

Media Update

5 December 2016

UN Women

Press Release

Enhancing Legal Protection to End Violence Against Women in Sindh

05 December 2016 - Karachi, Pakistan: Violence against women and girls is a grave violation of human rights deeply rooted in gender inequality and gender-based discrimination. Violence not only has negative consequences for those who suffer it, but also their families, the community and society at large.

Violence against women and girls is not inevitable. It can be effectively addressed through prevention, protection and provision of services. In a bold and positive step Sindh's Provincial Assembly adopted a Resolution condemning violence against women and demanded the government to implement the law passed on the issue. The Resolution was passed on 25 November 2016, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, which kicked off 16 days of Activism campaigning against gender based violence and is mobilizing country-wide and global actions to increase awareness and create opportunities to address challenges and solutions to end violence against women and girls.

In addressing legal rights and protection of women, UN Women (the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women) and the Women's Development Department of Sindh organized a panel discussion on "Enhancing Legal Protection to End Violence Against Women in Sindh" as part of Sindh's 16 Days of Activism to end gender based violence.

In welcoming guests Mr. Jamshed Kazi (Country Representative, UN Women Pakistan) shared: "Today's event is being organized as part of 16 Days of Activism campaigning to bring together various stakeholders from government, private sector and development practitioners to share experiences and discuss strategies for strengthening implementation of laws.



This conversation must continue with concrete actions to eliminate violence against women such as strong coordination amongst stakeholders for effective response, enhanced capacities of officials and public awareness, as well as addressing gaps in legal frameworks.”

Mr. Mudassir Iqbal (Secretary, Women Development Department, Sindh) in his overview of legal initiatives being taken by the Department to end violence against women highlighted enactment of the Sindh Domestic Violence Act (2013), Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Act (2013), and implementation of the Protection Against Harassment Of Women At Work Place Act (2010) with 2,300 Inquiry Committees formed thus far in the province. Legislations under development were shared as a Sindh Abolition of Dowry Act (2016) and the Sindh Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention Act (2016). Institutional mechanisms being strengthened in the province included Sindh’s Provincial Commission on the Status of Women and Women Protection Centres.

Speaking on legislative opportunities and gaps of Pakistan’s Anti-Rape and Anti-Honor Killings Bills recently adopted by the National Assembly on 6 October 2016 were Justice (Retired) Majida Rizvi (Chairperson, Sindh Human Rights Commission) and Mr. Ali Rashid (Member of National Assembly). Justice (Retired) Majida Rizvi shared salient features of both bills and amendments made. An opportunity discussed was closure of legal loopholes with stricter punishment for the convicts making it tougher than ‘ordinary’ murder cases. However, with this opportunity a gap reflected upon included “how do you differentiate between a ‘random’ killing or an ‘honor’ killing?” Mr. Ali Rashid shared that as a next step, the National Assembly and lawmakers are looking to address and amend the evidence law section of these bills.

Speaking on the protection of women against sexual harassment from a private sector perspective, Ms. Zubina Sadick (Habib Bank limited), Ms. Safia Kaleem (Nestle Pakistan) and Ms. Zara Tareen (Actor/Photographer) shared that zero tolerance for harassment of women, women-friendly environments and awareness of the policy and Code of Conduct were key drivers to end harassment at the workplace.

Speaking on progress and challenges in implementing the Sexual Harassment Act were Ms. Maliha Hussain (Mehergarh) and Mr. Pir Ali Shah (Ombudsman, Prevention from Workplace Harassment). Ms. Maliha Hussain highlighted that both organizations and employees have been empowered to address the stigmatized issue that sexual harassment does occur within

organizations. Adding to this, Mr. Pir Ali Shah spoke of how the Act was being implemented in Sindh with establishment of Inquiry Committees and active reporting of cases in both the public and private sectors.

In her remarks, Ms. Grace Shelton (US Consul General, Karachi) said: “Gender equality and women’s empowerment are critical to building resilient democratic societies. Violence against women is not only a Sindh or Pakistan problem, it is global one with an obligation on all of us to end. There is much to be done and the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs is committed to working with the Sindh Government and UN Women as there is no honor in such killings.”

For more information contact:

Ms. Faria Salman, Strategic Management and Partnerships Officer & Head of
Communications for UN Women Pakistan Email:
faria.salman@unwomen.org

