



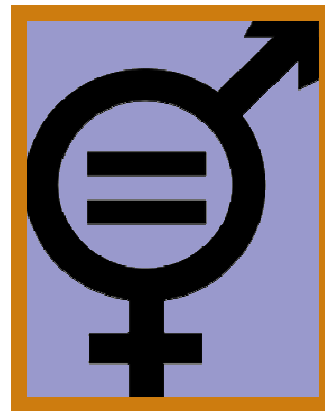
National Commission on the Status of Women

Editorial

Welcome to the first issue of the National Commission on the Status of Women's Newsletter. This issue attempts to report and highlight the activities and achievements during the period between March to December, 2009 .

Let me begin by thanking all of you who have made contributions to the Commission. My special thanks go to GRAP, The Asia Foundation, UNIFEM and the ADB for supporting NCSW financially and technically to enable and strengthen it to achieve its goal. These partnerships demonstrate that much can be achieved when people come together; from different walks of life with a common purpose and share their knowledge and resources.

Women, their rights and status have always been the subject of debate, whether we look at history or at the present. Passing through various hurdles and achieving milestones, the struggle has reached a point in time where it has finally come to be accepted as a mainstream issue. As a result, today we see institutes and organizations emerging at government and non-governmental level



that are focusing on women's issues as priority issues, and are raising their voice to promote women's rights as human rights. A certain segment of our society has dubbed the women's struggle and movement as a "western agenda" linked directly to western "feminist campaigns", denying that it has ever been "our" issue. They ignore the fact that this struggle is part of the larger struggle for Human Rights that are being violated so frequently at every level in our society. It is

time that we address this issue as our utmost priority, if we want a society that is peaceful and violence free.

Anis Haroon

Chairperson

"They say that time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself"

Andy Warhol

Introducing NCSW

The National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) is a statutory body that was established under Ordinance XXVI in 2000. According to the Ordinance, the NCSW consists of a Chairperson and not less than ten and not more than twenty members. The majority of the members are women, including religious minorities, representing the four provinces, Gilgit-Baltistan, Islamabad Capital Territory, Federally Administered Tribal Areas and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. There are also three ex-officio members, from the Ministries of Finance, Interior and Law and Justice, and one Ex-officio Member/Secretary from the Ministry of Women Development.

What it Does

The NCSW has been set up for the emancipation of women, providing equal opportunities to them in all the fields of socio-economic development and elimination of all forms of discrimination against women .

The mandate of the Commission is to examine the policy, programs and other measures taken by the Government for women's development and gender equality, to assess their implementation, and make suitable recommendations to the concerned authorities where considered necessary for effective impact.

The Commission is also mandated to review all laws, rules and regulations affecting the status and rights of women, and suggest the repeal, amendment or new legislation needed to eliminate discrimination, safeguard and promote the interest of women, and achieve gender equality in accordance with the Constitution and obligations under international covenants and commitments;

The Commission monitors the mechanism and institutional procedures to redress violation of women's rights and individual grievances, and facilities for social care, and suggest initiatives for better management and efficient provision of social and economic justice.

The Commission encourages and sponsors research to generate information, analysis and studies relating to women and gender issues to provide information and awareness for rational policy and strategic action.

The Commission also develops and maintains interaction and dialogue with non-governmental organizations, experts and individuals in society, and maintains an active association with similar commissions and institutions in other countries for collaboration and action to achieve gender equality and development at the national, regional and international level.

Chairpersons

Dr. Shaheen Sardar Ali

(1-9-2000 – 22-7-2001)

Dr. Faqir Hussain (Acting Chairperson)

(23-7-2001– 6-3-2007)

Justice (Rtd.) Majida Rizvi

(7-3-2002 – 7-3-2005)

Dr. Arfa Syeda Zehra

(2-1-2006 – 24-3-2009)

Ms. Anis Haroon

25-3-2009 – till to date

SAUT-E-NISWAN

Organizational set-up:

Chairperson



Members



Secretariat

Profile of Chairperson:

Ms Anis Haroon

Ms. Anis Haroon has a rich and varied experience in working for women's rights and human rights. She has a Masters in International Relations and an L.L.B from Karachi University. She started her career as a teacher. Later she joined *Akhbar-e-khawateen* in 1970 as an Assistant Editor. She was selected by the UN to attend the International Family Planning Conference in Bucharest, Romania, in 1974. She also represented Pakistan at the RCD Journalists conference in Ankara.

She worked as reporter/feature writer in a daily newspaper "The Leader", Karachi and she has been working with women awareness programs since 1979.

