The legislative history on women’s rights issues has all those dark, grey and bright patches. There have been repeated attempts and continued efforts by women and men parliamentarians for reform of existing laws and new positive legislation for women. The efforts went along determined struggle by women’s rights groups and activists for long years against discriminatory laws and customary practices. Though women of Pakistan have reached a milestone on 12-13 December 2011, when three important bills, Prevention of Anti-Women Practices, 2011, Bill, Acid Control and Acid Crimes Prevention, 2011, Bill and The Women in Distress and Detention Fund (Amendment) Bill, 2011 were passed by the Senate, there is a long way to go and the major challenge in the future would be to see how women parliamentarians and women’s rights movement ensure that women of Pakistan in all professions, groups and classes and in all age-groups, benefit from these laws and the de jure equality for women is transformed into de facto equality. More emphasis now needs to be shifted towards strict enforcement and implementation of these laws.

There gulf between 1999 and 2011 is 12 years long. Something must have happened during these twelve years which led to the Parliament’s change of heart towards women’s rights issues; and something must have happened even before these 12 years and even so on prior to that. Things usually get clearer if seen in historical perspective because what happened on 12 December 2011 did not transpire in one day or a single year. There was a build-up of events to this momentous occasion, and it has a history of continuous efforts by women’s rights movement and women in political parties for several decades.

Women in political parties and in successive governments always undertook bold initiatives. They faced enormous challenges and tough resistance from various quarters whenever they tried to make some legislative contribution in legislatures. Women’s rights activists have been waging a glorious struggle for realization of women’s equal status and rights in society since long through agitation on streets, research and advocacy and through extensive lobbying with decision-makers and legislators.

Past seven years (2004-2011) are monumental in the context of legislative upsurge on crucial women’s rights issues. This is unprecedented in Pakistan’s legislative history that seven progressive and positive laws to cover specific areas of women’s lives came in during just seven years. After a legislative drought for almost 28 years the breakthrough was made through the enactment of law on ‘honour’ killings in 2004; in 2006, came the Protection of Women, Act, amending two Hudood Ordinances; in 2009, the DVB was passed by the National Assembly (since it lapsed and could not become law so far, therefore it has not been counted in the tally); in 2010, two laws came in on preventing and criminalizing the offence of sexual harassment of women and; in the present year, 2011, came these three laws - on customary practices, acid attacks and women in distress.

There is no denying the fact that some of these, and may be all of these laws, have shortcomings - some of which are of serious nature - but, these can be and must be removed and reformed in future. Several precedents are available in this regard, e.g. the Section 310A, which was inserted in 2004 in the Criminal law (Amendment), 2004, has been substantially improved in the Prevention of Anti-Women Practices Act, 2011.

It is necessary to connect the present success with the efforts and successes made in the past for clarity of perspectives and vision. We will focus on recording of major events with brief comments in the next columns, which we believe, had a great impact on bringing about present development.

MFLO 1961
The first and major progressive legislation on women in Pakistan was the promulgation of Muslim Family Laws Ordinance (MFLO) in 1961. The MFLO was based on the recommendations of the Commission on Marriage and Family Laws, set up in 1955. The recommendations were accepted in a diluted form. The primary aim of MFLO was to discourage polygamy and regulate divorce. The law also ensured the right of inheritance of grand children (the relevant section was struck down by the Federal Shariat Court in a judgment in 2000. The
Seven pro-women laws in seven years

From Page 1

Major laws concerning women: at a glance

- The Guardians and Wards Act, 1890
- The Foreign Marriages Act, 1903
- Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929
- The Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, 1939
- The Muslim Family Laws Ordinance, 1961
- West Pakistan Rules Under The Muslim Family Laws Ordinance, 1961
- West Pakistan Family Court Act, 1964
- West Pakistan Family Court Rules, 1965
- Dowry and Bridal Gifts (Restriction) Act, 1976
- Dowry and Bridal Gifts (Restriction) Rules, 1976
- The Hudood Ordinances, 1979
- Qanun-e-Shahadat Order, 1984 (Law of Evidence)
- The Pakistan Citizenship Act, 1951, partially amended in 2001
- Amendments in Family Courts Act for khula etc. in 2002.
- The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2004 (on 'honour' crimes)
- Protection of Women (Criminal Laws Amendment) Act, 2006
- Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2010 (on sexual harassment)
- The Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010
- The Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention Act, 2010
- The Women in Distress and Detention Fund (Amendment) Act, 2011

