatory gender norms prevent women from accessing justice.

According to the report’s abstract, it draws on a new framework for influencing changes in individuals’ behaviour to reduce the condoning of domestic violence.

Using a mixed-methods approach the report introduces a new initiative of women for institutional reform undertaken by the Strategic Reforms Unit (SRU) in Pakistan, to examine the role of social norms in normalising the practice of domestic violence.

This initiative, the report claims, provides an opportunity for examining how prevalent social norms can be changed by both improving women’s access to legal processes regarding the registration and prosecution of crimes as well as addressing public shame associated with the wearing of a tracking device by the assailant.

“This model of institutional reform of the criminal justice system could provide the way forward to close the large gap between incidents of violence against women (VAW) and the low level of convictions in many societies,” it said, adding that such institutional reform could be adapted for use in other countries to comprehensively reduce VAW cases and to increase the success in prosecution and sentencing of perpetrators of such crimes.

According to the report, despite the high number of cases relating to domestic violence that is more than one third of all criminal cases, the conviction rate for violence against women is a mere one to 2.5 per cent of all registered cases.

“This dismally low conviction rate has been a further sense of distress for the victims, as some resorted to extreme measures such as setting themselves on fire to bring attention to their neglected cases,” it added.

According to Salman Sufi, who introduced the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act 2016 and South Asia’s first Violence Against Women Centre, this was an evaluation-based design institutional intervention, a mixed-methods research using qualitative insights and desk review was done.

“We conducted a two-year multi-stakeholder analysis of the existing case-flow process by examining the procedures involved in the registration of cases. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, comprising an analysis of the following sources of government data collected by different provincial agencies,” he told Dawn.

“We also examined the existing sets of rules and standard operating procedures of the Medico-Legal Surgeon Office, the Punjab Forensic Science Agency, and the prosecution and police departments,” he added.

Talking about the SRU, Mr Sufi said that the unit took numerous steps to alleviate the problems of its citizens through revolutionary public sector reforms, especially in the domain of women’s rights and empowerment.

“The unit through its innovative measures devised a seminal reform to provide an effective system of justice, protection, relief and rehabilitation of violence against women victims. It helped in conceptualising and implementing various revolutionary, historic and groundbreaking reforms to facilitate women in the country such as the Women on Wheels initiative, Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act 2016 and Women Protection Authority,” he said.

This model, according to Mr Sufi, will ease access to justice, allow for refuge, and the wearing of the tracker by the male assaulter will start a chain of shame in a severely gendered society.

“Through our extensive research, we identified the prime reasons which resulted in a low conviction rate of gender-based violence crimes. These include: disconnected evidence collection; lack of sensitisation to gender-based violence issues; passing of moral judgments; and absenteeism of relevant personnel. Multan VAWC has inbuilt institutional reform aspects to address all these,” he said.

“Multan’s VAWC streamlines the investigation-prosecution case-flow process by bringing all previously disconnected justice delivery services under one roof. These include first aid care, police reporting, investigation, prosecution, provision of legal aid, medical examination and treatment, collection of forensic and other evidence, psychological evaluation, counseling, and post-trauma rehabilitation. The centre is 24-hour operational, all-women run facility with dedicated police investigation and prosecution teams to coordinate response to any VAW offence,” he explained.

Mr Sufi added that since the VAWC Multan was established, they had seen a tremendous increase in the number of reported offences in the Multan region as well as in Khanewal and Muzaffargarh.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1505085>

## ***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEP 23<sup>rd</sup> TO 29<sup>th</sup> 2019***

### **NEED STRESSED FOR SENSITISING POLICE TO DEAL WITH ANTI-WOMEN CRIMES**

KARACHI: A consultative meeting on the Sindh Comprehensive Acid and Burn Crime Bill 2019 has brought up several issues standing in the way of the law's coming into action.

There have been so many great pro-women laws that were passed by the Sindh Assembly but they couldn't be implemented due to things such as lack of trained human resource or lack of a redressal system. The component of funding in legislation also goes against these laws and acts, said Sindh Commission on the Status of Women (SCSW) chairperson Nuzhat Shirin.