She has written many articles on women's rights, and legal, social and Political Issues. Anis Haroon joined Aurat Foundation as Resident Director in 1990 and played a



key role in providing relief to victims of violence, especially saving lives of women who were in danger of being killed under the cruel custom of Karo-Kari.

She is a founder Member and Secretary General of Pakistan Chapter for Pak India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy, Pakistan Association for Mental Health and Pakistan Women Lawyers Association.

She remained president of Aurat Foundation from 1994 to 2004.

Anis Haroon has also served as Secretary General of the Board of South Asia Partnership International and as Consultant and Member National Committee of Aurat Foundation on the 'Legislative Watch' and 'Political Education' programs.

In 2000 she published a book titled "**Dard-ke-Rishtay**" based on true stories of women victims of violence.

Others Members of the Commission are:

- Ms Ali Begum
- Ms Bushra Ali Zulqarnain
- Ms Charmine Hidayatullah
- Dr.Fouzia Saeed
- Mr Jami Chandio
- Ms Khawar Mumtaz
- Ms Misbah Momin
- Ms Nasreen Azhar
- Ms Noor-ul-Ain
- Ms Rashida Anwar
- Ms Romana Tanvir
- Ms Rukhsana Ahmad Ali
- Mrs Ratna Bhawandas Chawla
- Director General, Ministry of Women Development
- Secretary, Interior Division
- Secretary, Law and Justice Division

Autonomy of the Commission

Interview with Commission member Ms. Nasreen Azhar on constraints being faced by NCSW

The National Commission on the Status of Women was established to act as the conscience of the government to monitor women's rights. The women's movement and society at large expect that the Commission will play an effective role in mitigating the many injustices and excesses that the women of the country face, but, as matters stand, the responsibility given to the Commission is not matched with adequate support and authority. A review of the past nine years clearly indicates that the Commission is severely handicapped because of the existing administrative and financial arrangements. The Commission is expected to function as a watchdog body within the government system, but inherent flaws in the relevant Ordinance make this virtually impossible. To understand the constraints being faced by the Commission because of its current status, the Communications Section interviewed senior women's rights activist and Board member, Ms. Nasreen Azhar.



Why is the NCSW seeking autonomy?

The mandate given to the National Commission on the Status of Women entails reviewing laws, policies and mechanisms from a gender perspective. In order to do that, to study the existing mechanisms, structures, procedures and practices that hinder gender equality within society, and more particularly, within the government machinery, it is necessary that the NCSW should be able to operate independently of other government departments.

Under the present arrangement the Ministry of Women's Development has been given the responsibility to provide administrative support and to serve as the Commission's line department. But the past ten years have shown that the existing administrative and financial arrangements have severely hampered the Commission from functioning effectively. It has encountered problems in accessing funds, even those allocated to it; in employing the consultants and staff that it needs to further its work; and faced unforeseen delays in day to day matters.

Can you give any examples?

For example, the Commission's report on the Hudood Ordinances, from which several recommendations were eventually included in the Women's Protection Act passed in 2006, was not forwarded to the then President of the country for three years. And at times salaries have been held up for several months.

What is the reason for these delays?

Some of these can be attributed to the cumbersome bureaucratic procedures that are generally hindering good governance in the country, but also, the nature of the work given to the NCSW is such that the outcomes of any report or activity might not find favour with the existing power structures, and those with vested interest can make it difficult to move forward. In short, the inherent flaws in the relevant ordinance and rules of business make it very difficult, if not virtually impossible, for the Commission to function efficiently and objectively as a watchdog body within the government system. Experience has shown that woman's commissions that have been given administrative and financial autonomy, such as those in South Africa and India, have been the most successful.

Have any measures been taken to achieve an independent status?

As recommended by the Gender Reform Action Plan (GRAP) almost four years ago the NCSW drafted various amendments that needed to be made in the NCSW Ordinance to give it more 'teeth.' And when the present members came on board in March 2009 the amendments were again reviewed by a team of legal and gender experts and forwarded to the Government. The amendments have been endorsed by the Prime Minister and also by the Women's Caucus in the National Assembly, and it is hoped that the NCSW will soon be granted the autonomy that it needs in order to function as an effective body.

Major Activities of the Commission

Lobbying and Advocacy Forums

A. Consultation to Finalize Amendments in the NCSW Ordinance

An exhaustive consultation process has been going on for some four years with legal experts and representatives of civil society to suggest amendments in the NCW Ordinance, so that it can function as an effective body. The new board again initiated this process and the updated amendments have been forwarded to the Government.

