

Friday, January 27, 2017

'Gender discrimination not limited to developing countries'

By Moayyed Ali Jafri and Sher Ali Khalti

LAHORE

PAKISTANI women are politically more aware, courageous and vibrant for movement as compare to other women of South Asia.

This was acknowledged by Programme Director of UNIFEM former Regional Director and leading women rights activist from Nepal Chandni Joshi in an exclusive interview with The News. Dedicating virtually her entire life to the cause of women rights, especially in the economic domain, Ms Joshi has fought and won many battles in the policy domain, regionally and internationally. She

was the prime force behind setting up South Asian Regional Office of UNIFEM in Pakistan and India while bringing various governments, gender advocates and researchers together to common platforms along with South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

As she looked back on all that she has done to this day, she said that it was an uphill task to convince the policy makers regarding the economic contribution to national development by women not just through professional jobs, but through the management of domestic household. It really does not make intelligent sense, that if two individuals are doing the same job with similar results,

one is undermined and underpaid based only on their gender and not performance, she said. "Gender discrimination regarding acknowledgement and compensation for work is not a problem exclusive to developing countries, she said, citing the examples of same disparity in the US. Before this seeps into minds of the policy makers, this concept needs to be corrected through awareness among the masses in general, and that is where the real challenge is", she said. It is heartening to see that these issues which were not even considered as worthy of discussion have now become a part of the public and policy discourse in the region and internationally, however, the road to

absolute parity is long and difficult, she commented.

She was concerned over the fact that not a single country of the world was able to achieve the targets set by the Beijing Declaration, not even the Scandinavian countries. However, she was hopeful that at least some of them would be able to do so by the next deadline set till 2030. Commenting on the status of women in Pakistan, she said that she believed that the country was heading in the right direction with progressive legislation coming into effect and the overall silence over these issues finally ending. Government should make macro policies for the welfare of women, he said.

First and foremost mindset needs to be changed for working women, unfortunately, women are being discriminated not only in South Asia but around the world, said Ms Joshi.