The event was organised by the Acid Survivors Foundation Pakistan (ASFP) in partnership with Group Development Pakistan and the SCSW at a local hotel on Wednesday.

She said that the real implementation bodies in the instance of crimes against women were police stations. The police need training and sensitising in order to deal with the complaints of people. There are NGOs trying to educate them but then they also keep getting transferred and the NGOs have to start all over again, she pointed out.

Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf MPA Adeeba Hasan said that they definitely needed NGOs to help guide and support not just police personnel but also those in the government and in the provincial assembly. NGOs are always needed to tell us where we are going wrong and what is needed. And it is true that the process of releasing funds from these sources is so long that by the time the money to be released gets okayed the patient dies, she said.

Rana Ansar, a Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan MPA, was of the view that there was a need to check budget allocations.

A clause should be mentioned on how to utilise the funds, she said. We need to move a resolution for establishment of more burn centres.

She also said that often a seriously injured person might die before the police reached the spot. Therefore, it is extremely important that the person's statement should be taken by a guardian under the supervision of a medical officer.

Police surgeon Dr Qarrar Abbasi said that the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre had space where they could make a burn and plastic surgery centre.

Lawyer and human rights activist Ali Palh said there should be a special fund for disabled persons too, as there were disabled acid victims as well.

ASFP chairperson Valerie Khan Yusufzai, meanwhile, observed that effort against acid and burn violence was a success story in Pakistan as it happened to be the only form of gender-based violence that had decreased by 50 per cent in 10 years. Still, resource management is important, she said.

Transgender activist Bindiya Rana said that funds needed to cover all expenses such as food, shelter, travelling expenses, legal aid for the victims. She also pointed out that police stations needed to have photocopiers and power generators.

She also noticed that funds for women in distress mentioned that they would be used for female acid crime survivors and not for males, transgenders and children. But where [should] they go for their rehabilitation and medical treatment if they are the victims? she asked.

Later, a letter of cooperation was signed for the purpose of strengthening the collaboration between the SCSW and ASFP to contribute towards reducing acid crimes and acid violence in the province, to monitor the implementation of the relevant law and to achieve the enactment of the Sindh Comprehensive Acid and Burn Crime Bill.

[https://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=26\\_09\\_2019\\_115\\_005](https://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=26_09_2019_115_005)

## **OCTOBER, 2019**

### ***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 7<sup>th</sup> TO 13<sup>th</sup> 2019***

## **4.5M NEW WOMEN VOTERS REGISTERED IN COUNTRY**

Amjad Mahmood Updated October 08, 2019

LAHORE: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) claims to have registered 4.5 million new female voters mostly from areas where societal values have been barring womenfolk from coming to the fore.

“We have been launching awareness campaigns in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's tribal districts for the last two years to motivate women to come out to use their right to franchise. The drive has proved a success as 4.5m new

female voters have so far been registered, mostly from these areas,” ECP additional director general Nadeem Qasim told Dawn here on Monday.

He said those districts were selected for launching the drive where difference between male and female voters was more than 10 per cent. “Despite being 49 per cent of the population, the number of registered women voters is 12.5m less than men in a total of 110m registered voters,” he regretted.

Sharing the method employed to motivate the womenfolk, the ADG said that the National Database and Registration Authority’s mobile vans were used to offer free national identity card service and Friday was fixed as the women-specific day for making their CNIC’s. “This helped the ECP to register them as voters.”

Earlier, local media men were briefed about the third five-year (2019-23) strategic plan of the ECP at a consultation here on Monday.

The participants were told that the post-election 2018 review report of the ECP had not so far been laid before any of the five elected houses — the National Assembly and four provincial houses — though the job had to be done within 60 days of the submission of the report as per law.

According to ECP sources, the report was submitted to the federal and provincial governments in March last year but it was apparently stuck in meetings of standing committees.

The sitting was told that the strategic plan has been based on 212 recommendations collected through consultations with over 5,000 individuals and entities, including political parties, NGOs and CSOs related with various democratic and election projects.