The proposed amendments can be seen at www.ncsw.gov.pk

B. Civil Society Consultation on Constitutional Reforms

In order to restore the 1973 Constitution to its original form, the Government of Pakistan has set up a Constitutional Reforms Committee. NCSW utilized the opportunity to organize a Civil Society Consultation on Constitutional Reforms on July 25, 2009 with a focus on rights of women .

Other than specific recommendations, some general suggestions made by participants were:

- Renaming the state the Democratic Republic of Pakistan
- Gender sensitive language in the text of Constitu-

tion to be incorporated.

- Positions, such as President of the country, should also be open for women.
- The text of the constitution was found to be religiously biased. It was suggested to make the text more secular.
- Principles of democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance social justice and good governance should be emphasized as enunciated by Quaid-e-Azam in his speech to the Constituent Assembly on 11 September, 1947.

C. National Conference on “Extremism and its Impact on Society”

NCSW organised a two- day conference in Islamabad on “**Extremism and Its Impact on Society: Implication for Women**” on 18th and 19th August, 2009. The broad themes of the conference were Symbiotic Relations between State and Religion; Patriarchy and Extremism: mobilization of women for extremist causes; and Consequences of Extremism.

Participants included Ms Shahnaz Wazir Ali, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister for the Social Sector; Ms Bushra Gohar, MNA from the Awami National Party and Chairperson Standing Committee on Women’s Development; prominent academicians and human and women’s right activists from across the country. Though much had been said about

the rampant extremism (especially religious extremism), intolerance and violence in the country, its effects on women had not been adequately highlighted before. The purpose of the conference was to examine the causes for retrogressive developments and see that what could be done to address the issue.

major activities continued

D. Celebration of Rural Women's Day

The NCSW observed the Rural Women's day in collaboration with Potohar Organization for Development Advocacy and LOK VIRSA, on October 15, 2009. The objective was to recognize the contribution of rural women to culture and food security. Under the theme of 'Reclaiming the Dignity of Rural Women in Pakistan, a large number of rural women from all parts of the country, participated in the event. The forum provided an opportunity to the rural women to voice their concerns and share their personal experiences. Women from different parts of the country highlighted problems faced by them in their respective areas.



Basic health facilities, adequate training opportunities and access to markets were their basic demands .

Another feature of the event was a panel discussion with representatives from government and the NGO sector. While expressing solidarity with rural women. Participants urged the women to organize themselves in order to fight for their rights.

The panelists suggested that an enabling environment should be provided to women farmers, so that rural women should benefit directly from social security programs. They must have easy access to agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities, appropriate technology and should be given equal treatment in land distribution and agrarian reforms as well as in land resettlement schemes. Three women haris from

E. Commemoration of 16-Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence

To commemorate the 16 days of activism against Gender based Violence, the NCSW organized seminars under various themes in the main cities of Pakistan.

The first forum was held in Muzaffarabad on November 25, and the theme was "Challenges faced by Women". The second forum was held in Lahore on December 2 on "Forced Marriages". The colloquium explored the practice of forced mar-

riages in Pakistan; the position under Islamic law and the Child Marriage Restraint Act 1929.

The third seminar in the series was held in Islamabad on December 9, on "Violence in the Name of Religion and its Impact on Women".

The fourth forum was in Hyderabad on "Killing in the Name of Honor: what needs to be done."



F. Board Meetings

Four meetings of the NCSW Board were held from April to December, 2009.

The first meeting of the newly re-constituted BoD of the Commission, which was 35th meeting of NCSW BoD, was held at the NCSW office on April 15, 2009.

The Chairperson Ms Anis Haroon referred to the flogging of a girl in Swat

and proposed that the Commission may become a party through a lawyer in the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

But even before the first formal meeting, a press conference was held in Karachi on April 6 to condemn the flogging by Taliban in

The activities for the next quarter were proposed and discussed.

It was decided that Board Members Bushra Ali Zulqarnain, will be nominated to the Gender Crime Cell and Romana Tanvir, as focal person for UK/Pakistan Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism. Romana Tanvir was requested to organise a preparatory meeting in this regard.

board meetings continued.....

At the third meeting of the new BoD held on August 19 an update on the GRAP Project was shared and members were updated on activities and developments.

The members expressed their reservations on the penalty clause in the bill on Domestic Violence.

In the next meeting, held in the committee room of NCSW, Islamabad on October 16, the board reviewed a proposal submitted to GRAP and proposed amendments in the ADB project.

The meeting decided that members will form small groups and will re-



view/ hold events on the Blasphemy Law, Child Marriage Law, Criminal Law Amendment Act 2004 and the Inheritance Law within next one month.