From 1999 to 2002

There was no Parliament from 1999 to 2002, after the overthrow of Nawaz Sharif's elected government by Chief of Army Staff General Pervez Musharraf. Constitution was also held in abeyance. General elections were held in 2002 and the 12th National Assembly came into existence. The Pakistan Citizenship Act, 1951, was partially amended enabling children of Pakistani women to citizenship in 2001, but their foreign spouse were still barred from acquiring Pakistani citizenship. Amendments in Family Courts Act were also made in 2002 to ensure that women get 'khula' within a specified time-period.

Restoration and enhancement of reserved seats for women in national and provincial assemblies and the Senate was the landmark event during this period; 17% seats were reserved for these assemblies; 33% seats for women were reserved in the local government system. This may be noted here that the reservation of seats for women was a constitutional provision in the 1973 Constitution which lapsed with the general elections in 1988. As a result of this affirmative action measure in 2002, thousands of women were elected at the local level and the proportion of representation of women in national and provincial assemblies rose to nearly 20% changing the overall complexion of Pakistan's elected Houses. The first significant step in breaking the glass ceiling and achieving a critical mass of women's political representation had been taken with a long-lasting impact.

From 2002 to 2007

The foundation of the new wave of gender-based legislation was laid down primarily by women parliamentarians in the 12th National Assembly, the Senate and the four provincial assemblies with the complete support of women's rights and human rights organizations, including Aurat Foundation, WAF, HRCP, SAPPK, AGHS, Shirkat Gah, SPO, SDPI, Sungi and PILER. The centre-stage, however, was managed and run by women legislators and political parties. Several prominent male supporters in their respective parties were also supporting them, in addition to the National Commission on the Status of Women which had also been set up in 2000. The performance of women legislators in the 12th National Assembly was amazing. Though a majority of their legislative efforts did not succeed, these were important because they, in fact, led to the results being witnessed today.

The records of the 12th National Assembly show that Ms. Sherry Rehman (PPP) and others from her party moved the only Private Members Bill in 2003 titled 'The Protection and Empowerment of Women Bill, 2003'; in 2004, Ms. Sherry Rehman also moved a bill on addressing the issue of 'honour' killings. But, meanwhile, an official bill on ending 'honour' killing was moved in the House, on 30 July, 2004. The bill, on which Ms. Nilofer Bakhtiar, Advisor to PM on Women's Development was working for quite some time in collaboration with Aurat Foundation did not have both the provisions on Qisas and compensation, which were part of the private bill as well as the draft bill which was prepared by Ms. Shahla Zia (late). However, since the author of this article was privy to the efforts being made in this regard, it could be said that Ms. Nilofer Bakhtiar, Ms. Mehnaz Rafi and Ms. Kashmala Tariq, who were again the ruling party (PML-Q) tried their best even till the last moment to get both these positive amendments incorporated in the bill. They failed due to strong resistance from some quarters in the government and party. The official bill was passed by the National Assembly on 26 October 2004.


In 2005, general focus has been to legisl ate for uplifting women's status and ending grave discriminations against women.
Seven pro-women laws in seven years

From Page 2


In 2006, the fourth year, the National Assembly passed the official bill "The Protection of Women (Criminal Laws Amendment) Bill, 2006, moved by the government on 21 August 2006, PPPP, MQM and ANP supported the bill, MMA (an alliance of six religious parties) opposed it and the PML-N abstained from the voting. The bill drastically amended two of the Hudood Ordinances, the Zina and Qaf Ordinances. Some of its salient features were that it separated the Hadd and Tazir offences/punishments; rape (zina-bil-jabir) was separated from forcible-marriage/adultery and shifted to the PPC from the Zina Ordinance; the offence of fornication (all sex outside marriage) was inserted in the PPC as separate sections (496B & 496C) with imprisonment up to five years and fine up to ten thousand rupees; procedure for complaint of zina & qaf changed; and simultaneous imposition of Qazi made possible.