The recommendations were, however, not shared with the media.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1509623>

## **PANCHAYAT SELLS WOMAN FOR ‘ADULTERY’**

A Correspondent October 09, 2019

DERA GHAZI KHAN: Kot Chhuta police have registered a case against nine people for holding a village council ordering the sale of a woman for adultery in pursuance of Kala Kali, sources told Dawn.

Muhammad Hussain lodged a complaint with the police that the illegal panchayat sold his sister for Rs600,000 on adultery charges. The panchayat penalised a male suspect with a Rs1.8m fine.

SHO Bakht Nasar said a case had been registered against nine people on the complaint of woman’s brother. DPO Asad Sarfraz said the police were looking into the case.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1509781/panchayat-sells-woman-for-adultery>

## ***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 14<sup>th</sup> TO 20<sup>th</sup> 2019***

## **RURAL WOMEN DEMAND INCLUSIVE POLICIES TO REDUCE INEQUALITY**

Staff Reporter October 17, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Rural women demanded inclusive policies to reduce inequality and set a path for sustainable development and a strong economy on the second day of the Rural Women’s Conference on Wednesday.

The 12th annual Rural Women’s Conference, organised by the Potohar Organisation for Development Advocacy (PODA), is being held at Lok Virsa. More than 2,000 representatives from all districts attended the second day of the conference, which ends today (Thursday).

PODA President Sameena Nazir said inclusive policies demand inclusive processes to engage women at all levels for sustainable development.

“We need to recognise the role and contributions made by Pakistan rural women. For this we need to recognise rural women’s status in the society through government policies by declaring them farmers so that they can benefit from the government’s schemes. A person who owns land is a farmer officially. That’s why we demand the government to allocate one acre of government land to a woman farmer for agriculture to mainstream their work as a farmer,” she said.

“Our country has done well to ensure pro-women legislation. We have made progress in some areas but there is significant amount of work still to do in terms of ensuring inclusive policy as it will ensure a better society. We are here at the conference for better society for rural women of Pakistan,” Ms Nazir said.

The Jugni Theatre Group also revealed societal complexities through their performance in the Lok Virsa open air theatre. They touched on social behaviours in a subtle manner and ended the performance to ensure human rights which are interconnected and for which we need to enhance access to education.

Educationist Khalida Ahmed said: “Education is the mother of all rights. It demands long term commitment from the government, civil society, parents, teachers and students.”

She was speaking at the policy dialogue session on ‘Girls’ Right to Secondary Education in Rural Areas’.

Speakers at the session emphasised inclusive education, in which people with disabilities are an integral part of the mainstream education system.

Women’s rights activist and former member of the National Commission on Human Rights Anis Haroon concluded the session saying that governments need to invest more in sectors of education, health and justice, as this leads towards overall sustainable development and progress for all.

While speaking on the policy dialogue on the ‘Political Rights of Rural Women’, Election Commission of Pakistan Secretary Babar Yaqub Fateh Mohammad said the commission was committed to making all out efforts to ensure the inclusive participation of women at all levels.

The evening ended with musical performances by various performers and artists.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1511234/rural-women-demand-inclusive-policies-to-reduce-inequality>

## **E-COMMERCE POLICY LINKED WITH WOMEN EMPOWERMENT**

By Zafar Bhutta Published: October 19, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The government has decided to develop linkages with the one-woman, one-bank account initiative under the e-commerce policy.

Considering draft of the e-commerce policy, the cabinet members in a recent meeting suggested that the e-commerce policy may be linked with the one-woman, one-bank account initiative, which complements e-commerce initiatives apart from promoting women empowerment and financial inclusion.

During discussions, the cabinet members emphasised the importance of a payment gateway for effective roll-out of e-commerce in the country. It was pointed out that while some foreign online payment companies were interested, the State Bank of Pakistan should come up with a clear-cut policy.

They, however, felt that the SBP did not seem to have the capability to find a solution to the payment gateway problem.

