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Women of Pakistan



Breaking the Silence on Feminization of Poverty



http://media1.s-nbcnews.com/jMSNBCComponents/Slideshows_productiontwip-130613ss-130613-twip-10.ss_full.jpg

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Women of Pakistan: Breaking the Silence on Feminization of Poverty



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ing tone and style mars the good intentions that the content may have hoped to convey. Modern media, both print and electronic, fail to highlight the problems most relevant to women, including and in particular rural women, women who are trafficked, women who are compelled to sell their bodies to survive, women without the support of husband or other family, the abused and oppressed, those denied the right to study or work, to make choices and avail opportunities, etc.

As we collected and compiled content for this diary, I was amazed at the prevalence of stereotypical media images of the poor. Although most content was sympathetic and gender neutral in its treatment of the issue it did not help much in giving context to the issues of poverty or highlighting its causes. These aspects of poverty are missing from news and current affairs programmes and articles, from entertainment, from television plays and soaps. The media needs to highlight not only the suffering of the millions of these invisible women and men, but also celebrate and support their resilience and their dignity. Presently, at best we have very few stories/audio or video documentaries that look at poverty in terms of wealth and income distribution only. Coverage of the Benazir Income Support Programme is one such example. Though Uks's Code of Ethics for gender-sensitive media includes a clause on why we should not exhibit welfare work, the media is full of photographs with news/captions of the wealthy and the powerful, business tycoons, politicians or parliamentarians distributing largesse (often from taxpayers money) in the form of cash, cheques, sewing machines etc. The majority of recipients are women and the captions invariably state 'a poor woman receiving...', hitting directly on the self-esteem of the recipient. It is not difficult to gauge the impact such stories have on the public's attitude towards poverty and how 'charity' is all that is needed to cure the ills of poverty.

The media must recognize that there is continued need to analyze not only whose story is told and whose voice is heard but also who is telling the story and how? Today's vibrant, forceful, media, be it print or electronic, have the potential to change mindsets, but to achieve that goal positive content is the first requirement. Simply presenting female commercial sex-workers as evil and a disgrace to society doesn't change anything. The media needs to analyze the causes that lead to women opting for this profession and develop options that are condoned by society. Instead of turning a woman into a social outcast, a positive contribution would be to suggest ways and means by which such a woman

could be assimilated back into society. Many women resort to prostitution in order to survive, feed hungry children or support young siblings. Media, both news and entertainment, need to take into account the fact that gender inequalities directly act as a determinant of poverty, thus understanding the root causes is absolutely a must before passing a judgment. A long, hard look at those who avail of the services of women sex workers would not go amiss.

Pakistan's media needs to understand that feminization of poverty, as defined by researchers 'is a change at levels of poverty biased against women or female-headed households. More specifically, it is an increase in the difference in the levels of poverty among women and men or among female versus male and couple-headed households.' While addressing poverty and gender inequality, the media, be it news or entertainment or advertising, may focus on how the household is a key site of gender discrimination and subordination and is thus an important focus for examining gender and poverty issues. The media can take a lead in finding answers to whether this is a consequence of lack of income, or a result of the gender inequality and biases present in both societies and governments. Hopefully, after going through Uks 2016 diary, they will.

Wishing you all a very happy, peaceful and safe New Year.

Tasneem Ahmar

Director, UKs Research Centre



<http://blogs.dw.com/womentalkonline/files/This-woman-has-set-up-a-food-cart-in-front-of-a-government-office-in-Lahore-By-covering-her-face-she-says-people-will-respe.jpg>

Unacceptable and Unnecessary: the Feminization of Poverty

Tahira Abdullah

It pleased me no end that my friend, fellow activist, and head of Uks, Tasneem Ahmar, readily agreed to my suggestion, way back in July, that the theme of the 2016 Uks diary needed to focus on "The Feminization of Poverty". Thus, while she is primarily a mediaperson and I am not, it is gratifying that we both remain on the same wavelength regarding the importance, topicality and immediacy of the diary theme in any given year.

Even now, it never ceases to amaze me how the influential stratum of Pakistani society, i.e. the opinionmakers, lawmakers, decisionmakers, policymakers, planmakers, programmers, implementers, monitors, evaluators, report-writers and, not least, the media, closely monitoring all the above, can see, hear, touch, smell and feel the Elephant in the Room, but still accept its official and deliberately rendered invisibility without feeling or displaying a sense of outrage.

This Elephant has two faces: (a) Poverty in Pakistan and its alarming increase; and (b) the Feminization of Poverty (FoP) in Pakistan, and its alarming increase.

Because of this seeming "invisibility", successive governments, irrespective of whether led by military dictators (for 34 of our 68-year existence), or by civilian, democratically elected dispensations, have tried to hide the real data on Poverty and the FoP from us. This is lest we get rudely awakened from our comfortable and blissful slumber of ignorance, or start asking difficult questions, or horror of horrors, actually start demanding remedial action.

It is an inconvenient truth that Poverty data has been deliberately withheld from the GoP's annual Pakistan Economic Survey (PES) reports ever since the General Musharraf/Shaukat Aziz-led debacle of 2005-06 – with its fudged data and changed goalposts, and ending with the ridiculous report of the GoP on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs - 2013), particularly the section on Poverty.

Women and girls – comprising 48% of the population – do not deserve to subsist with a 3:1 f/m ratio of poverty in Pakistan. This means that

75% of the poor in Pakistan are women and girls, i.e. only 1 out of every 4 poor Pakistanis is a man or boy. Poverty and hunger have a predominantly female face in the "Islamic" Republic of Pakistan.