Misbah Momin and Khawar Mumtaz members from Lahore, pursued two cases of Violence Against Women, and Romana Tanveer, visited the women's Jail in Multan to know the problems faced by women inside Jail. A report has been submitted to the NCSW office with recommendations.

Members expressed their condolences and sympathies to Member from Balochistan Rukhsana Ahmed Ali for the sad loss of her husband. He was targeted in a sectarian attack and was tragically shot to death in Quetta.

Commission at National and International Fora

The Chairperson Anis Haroon attended a regional conference on "Democracies without Violence: Engendering Politics, Policies and Action" in Dhaka in November, 2009. South Asia Partnership International had organised this three day event, in which representatives from all SAARC countries participated. Pakistan had sent a representative delegation comprising civil society organisations, members of the provincial and national assemblies and the chairperson

NCSW, was asked to read a paper on the situation in the country and also chaired a session.

She also addressed a gathering at which she highlighted the root causes of violence, saying that patriarchy, disempowerment of women, an ineffi-

cient justice system, lack of proper legislation, poverty, unequal access to resources, poor governance, underdevelopment, criminalisation of politics, family structures and the general breakdown of law and order were some of the reasons.

Some excerpts from Anis Haroon's paper are as under :-

"Women's rights can flourish only in democracies. Peace and social justice are so vital for creating a stable society. For women's fullest participation in politics, electoral reforms are badly needed and South Asian countries can share their experiences of good practices. We must all focus on creating an enabling environment for women, and this is possible only when level playing fields are created. Women of South Asia should raise their voices strongly and condemn violence at all forums, from home to the parliament.

Speak up-while you are free to speak

Let no one stifle your voices."

SAUT-E-NISWAN**Commission at national and international fora continued.....**

Raashda Anwer Member Board of Directors, attended a conference in Jakarta, Indonesia, held on 29-30 November. The conference was organised to commemorate 10 Years of Reforms by the National Commission on Violence Against Women (KOMNAS PEREMPUAN).

The KOMNAS PEREMPUAN prepared an integrated report that brought together women's experience of violence in various conflict situations across four decades (1965-2009). The report identified the lessons learnt, the root causes and consequences of violence and set out the way forward.

Raashda Anwer made a presentation about NCSW Pakistan, the

key issues that the Commission was focussing on, its structure, legal status and mandate. Raashda Anwer also attended the Regional Consultation on the Advancement of Women's Rights in the Asia Pacific Region in Jakarta. It was organised by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations Population Fund and Komnas Perempuan, Indonesia's National Commission on Violence Against Women. The meeting was organised to identify capacity needs and possibilities of collaboration between Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN

agencies and specialised women's commissions in the region.

Raashda Anwer facilitated two sessions on "Challenges in Promoting and Protecting the Human Rights of Women at the National level".

She also gave a presentation on the NCSW and challenges faced by the Commission to promote women's rights. She made practical recommendations to strengthen commissions at regional level by sharing resources and establishing sub-offices.

Nasreen Azhar, represented the NCSW in two meetings of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Human Rights. The meetings discussed the draft legislation for establishing a National Human Rights Commission.

Two cases, one of violence against a woman and the other concerning violence against a non-Muslim citizen were also discussed.

She also attended a meeting of the NA Standing Committee on Women's Development in which the CEDAW report

Highlights of Ongoing Projects**UNIFEM**

Public-Private Partnership to "End Honour Crimes in Pakistan" is a project being funded by UNIFEM. The eventual goal is to eliminate harmful traditional practices within the parameters of honour crimes and violence against women through implementation of the Criminal Law Amendment Act 2004. The project is being executed with local partners National Rural Support Programme and Rozan. The National Rural Support Programme is building the capacity and awareness level of key stakeholders, such as lawyers, judiciary, law enforcement agencies, media, community and religious leaders for effective

implementation of this law in the field - the two pilot districts, Rajanpur in Punjab and MirpurKhas in Sindh. Rozan is providing technical trainings for capacity building of the concerned National Rural Support Programme staff.

Benchmark survey of the selected districts has been done to assess the prevalence levels of violence, and awareness level of the community and other key stakeholders. Capacity assessment of key stakeholders is done by conducting interviews and training need assessment.

In the light of the TNA report a training plan has been developed. Local trainers and prospective trainees have been identified. A training of trainers took place in Islamabad and about

twenty trainers were trained.

The NCSW will formulate further policy recommendations through provincial and national interface to improve the implementation potential of the Criminal Law Amendment Act 2004. These provincial and national level interfaces will be held in the first quarter of year 2010.

highlights of ongoing projects continued.....