It was argued that the payment gateway was essentially a market access issue and needed to be tackled diplomatically as well. At the same time, the e-commerce policy was the need of the hour and should be approved.

It was also suggested that the format of e-commerce policy draft needed to be improved to turn it into a policy document, which should not contain recommendations but a definitive policy of the government.

The Commerce Division pointed out that extensive consultations had been held to prepare the draft of e-commerce policy, which was essential to elicit cooperation and collaboration of foreign payment gateways.

The role of the State Bank of Pakistan as a regulator delineated its main function, which was regulation rather than creating a payment platform, it said.

The emergence of e-commerce platform has paved the way for inclusive trade and economic development. Global e-commerce has been growing exponentially for the past two decades and recorded sales growth of 13% in 2017 with estimated sales of \$29 trillion.

In addition to that, the number of online shoppers grew 12% and reached 1.3 billion.

E-commerce in Pakistan is at a nascent stage with modest internet retail sales despite 161 million cellular subscribers, 70 million 3G and 4G subscribers, 72 million broadband subscribers and tele-density of 76.56% as of July 2019.

However, it is an emerging sector with a noticeable surge in the recent past in online vendors, e-commerce platforms and online payment facilities introduced by banks and cellular companies.

According to SBP figures, excluding cash-on-delivery sales, annual e-commerce sales stood at Rs18.7 billion by the end of June 2018 while the total size of Pakistan’s e-commerce market in 2018 was Rs99.3 billion. The number of

registered e-commerce merchants has risen 26 times and e-commerce payments have surged 23 times in a span of just 12 months.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2082762/2-e-commerce-policy-linked-women-empowerment/>

## **50 WOMEN, 28 MEN KILLED IN NAME OF HONOUR IN SINDH THIS YEAR: POLICE**

Our Correspondent October 20, 2019

At least 50 women were killed this year in different parts of Sindh under Karo-Kari, while 28 men were also murdered in 'honour' killing.

This information was revealed by Abdul Khaliq Shaikh, the DIG headquarter Sindh Police, in his presentation at a consultation on Karo-Kari, titled 'Karo-Kari/Honour Killing — A Crime Against Humanity; Reasons and Challenges in Stopping the Menace', held by the Sindh Human Rights Commission (SHRC) at a local hotel.

The purpose of the event was to address the menace of honour killings in the wake of the recent rise in such incidents across the province. A panel comprised of federal and provincial lawmakers, and members of the civil society, judiciary and law enforcement agencies discussed the issue and suggested solutions to deal with it.

DIG Shaikh said the Sindh police had been focusing on the prevention of honour killings and it had formed an anti-honour crime cell in this regard. "We have previously set up a database, trained over 2,000 officers, developed a training manual, and also developed a separate manual for violence against women."

The officer added that the police department had recently formed a human rights cells, as well as human rights desks in every district, along with setting up a network against gender-based violence in collaboration with civil society.

Nafisa Shah, an MNA of the Pakistan Peoples Party and the author of 'Honour Unmasked', said modernisation and reforms within the formal state and justice system were required to deal with the issue of honour killing. "The case [of honour killings] does not exist outside the state, the courtroom is implicated, the law is implicated and the criminal justice system is deeply implicated. . . The idea of restorative justice becomes strong when investigation systems and criminal justice systems are weak," she said.

Nafisa said that even though the aspect of culture and customs could not be ignored when one talked about honour killings, our criminal justice system was in a dire need of reforms and the so-called garb of Islamisation had had a lot of impact on our criminal justice procedures.

SHRC Chairperson Justice (retd) Majida Razvi spoke about the sufferings of women and young girls within the province, especially cruelties inflicted on them in the name of honour. She was of the view that the issue of honour killing was a matter of urgency, which needed to be dealt with in consultation with all the stakeholders. She also highlighted the lack of implementation of laws in this regard.

Justice (retd) Shaiq Usmani, former chief justice of the Sindh High Court, said Karo-Kari had a cultural aspect and it meant to restrain women and deprive them of independence.

"There is a need for different laws. An anti-honour killing law should be made to separately deal with this heinous crime. A separate commission or institution must be formed to deal with cases related to honour killings," he said.