During the same year (2006) Ms. Mehnaz Rafi also moved a bill "the Offence of Qazf (Enforcement of Hadd) (Amendment) Bill, 2006", to reform the Qazf Ordinance. In the meantime, Ms. Kashmala Tariq brought another bill to further reform the Hudood Ordinance through her bill titled 'the Offence of Zina (Enforcement of Hadd) (Amendment) Bill, 2006'. Two bills on Muslim family laws namely, "the Muslim Family Law (Amendment) Bill, 2006", by Aisha Munawar and Ms. Inayat Begum (MMA) were moved in the fourth year; and one with the same title was moved by Ms. Rubina Shaheen Wattoo. Ms. Shakela Khanam Rasheed (PPP) also moved an important bill called "the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) (Amendment) Bill, 2006" in 2006. The last and the fifth parliamentary year (2007) proved to be Senate could make only two laws for women during its tenure, which were the law on 'honour' killings in 2004 and the Protection of Women Act in 2006.

From 2008 to 2012

General elections were held in 2008. But, there was no going back to the momentum created by the previous National Assembly. Aurat Foundation, UNIFEM and Ministry of Women's National Assembly by Ms. Yasmeen Rehman (MNA PPPP as a private member) in the first half of 2008. Aurat Foundation and UNIFEM succeeded in merging their versions into one draft through a consultative process. This draft was further discussed and shared with different stakeholders by a team of Aurat Foundation led by Ms. Malihah Zia and; finally handed it over to the MoWD. Since, by then the fourth DVB had been tabled in the National Assembly, the Standing Committee of the National Assembly on Women Development under its Chairperson Ms. Bushra Gohar (MNA ANP) performed the task of further consultation through a sub-committee headed by Dr. Attiya Inayatullah (MNA PML-Q). This committee developed the final version. The National Assembly made history on 4 August 2009 by passing the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Bill 2009 of Ms. Yasmeen Rehman. Unfortunately, this bill got lapsed in the Senate and nothing could be done to save it due to changes in the legislative process after the 18th Constitutional Amendment. A recent initiative by the NCSW has created new hopes of the passage of a new reformed version of the DVB. In the meanwhile, women legislators in collaboration with the NCSW and Aurat Foundation are making efforts to introduce comprehensive legislation on domestic violence in provincial legislatures which hopefully will bear fruit soon.

In 2010, came two laws to curb sexual harassment against women as official bills. The first one is Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2010, which makes amendment in section 509 of the PPC relating to the sexual harassment of women at workplace. This is a good piece of legislation. The Act defines the offence of sexual harassment and says that the offence "shall be punished with imprisonment which may extend to three years or a fine up to five hundred thousand rupees or with both". The other, more comprehensive law titled "The Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace, Act, 2010". This is the main and comprehensive law to address the issue of sexual harassment of women at workplace. AASHA, a civil society coalition must be credited and appreciated for its dedication and pursuance to take the bill to its final stages and get it passed. Ms. Sherry Rehman, who was holding the portfolio of Information Minister at that time made special efforts to hold two broad-based consultative meetings of various stakeholders to have input and feedback on the bill. Aurat Foundation was part of these consultation meetings and it was the suggestion of setting up the institution of Federal Ombudswoman under the Act came from one of its representative. This bill was passed by the National Assembly on 22 January

Continued on next Page
Seven pro-women laws: some concluding observations

Women legislators have demonstrated and proved that they could be good politicians and parliamentarians. The study of activities of women parliamentarians in the 12th National Assembly elaborated above reveals that women MPs did move bills on the issues of inheritance, marriage with Quran, citizenship rights, uplifting women's status and ending injustice and discriminations against them and even on custodial practices of women and swara. They had also moved bills to reform Hudood Ordinances and the MFLO.