Asian Development Bank Support

To strengthen the institutional capacity of NCSW on an immediate basis, the Asian Development Bank provided technical support under a project titled "Institutional Strengthening of NCSW".

The objectives are:

- To strengthen the NCSW by undertaking gender related research with a focus on socio economic aspects which directly impact the status of women in terms of employment, policy and legislative requirements, health and education
- To review the Political Parties Order 2000 with a gender lens and propose recommendations for social and political empowerment of women to enhance political participation of women.
- To establish a Resource Centre by setting up a database for information exchange and communication on women related issues. Under the project the research is being conducted on:
 - a) Local Bodies System and its impact on women
 - b) Impact of Women Protection Bill 2006 on women

The Asia Foundation Support

The purpose of this collaboration is to strengthen the protection and promotion of women's rights as human rights. The Foundation is supporting the institutional strengthening of the NCSW through the provision of professional consultants.

These consultants are also supporting the creation of a sustainable internship program at NCSW which attracts bright students interested in working for a specific period at the Commission.

Media & Communications:

Research

A research study was commissioned on the topic of "Women's Perceptions about Religious Extremism/ Talibanisation and Military Operation: Case Study of Malakand Division".

The purpose was to understand the complexity of Taliban's extremist ideological/strategic/ operational paradigms on the basis of people's voices.

Printing and Publication

- The Media and Communication section designed various banners, leaflets, note books, file etc.
- A new NCSW Brochures for different occasions were designed and printed.
- Creative and technical work related to the printing of the annual diary (2010) and the E-newsletter was also undertaken.
- Media coverage of various event that were held by NCSW was ensured.
- It has reorganised contents for official website, arranged interviews of Chairperson with Radio Pakistan and WAQT TV; and prepared press releases of various activities undertaken by the Commission.

The research also highlights perceptions of women living in conflict zones.

During the research, areas including Takht Bhai, Jalala, Shah Mansoor, Jalozai and Salihkhana in districts Swabi, Charsadda, Mardan, Peshawar and Nowshera were visited to collect the data.

The research also focussed on perceptions of the displaced persons, especially women regarding the militant leader Fazlullah's FM Radio in particular and Taliban in general.

The socio-cultural conditions of Swat and Malakand Division in general prior to Talibanisation, was also studied.

Gender Reform Action Plan (GRAP) Support

NCSW is one of the federal implementing partners of GRAP. Interventions entrusted to NCSW are:

Formulation of a phased plan for review and formulation of amendments in laws with special relevance to women;

Formulation of legal framework and legislation for the abolishment of all parallel legal and quasi-legal systems and the strengthening of a uniform inte-

grated judicial system in the country.

Consultants having legal and gender expertise have been hired in the four provinces of Pakistan and Gilgit-Baltistan to study and analyse the following from a gender perspective and propose recommendations for a uniform legal system by bringing necessary amendments in the laws:

- Muslim Family Laws Ordinance, 1961
- Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, 1939
- Guardians and Wards Act 1890
- Jail Manual
- Parallel legal systems
- Child Marriage (Restraint) Act, 1929
- Dowry and Bridal Gifts (Restriction) Act, 1976

Programs and courses on gender around the globe

<http://wgss.richmond.edu/program/upcoming-courses.html>

<http://www.mith2.umd.edu/WomensStudies/Announcements/uea.html>

http://www.uscupstate.edu/academic/arts_sciences/womens_studies/default.aspx?id=2226

<http://www.utdallas.edu/genderstudies/courses.html>

<http://www.wgs.claahs.vt.edu/upcoming.html>

http://www.visthar.org/?page_id=7

<http://www.cavehill.uwi.edu/fhe/gen dev/GenderUGCourses.htm>

http://www.gend.ceu.hu/non_degree.php

<http://www.stanford.edu/~eckert/linguist156/index.html>

http://www.aln.org/publications/jaln/v7n1/v7n1_gunn.asp

<http://www.nwsa.org/about/genderstudies.php>

<http://www.nwsa.org/>

<http://www.stetson.edu/academics/programs/132.php>

<http://www.randolphcollege.edu/x14016.xml>

http://www.coe.edu/academics/genderstudies/genderstudies_curriculum

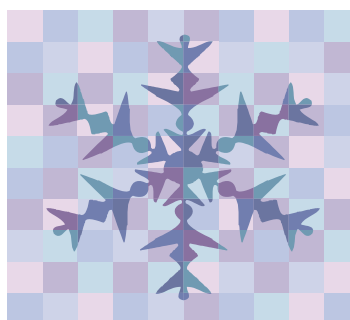
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SAUT-E-NISWAN

Visual Glimpses of Commissions' Activities