Anis Haroon, a former member of the National Commission for Human Rights, said the issue of honour killings was not a new issue. "Every other day we witness a new wave of honour killings," she remarked. Citing the SHRC's previous annual report, she stated that 118 cases of honour killings took place between 2017 and 2018.

She added that several cases of Karo-Kari also went unreported. "When dealing with the cases of honour killings, the judges and police are all under pressure," she said.

Other speakers at the consultation included Chief Minister's Special Assistant on Human Rights Veerji Kohli, Justice (retd) S Ali Aslam Jafri, Szabist Social Sciences Department Dean Dr Riaz Ahmed Shiakh, Aurat Foundation Resident Director Mahnaz Rahman and Federal Investigation Agency Additional Director Faizullah Korejo.

The event was moderated by Zulfiqar Shah from the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/543414-50-women-28-men-killed-in-name-of-honour-in-sindh-this-year-police>

## ***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 21<sup>st</sup> TO 27<sup>th</sup> 2019***

### **RECOLLECTION OF WOMEN'S STRUGGLE FOR RIGHTS**

Shoaib Ahmed Updated October 21, 2019

LAHORE: Thought-provoking discussions on women's role in various fields were part of the concluding day of Asma Jahangir conference on Sunday.

In the session 'Politics Inspire Art and Art Inspires politics' that was moderated by former National College of Arts Principal Saleema Hashmi (panelists were visual artist Fatima Salman and writer and poet Neelam Ahmed Bashir), they discussed at length the contribution of women in art and how in oppressed times of Zia's regime women fought for their rights.

Saleema Hashmi while opening the discussion remembered the days when during Zia's regime the Women Action Forum (WAF) was launched as a reaction to oppression. At that time, she recalled, the voices of women artists emerged and Asma Jahangir was on the forefront. And how one can forget Sheema Kirmani and Kishwar Naheed who raised strong voices against that oppression.

She then introduced Fatima Salman, an NCA graduate and a miniature artist. The artist shared with the audience the ever joyful experience of becoming a miniature artist.

She also talked about the fact that art could be a strong medium to inspire society at large.

Speakers dilate upon the contribution of women in art and how in oppressed times of Zia's regime women fought for their rights.

"I use gold work in my miniature paintings to highlight the power and prestige," she said. She showed a painting of Asma she made as gold work. She said there should be a platform for women when it comes to art.

She also introduced Neelam Ahmed Bashir who had recently written a poem which got five million hits on social media both from India and Pakistan. Ms Bashir said she mostly wrote fiction but sometimes wrote poetry as well.

In the session 'Women Building Brides for Peace in South Asia', the panelists were Hina Rabbani Khar, former foreign minister, Fawzia Kufi, women's rights activist and prominent politician from Afghanistan, Bhavani Fonseka, Senior Researcher Transitional Justice Issues at CPA and Human Rights lawyer from Sri Lanka, Ingrid Johansson, Ambassador of Sweden and Omar Zakhilwal, Afghan ambassador. The session was moderated by Munizae Jahangir. Ambassador of Sweden Ingrid Johansson threw light on an essentially feminist government in Sweden and how it works. She said Sweden was considered an advanced country but it was still working on development.

Fawzia Kufi held Lahore in high esteem and said she was feeling great to be here in Lahore which is a historic city and a city where poetry, literature and art flourished. She showed her concern regarding women rights in Afghanistan. Women rights was a big issue there, she said, adding that 150 or so people were daily killed. Women in Afghanistan were 55pc of the population but were a silent majority, she added.

Omar Zakhilwal talked about how with Taliban around, women were not allowed basic education let alone higher education and their social existence. He said the dialogue process was on and one should be optimistic.

Hina Rabbani Khar said: "We need to be forward looking in the entire region". She said instead of glorifying the past that how was Afghanistan in 70s and Pakistan in 60s, there was a need to look forward. Rational tackling of issues in the region was needed the most.