Inspired by the vision of Shaheen Benazir Bhutto, the decision of Pakistan People’s Party to nominate Dr. Fehmida Mirza as Speaker of National Assembly, and Begum Shahnaz Wazir Ali as Advisor to PM on Social Sector, contributed immensely in promoting women-friendly and gender-sensitive political culture. The appointment of several women ministers at the federal and provincial level further contributed to strengthening women’s political base. Appointment of the first-ever woman minister in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by the ANP government and election of a woman Deputy Speaker in Sindh Provincial Assembly were also measures in the same positive direction.

Several key institutions are in place and active: Women’s Parliamentary Caucus is undertaking pro-active measures, and it has been able to bring together women parliamentarians across parties, like Ms. Nafisa Shah from PPP, Begum Ishrat Asif and Begum Nazhat Sadiq from PML-N and Ms. Bushra Gohar from ANP.

Standing Committees are more cognizant of their role and are also more active than before. Ministry of Human Rights is pro-active. Pakistan has ratified important international human rights treaties during the last two years, which were long overdue.

The NCWS which took the lead to reform laws concerning women under its first chairperson Justice (Retd.) Majida Rizvi, remained vibrant during Syeda Arifa Zehra’s tenure and; is currently writing history by undertaking several legislative initiatives and attaining full autonomy for itself under the dynamic leadership of Ms. Anis Haroon, who is one of the pioneers of women’s rights movement in Pakistan.

Public representatives sitting in the Parliament from various political parties are aware of the surrounding climate. The unanimity shown by the Parliament on more than one occasion in passing a number of pro-women laws mean that the law-makers are inclined to pay attention to women’s concerns. They are hearing all kinds of demands by their constituents for change in social relationships and perhaps they are trying to respond to the changing trends and emerging realities in society, where everyone is demanding equality and justice.

Perhaps, this is a season of local, as well as, global high tide of gender equality in the ocean of human progress - a new historical wave? And perhaps the era of ‘legal tyranny’ which began with the promulgation of discriminatory laws against women by dictator Ziaul Haq is finally coming to an end!

Policy and Institutional Measures

Several landmark developments to accord policy and institutional framework to women’s rights and empowerment have occurred and followed the pro-women legislation referred to in this discussion, mainly during the last two decades. Briefly these are: setting up of First Women Bank in 1989 and women police stations in 1994; launching the ambitious Lady Health Workers Programme in 1994; setting up of Commission of Inquiry for Women in 1994 and launching of its Report in 1997; ratification of CEDAW in 1996; launching of National Policy for Women in 1998; establishment of 25 crisis centres for women survivors of violence since 1997 to 2008; establishment of a permanent National Commission on the Status of Women in 2000; launching of National Policy for Development and Empowerment for Women in 2002; introduction of 33% reserved seats for women in local councils and 17% quota of reserved seats for women in national and provincial legislatures in 2000 and 2002, respectively; launching of Gender Reforms Action Plan (GRAP) in 2005; launching of Benazir Income Support Programme, with women as primary beneficiaries, in 2008. Also in 2008, the country’s Women’s Parliamentary Caucus (WPC) was formed in the Federal Parliament. In 2008, the full-fledged Ministry of Human Rights was established giving a new and holistic human rights perspective and an empowering structures and institutions.

—the author is associated with Aurat Foundation
16 Days of Activism to End Violence against Women observed with rallies, performances and vigils

KARACHI: Aurat Foundation Karachi team organized an ‘art and cultural’ event to mark the 16 Days of Activism.

The event was organized on December 9, 2011, at the Mumtaz Mirza Auditorium, Karachi. The poets invited highlighted key gender issues faced by women in society including violence. A folk band ‘Marval’, led by a young female singer Marval Murk from flood-affected district Sanghar, sang the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitta and other sufis poets. The band was. The event was chaired by famous poet Ms Fahmida Riaz. Other poets included Azra Abbas, Nasim Syed, Fatima Hassan, Tanvir Anjum, Sadia Hareem and Attiya Daud.