Bhavani Fonseka talked about the history of women engagement in Sri Lanka. He said it was good that in Sri Lanka many talks had been held at various fora about women rights. She held Asma Jahangir in high esteem.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1512039>

## ***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCT 28<sup>th</sup> TO NOV 03<sup>rd</sup> 2019***

### **SINDH HAS LAUNCHED SCHEMES TO IMPROVE FACILITIES FOR PREGNANT WOMEN, PA TOLD**

Hasan Mansoor Updated October 30, 2019

KARACHI: Conceding that around three-fourths of the pregnant women in Sindh had no service available to them for safe delivery in the healthcare facilities run by the provincial government, Health Minister Azra Pechuho said on

Tuesday that her ministry had launched a multifaceted strategy to improve conditions in the health sector and alleviate poverty.

Issues of poor indicators in the social sector in the province were highlighted when Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf's Khurram Sher Zaman tabled an adjournment motion in the Sindh Assembly on the private members' day with Speaker Siraj Durrani in the chair, mainly raising the issues of stunted growth in Sindh. He said almost half of the children in the province were victims of stunting and such an issue should be given due importance. The government should have declared emergency to tackle it.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Mukesh Chawla initially opposed the adjournment motion, saying Health Minister Pechuho wanted to furnish a policy statement on the issue raised in the motion.

'Livestock department has initiated a fodder distribution drive with Rs50 million in four union councils of Tharparkar district'

He said a decision on whether to hold a debate on the adjournment motion would be taken after the health minister's statement.

Dr Pechuho informed the house that a programme funded by the European Union was under way in eight Sindh districts aiming at alleviating poverty.

Besides, added the minister, the provincial government had planned to target six more districts by launching a similar project sponsored by the World Bank.

She said around 75 per cent of the pregnant women received no service for safe delivery at the government-run hospitals. However, she added, the government was aware of the issue and had planned various strategies to ensure better services at those healthcare facilities.

She said the government had initiated several programmes in the past, which had improved Sindh's health indicators in the recent official surveys as in many sectors the province registered progress "way above" the rest of the country.

She assured the mover of the adjournment motion that Sindh had already launched many programmes in which various sectors and departments had been brought on a single forum to tackle the scourges of stunting and wasting. She said malnutrition was regarded as silent hunger for which the Sindh government had launched programmes which particularly targeted mothers and children.

Dr Pechuho said with the health ministry, the population welfare department, also under her supervision, had been involved in making women aware of the importance of birth spacing. She said a programme had been launched with the cooperation of the World Bank to control population.

Minister Chawla later asked the chair to admit the PTI lawmaker's adjournment motion for debate as the issue highlighted in it bore great significance to the people of Sindh.

Speaker Durrani admitted the motion and fixed it for debate on Monday.

Minister for Livestock and Fisheries Abdul Bari Pitafi told the house during the Question Hour that a programme for women empowerment through rehabilitation of rural poultry at Karachi, Thar, Jamshoro, Dadu, Larkana and Jacobabad was being executed by his ministry. It was completed in June.

Responding to a question furnished by Grand Democratic Alliance's Nusrat Sehar Abbasi, the minister said the scheme was originally approved at the cost of Rs59.56 million and was to be completed by June last year. However, it was revised at a cost of Rs84.428m with the addition of two more districts — Sujawal and Tando Mohammad Khan. He said the activities that the project undertook included distribution of poultry birds, training to rural women, procurement of medicines, vitamins, vaccines and feed for the birds and holding seminars etc as per scope of the scheme.

A PTI lawmaker remarked that the PPP government had taken a U-turn by distributing birds to people following the example of the prime minister's poultry scheme.

Mr Pitafi said it was the PM who had "copied" the Sindh government's scheme, which had originally started in 2015. He said the scheme had helped the government to emancipate rural women. He added that some 3,000 women had been trained.

Answering another question also asked by Ms Abbasi, the minister said a scheme to upgrade the veterinary centre at Bhan Saeedabad was approved in August 2017 at a cost of Rs5.8m for a year. But due to lesser releases by the finance department during the 2017-18 fiscal, it could not be completed and was extended for a year. He added that the scheme was completed in June and cost Rs5.47m.