HARIPUR: Aurat Foundation’s Peshawar office ended the 16 Days of Activism by organizing a rally in Haripur to demand of the Senators to pass the Anti-Women Practices bill in the Senate when it is tabled there. The rally, held on the Human Rights Day i.e. 10th December, 2011, was joined by hundreds of local community members, mostly women, human rights and political activists. The rally started from Zafar Park and ended at Ayub Park after marching through different city roads. The rally was addressed by Naeem Mirza, Chief Operating Officer of Aurat Foundation, Shabina Ayaz, Resident Director, Aurat Foundation’s Peshawar office. Rabia Waqar from NCA and others. The participants or the rally asked the Senate of Pakistan to pass the bill already approved by the National Assembly to protect women from the negative customs and traditions. The participants were carrying banners inscribed with slogans that urged the Senators to play their role and endorse the bill, which had declared customary practices of swara, wani, forced marriages, their marriage with Quran and disinheritance of women illegal.

ISLAMABAD: Aurat Foundation Islamabad office organized Aurat Yakjehti Mela in honour of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on November 25, 2011, at the Lok Virsa Heritage Museum under the auspices of Gender Equity Program. The mela was one in a series of events that were held to launch the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence. The 16 Days campaign begins on November 25 each year and ends on December 10, the International Human Rights Day.

“We all, men and women, need to take an active role in addressing and preventing violence, changing gender attitudes, and increasing the commitment by community and government leaders on the issue”, said Dr. Andrew Sisson, Director of USAID Mission in Pakistan addressing participants of the event. Anis Haroon, the chairperson of National Commission for the Status of Women, highlighted the need to challenge militarism and end violence against women by bringing together women’s rights, peace and human rights movements. Naeem Mirza, Chief Operating Officer of the Aurat Foundation, discussed the Prevention of Anti-women Practices Act 2011, which criminalizes violent and discriminatory practices against women and girls and was recently passed by the national assembly. Simi Kamal, the Chief of Party for the USAID-funded Gender Equity Program, outlined the strategy that the program adopted to combat gender based violence. Black Box Sounds presented a USAID-funded media campaign that will highlight stories of struggle and courage of working Pakistani women through different TV, radio channels, and newspapers. Renowned artist Feryal Gauhar made a theatrical performance, titled ‘Khali Kamra’ (empty room).

QUETTA: On 25th of November 2011, Aurat Foundation, in collaboration with Balochistan Gender Network (network of different organizations in Balochistan) held an event to highlight the significance of 16 Days of Activism. Event was embedded with informative sessions, documentaries, stage performances, and candle light vigil, all sending strong message to stop violence against women.
The World's Women 2010: Trends and Statistics

The World's Women 2010 report, prepared by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat and the Statistics Division, presents and analyses world-wide statistics on the status of women and highlights the differences between the status of women and men in various areas of contemporary life.

This is a 255-page comprehensive and representative report of its own nature presenting unique and valuable data on the situation of women globally in eight key areas of human life. We are reproducing below the message of the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, along with "Key Findings" verbatim as presented in the beginning of each chapter of the report with the acknowledgement of the strenuous and committed effort made by the United Nations' team of researchers and writers.

The report is available on the website of the United Nations. — Editor Legislative Watch

Message from the Secretary-General

The United Nations occupies a unique position as a global storehouse of statistical information on social and economic phenomena. Numerical profiles of women and men and their status in societies are systematically collected, compiled, processed and analyzed, providing an authoritative basis for sound policymaking at all levels - national, regional and international.

The World's Women: Trends and Statistics was first published by the United Nations in 1991. A new edition has been issued every five years since 1995, as called for specifically in the Beijing Platform for Action adopted at that year's landmark Fourth World Conference on Women. With coverage encompassing the full range of issues and concerns, it is the only publication of its kind.

The World's Women 2010 is intended to contribute to the stocktaking being done to mark the fifteenth anniversary of the Beijing Conference. It addresses critical aspects of life: population, families, health, education, work, power and decision-making, violence against women, environment and poverty. It finds that progress in ensuring the equal status of women and men has been made in many areas, including school enrollment, health and economic participation. At the same time, it makes clear that much more needs to be done, in particular to close the gender gap in public life and to prevent the many forms of violence to which women are subjected.

It is my hope that the insights and information contained in the present publication will help Governments, researchers, scholars, non-governmental organizations and concerned citizens around the world in their efforts to ensure that every single woman achieves her full potential.

Ban Ki-Moon

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Population and families

Key findings

- The world's population tripled in the period 1950-2010 to reach almost 7 billion.
- There are approximately 57 million more men than women in the world, yet in most countries there are more women than men.
- There is a "gender spiral", with more boys and men in younger age groups and more women in the older age groups.
- Fertility is steadily declining in all regions of the world, though it still remains high in some regions of Africa.
- Life expectancy is steadily rising, with women living longer than men.
- International migration is increasing. There are more and more women migrants, and in certain areas they outnumber men.
- The age at marriage for women continues to rise - and it remains high for men.
- In family life women overwhelmingly carry the workload, although in some countries the gap has narrowed significantly.

Health

Key findings

- Women live longer than men in all regions.
- Two out of every five deaths of both women and men in Africa are still caused by infectious and parasitic diseases.
- Women are more likely than men to die from cardiovascular diseases, especially in Europe.
- Breast cancer among women and lung cancer among men top the list of new cancer cases globally.
- Women constitute the majority of HIV-positive adults in sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa and the Middle East.
- The vast majority of the over half a million maternal deaths in 2005 occurred in developing countries.
- The proportion of pregnant women receiving prenatal care is on the rise in many regions.
- Despite intensified efforts for reduction, Africa remains the region with the highest child mortality.
- Data reveal no significant disparity in the proportion of underweight girls and boys.

Education

Key findings

- Two thirds of the 774 million adult illiterates worldwide are women - the same proportion for the past 20 years and across most regions.
- The global youth literacy rate has increased to 89 per cent, while the gender gap has declined to 5 percentage points.
- Gaps between girls' and boys' primary enrolment have closed in the majority of countries, but gender parity is still a distant goal for some.

Work

Key findings

- Globally, women's participation in the labour market remained steady in the two decades from 1990 to 2010, whereas that for men declined steadily over the same period; the gender gap in labour force participation remains considerable at all ages except the early adult years.
- Women are predominantly and increasingly employed in the services sector.
- Vulnerable employment - own-account work and contributing family work - is prevalent in many countries in Africa and Asia, especially among women.
- The informal sector is an important source of employment for both women and men in the less developed regions but more so for women.
- Occupational segregation and gender wage gaps continue to persist in all regions.
- Part-time employment is common for women in most of the more developed regions and some less developed regions, and it is increasing almost everywhere for both women and men.
- Women spend at least twice as much time as men on domestic work, and when all work - paid and unpaid - is considered, women work longer hours than men do.
- Half of the countries worldwide meet the new international standard for minimum duration of maternity leave - and two out of five meet the minimum standard for cash benefits - but there is a gap between law and practice, and many groups of women are not covered by legislation.

Power and decision-making

Key findings

- Becoming the Head of State or Head of Government remains elusive for women, with only 14 women in the world currently holding either position.
- In just 23 countries do women comprise a critical mass - over 30 per cent of the population.
- While secondary school enrolments show improvement, fewer countries are near gender parity than for primary education.
- In tertiary enrolment, men's dominance has been reversed globally and gender disparities favour women, except in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern and Western Asia.
- Women in tertiary education are significantly underrepresented in the fields of science and engineering; however, they remain predominant in education, health and welfare, social sciences, and humanities and arts.
- Worldwide, women account for slightly more than a quarter of all scientific researchers - an increase compared to previous decades but still very far from parity.
- Use of and access to the Internet grew exponentially in the past decade, narrowing the gender digital divide - however, women still do not have the same level of access as men in most countries, whether more or less developed.

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## The World's Women 2010: Trends and Statistics

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- in the lower or single house of their national parliament.
- Worldwide on average only one in six cabinet ministers is a woman.
- Women are highly underrepresented in decision-making positions at local government levels.
- In the private sector, women continue to be severely underrepresented in the top decision-making positions.
- Only 13 of the 500 largest corporations in the world have a female Chief Executive Officer.