The GDA member also asked the minister to furnish details about a project involving construction of a veterinary centre at Shahpur Jahanian in Benazirabad district at a cost of Rs6m.

The minister said the project was to be completed by June last year. However, it could not be started yet due to unavailability of land required for it.

The minister denied a statement made in another question asked by Khurram Sher Zaman, which sought to know whether the livestock department had refused to provide fodder to over 7.69 million animals in emergency situations. Minister Pitafi said the provision of fodder to animals during an emergency was not under the domain of his ministry. However, he added, with the approval of the chief minister, the livestock department had initiated a fodder distribution drive through the Thar Foundation with Rs50m in four union councils of the desert district.

He said there were around seven million animals in Thar, and none of them had died of any disease because his department had got them vaccinated.

He said none of the pheasants in Thar had died as the department had got them vaccinated.

Before administering oath to the GDA's Moazzam Abbasi, who was recently elected from Larkana by defeating ruling Pakistan Peoples Party's Jameel Soomro, Speaker Durrani referred to the mayhem created by the opposition in the house on Friday when the session was adjourned.

He said the house was the "D-Chowk where members organise their processions".

"I will not tolerate anything that targets the sanctity of the house. My staff was humiliated and harassed; which is why passes to those visitors have been cancelled. I wanted that your family would have witnessed this occasion, but certain members in the house conspired to deny you this joy," said Siraj Durrani.

Published in Dawn, October 30th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1513653>

## **95PC WOMEN JOURNALISTS SAY ONLINE VIOLENCE IMPACTS THEIR WORK: REPORT**

Staff Reporter Updated November 02, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Ninety-five per cent of the country's women journalists feel online violence has an impact on their professional work, according to a Media Matters for Democracy (MMfD) report.

The report titled 'Hostile Bytes — a study of online violence against women journalists' was launched on Friday to coincide with the Inter-national Day to End Impunity against Journalists falling on Nov 2 (today).

According to the report, 77pc of Pakistani women journalists self-censor as a way to counter online violence.

The MMfD noted that while most of the conversation focused on the violence that journalists face in physical spaces, virtual spaces could also be vicious, especially for women journalists without any real repercussion for those who threatened and made these spaces toxic.

MMfD finds three out of 10 women journalists were victim of online crime such as blackmail

The abuse female journalists faced in online spaces was often not taken seriously, but had real repercussions for them, it said. The results showed that 105 out of 110 women believed online violence impacted their mental health.

"The sexualised and personal nature of abuse directed towards them not only affects them on a personal level, but also affects journalism in general that is heavily occupied by men leaving no room for women's voices. In times when their voices should be amplified, hate campaigns against women journalists is a very well-thought out strategy to ensure systemic oppression of women in professional spaces," said Hija Kamran, programmes manager at the MMfD and author of the study.

The research found that three out of 10 women journalists were victim of serious online crime such as blackmail and incitement to violence against them. The participants were not satisfied with the response they got from social media platforms and law enforcement agencies when they reported online violence. There was also reluctance to report to law enforcement agencies, showing that there was a need to improve the way these agencies handle online violence. Online spaces were increasingly becoming important for journalists to not only promote their work but also reach wider audiences. The form of the survey conducted for the research was filled out by 110 women journalists, from different parts of the country, in addition to in-depth interviews with nine prominent journalists. They agreed that social media and digital spaces were an important online component that impacted their professional choices.



The journalists also spoke of the importance of having networks of women journalists which could become a vital support system that would help them deal with online violence. In the interviews, women journalists said that in instances where they had been specifically targeted online, speaking to colleagues who had faced the same, helped them deal with the online violence they were facing.

Published in Dawn, November 2nd, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1514358>

## **NOVEMBER, 2019**

### ***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOV 25<sup>th</sup> TO DEC 01<sup>st</sup> 2019***

#### **‘WOMEN BODIES MUST UNITE TO END VAW’**

By Our Correspondent Published: November 26, 2019

PESHAWAR: With violence against women a national issue with high prevalence in the province as well, all women organisations and bodies have been urged to join hands and make collective efforts to protect women and girls.

This was urged by the Women Parliamentary Caucus (WPC) Chairperson Maliha Asghar Khan on Monday while speaking at an event to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and to launch the annual ‘16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign’ in the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P).

The event was jointly organised by WPC, Ombudsperson Secretariat and the K-P Commission on the Status of Women (K-PCSW) with support from UN Women Pakistan.

Maliha said that the provincial government is committed to protecting and supporting women through effective legislation and provision of quality services. In this regard, she urged all female members of the provincial assembly to set an example for other provinces by unanimously passing the long-pending pro-women bills.

“We strongly recommend that all women machineries join hands and make collective efforts for protecting women and girls from violence,” suggested K-PCSW Chairperson Dr Riffat Sardar, adding, “There is a need to understand the cultural context of the province and bring necessary reforms in the service delivery mechanisms in this regard.”

Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) MPA Rehana Ismail shared that Islam is a religion of peace and that it does not encourage gender-based discrimination.

“Teachings of Islam reassure respect of women.”

K-P Ombudsperson Rukhshanda Naz highlighted the importance of sensitizing the public about women’s rights. She added that obtaining an education was the most important thing for women to do because lower literacy and lack of awareness about basic rights makes them vulnerable to oppression and discrimination.

Two theatre performances were also given where local theatre groups portrayed the positive image of women in a family.

“Sixteen days of Activism is an international campaign, which is commemorated each year to raise awareness on violence against women as a human rights issue, focusing on the importance of grassroots work to end violence,” said Zainab Khan, the head of UN Women’s K-P office.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 26th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2106464/1-women-bodies-must-unite-end-vaw/>

## **DECEMBER, 2019**

### ***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DEC 16<sup>th</sup> TO DEC 2<sup>nd</sup> 2019***

#### **MOU SIGNED TO IMPROVE ANTI-HARASSMENT CELLS IN BALOCHISTAN**

Kalbe Ali December 21, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The government of Balochistan on Friday decided to improve its anti-harassment cells and inquiry mechanism with support of the UN Women (UNW) Pakistan to effectively fight harassment of women at workplaces.

The UNW signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the office of the ombudsperson Balochistan to work together to improve data collection mechanism and strengthen systems for better data collection, reporting of complaints and assessing trends through reported cases.

The MoU was signed here by Aisha Mukhtar, deputy country representative UNW, and Sabira Islam, the ombudsperson for protection against harassment Balochistan.

The signatories have agreed to enhance mechanisms for responding to cases of harassment through development of training materials and training of trainers.

The two sides will cooperate on capacity building of anti-harassment cells and inquiry committees to deal with cases of harassment as well as awareness raising on harassment laws and compliance requirements.

Provincial govt and UN Women will work to enhance mechanisms for responding to cases of harassment

Ms Islam expressed the need to protect women and girls from harassment at workplaces.

“We are planning to work together to ensure that there is effective implementation of workplace harassment laws across the province in order to enable women reach their full potential, feel protected at workplaces and actively take part in economic activities,” she remarked.

Ms Mukhtar appreciated the personal interest of Chief Minister Balochistan Jam Kamal in establishing harassment cells at the district level across the province.

She reiterated UN Women’s commitment towards strengthening institutions and mechanisms for preventing and addressing sexual harassment at workplaces.

“Harassment at the workplace holds women back from progressing as they embark on a journey of social and career development.

“We all need to understand that girls and women have a fundamental and legal right to work in a safe environment,” she said, adding the environment has to be free from harassment and discrimination.

She said the office of the ombudsperson had a crucial role in ensuring effective implementation of the harassment laws.

Women Development Department Director Noor Mubashir Sami expressed his department’s commitment to continue supporting the ombudsperson’s office to ensure that the women of Balochistan feel safe and protected as they step out to pursue education or take part in economic activities.

Published in Dawn, December 21st, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1523413/mou-signed-to-improve-anti-harassment-cells-in-balochistan>