### Violence against women

**Key findings**

- Violence against women is a universal phenomenon.
- Women are subjected to different forms of violence - physical, sexual, psychological and economic - both within and outside their homes.
- Rates of women experiencing physical violence at least once in their lifetime vary from several per cent to over 59 per cent depending on where they live.
- Current statistical measurements of violence against women provide a limited source of information, and statistical definitions and classifications require more work and harmonization at the international level.
- Female genital mutilation - the most harmful mass perpetuation of violence against women - shows a slight decline.
- In many regions of the world longstanding customs put considerable pressure on women to accept abuse.

### Environment

**Key findings**

- More than half of rural households and about a quarter of urban households in sub-Saharan Africa lack easy access to sources of drinking water, and most of the burden of water collection falls on women.
- The majority of households in sub-Saharan Africa and in Southern and South-Eastern Asia use solid fuels for cooking on open fires or traditional stoves with no chimney or hood, disproportionately affecting the health of women.
- Fewer women than men participate in high-level decision-making related to the environment.

### Poverty

**Key findings**

- Households of lone mothers with young children are more likely to be poor than households of lone fathers with young children.
- Women are more likely to be poor than men when living in one-person households in many countries from both the more developed and the less developed regions.
- Women are overrepresented among the older poor in the more developed regions.
- Existing statutory and customary laws limit women's access to land and other types of property in most countries in Africa and about half the countries in Asia.
- Fewer women than men have cash income in the less developed regions, and a significant proportion of married women have no say in how their cash earnings are spent.
- Married women from the less developed regions do not fully participate in intrahousehold decision-making on spending, particularly in African countries and in poorer households.

### Women MPs demand 10% party tickets on general seats

**Islamabad:** Women Parliamentarians from four provincial assemblies, i.e. Punjab Provincial Assembly, Sindh Provincial Assembly, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial Assembly and Balochistan Provincial Assembly, demanded ten percent mandatory quota of party tickets on general seats, while addressing a press conference at the National Consultation organised by Legislative Watch Programme for Women's Empowerment of Aurat Foundation on November 26-27, 2011.

During the press conference, they read a declaration, which was endorsed after a heated debate among themselves and civil society activists.

The declaration was endorsed by Ms Shehla Raza, Deputy Speaker, Provincial Assembly, Sindh, Dr Ruqiyah Hashmi, Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination, Balochistan, Ms Ghazala Gola, Minister for Women's Development, Balochistan, Ms Heer Soho, MPA (MQM), Sindh, Ms Nusrat Saher Abbasi, MPA (PML-F), Sindh, Ms Humaira Alwani, MPA (PPP), Sindh, Ms Shameela Aslam, MPA (PML-N), Punjab, Ms Faiza Malik, MPA (PPP), Punjab, Ms Amna Butter, MPA (PPP), Ms Deeba Mirza, MPA (PML-N), Punjab, Ms Shazia Tehamas, MPA (PPP), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ms Nargis Samin, MPA (PPP-Sherpao), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Ms Noor-us-Sehar (PPP).

**Ms Shehla Raza, Deputy Speaker, Provincial Assembly, Sindh, and several women legislators from four provincial assemblies (in the front row) addressing the press conference in Islamabad.**

**Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.**

**The Declaration reads:**

“We, Women Parliamentarians from Provincial Assemblies of Balochistan, Khyber PakhtunKwa, Sindh and Punjab and representatives of civil society organizations re-affirm our commitment to protect and preserve the provision of reserved seats in the Constitution for women in the National Assembly, Senate and the Provincial Assemblies.

We, Women Parliamentarians, would also like to demand that political parties develop consensus among themselves to amend the Political Parties Act so as to provide mandatory quota of 10 per cent of general seats to women to mainstream them in electoral processes before the next elections, in addition to the already available reserved seats for women.

We believe that the provision of the Reserved Seats for women is the Constitutional right of women of Pakistan under Articles 25, 34, 51 and 106, e.g. Article 25 (3) states: "Nothing in this Article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for the protection of women and children.

We believe that women parliamentarians role in Assemblies helps to initiate debates on issues of women's empowerment both within and outside legislatures, and eventually, lead to their playing a key role in law-making on crucial issues which concern women and citizens of Pakistan.

We must acknowledge that all important legislation (laws/Bills on 'honour' killings, Women's Protection Act, Protection of Women from Harassment at Workplace, Domestic Violence Bill, Acid Control and Acid Crimes Prevention Bill and recently passed Prevention of Anti-Women Practices Bill) which had been carried out in the Parliament for the last nine years would have not possible without the initiatives and consistent efforts of women parliamentarians across political parties.

We would also like to reiterate the commitment made by the Women's Parliamentary Caucus at a Roundtable on 29 September 2011, that "we further commit to enhance and strengthen women's representation in legislatures by working within our respective political parties and elected representatives and examining how the systems of nominations to the reserved seats could be made more democratic and transparent; and that women are represented at all levels of decision-making in political forums".—Staff Report
 Senators asked to pass the Anti-Women Practices Bill

QUETTA: Aurat Foundation’s Quetta office team organized a provincial consultation to celebrate and share the passage of ‘Prevention of Anti-Women Practices (Criminal Law Amendment) Bill, 2011’ and devise strategy to influence the Senators, with the help of women parliamentarians, politicians and civil society, for the passage of the Act from the Senate too. The participants included members of Balochistan Assembly, representatives of civil society organizations, lawyers, political and social activists and media persons.

Justice (R) Vishwarnath Kohli, member National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) shared the main points of the bill and suggested some major amendments. Ms Husn Bano, MPA (JUI) and Advisor to the Chief Minister, and Ms Zarina Zehri, PMA

UNSCR 1325 and highlighted the role of women in peace building process. Nisar Alam, Coordinator Child Protection Project (CPP), also spoke on the occasion.

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LABOUR: Ms Nigar Ahmed, Executive Director of Aurat Foundation, along with the members of Joint Action Committee, at the candle light vigil to condemn the NATO forces attack on Pakistani forces. The vigil was organized on Tuesday, November 29, 2011.

GEP scoping studies launched

Gender Equity Programme (GEP) organized an event in collaboration with the Applied Economics Research Centre (AERC) at the University of Karachi on 22nd November, 2011 to launch the scoping desk studies. The scoping desk studies and three key research thrusts included: i) primary research studies covering gender-based violence, ii) a national baseline study for GEP and iii) policy research studies.

The launch event commenced with the screening of GEP Documentary ‘Main Safar Main Hoon’. Ms Mahnaz Rahman, Resident Director, AF Karachi Office gave the introductory remarks. Muneezeh Saeed Khan, Sr. Program Officer (M&E), AF presented the findings of Scoping Studies & Upcoming Research under GEP and Ms Shahida Sajid Ali, Program Officer (CB) AF, facilitated the event. The key note speakers were Dr Nuzhat Ahmad, Director, Applied Economics Research Centre - AERC, University of Karachi and Dr Aliya, Lecturer, Centre of Excellence for Women’s Studies - CEWS, University of Karachi.

The Chief Guest of the event was Ms Tauqeer Fatimah Bhutto, Minister for Women Development. Ms Simi Kamal, Chief of Party - GEP, Aurat Foundation and Ms BushraJaffer, Deputy Chief of Party-GEP, Asia Foundation were also present at the event.

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Men brifed on women’s role in peace

SWAT: Women Peace Programme team of Aurata Foundation Peshawar office organized an awareness raising meeting at the Child Protection Centre (CPC), Asharay, Tehsil Matta, Swat, on November 25, 2011.

This activity was arranged for the men from community. Participants included people from different walks of life including elders, religious scholars, CPC members and other community members from different villages.

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ISLAMABAD: The Insani Haqooq Ittehad (IHI), a network of human rights organizations and activists organized a candle-light vigil in Islamabad, on Tuesday, November 29, 2011, to protest the killings of 26 Pakistani soldiers in an unprovoked attack by NATO forces at a Pakistani check post in Mohmand Agency on November 26, 2011. IH members termed it an act of aggression and a violation of international human rights standards which neither serves peace nor diplomatic relations. They also condemned and deplored the violence by militants that has resulted in the loss of over 30,000 innocent lives of Pakistani civilians and the ongoing attacks on schools and markets.

Nisar Alam briefing the participants on women’s role in peace

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Members of Insani Haqooq Ittehad chanting slogans against NATO aggression in Islamabad.

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