This is totally unacceptable, especially at the end of the much-touted MDGs and the start of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2016.

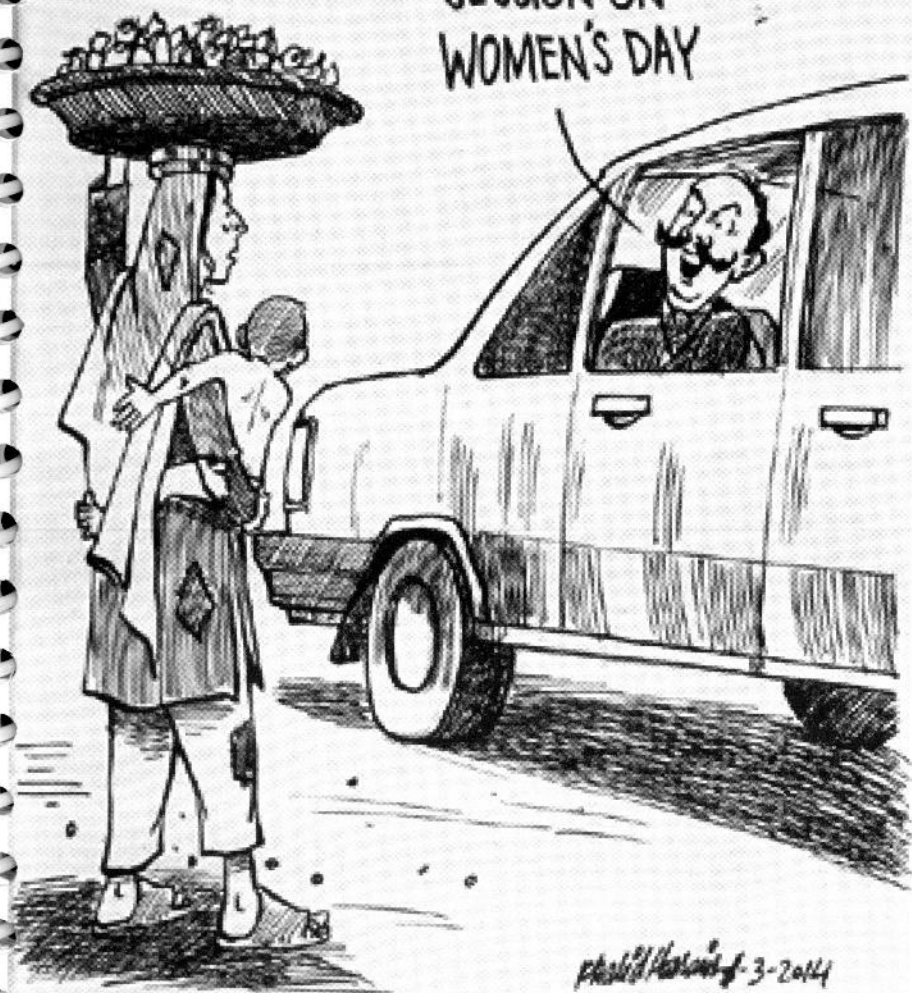
This is also unnecessary. We have the knowledge, the means, and the wherewithal to take both women and men out of poverty – as successive political parties and governments have promised to do, both at international fora, e.g. at the World Summit for Social Development (WSSD, 1995), and at home, via their election manifestos.

The BISP has not and will not do it – it is, at best, a band-aid on a deep wound requiring radical surgery. Meagre charity can give a woman a fish to eat, but it cannot teach her how to fish for herself and how to get herself and her children out of poverty for good. Job creation is urgently required. The official recognition, registration and adequate remuneration of women home-based workers and most importantly, women working in agriculture, livestock, forestry and fisheries, is urgently called for.

The question is: do the legislators and the governments have the political will and commitment to start doing what is urgently needed?



CONGRATULATIONS,
WE ARE GOING TO
HAVE SPECIAL ASSEMBLY
SESSION ON
WOMEN'S DAY



Phil Heston 3-2014

Daily Times — March 1, 2014

How nations fail women

In 1995 when a decisive UN Women's Conference took place in Beijing, most women didn't notice another major and worrying event that took place earlier the very same year – the formation of the World Trade Organization (WTO), an organization not created by the UN but dreamt up and aggressively pushed through by American companies, mostly giant multinational corporations (TNCs), taking the US government on board in mutual backscratching purpose.

The objective of the WTO was to view the entire world as a single economic unit rather than independent sovereign countries, giving rights to anyone to invest and exploit any country, the freedom to sell to and buy from any country irrespective of the countries' balance-of-trade and debt status, enjoy priority treatment and greater rights than citizens even if it violated human and constitutional rights, and generally treat any nation as their happy, hunting ground.

This was a lot easier than colonizing countries which required military force and oppression to subdue the natives while colonists looted to their hearts' content. Under WTO, corporations got country governments to authorize the exploitation. Too many countries became so compromised, bribed and brazen in making their own economies open to free-for-all exploitation, they can no longer be recognized as democracies, whatever they may call themselves.

The TNCs included the corporate food industry, both in food growing and its trade and got governments to view staples as commodities – to be bought and sold to anyone, anywhere, for money. If someone lacked money, they went hungry. Rationing and subsidies for the poor disappeared. That was supposed to be reality, not avoidable criminality. TNCs included foreign investors in every sector including public institutions where profit was not the primary purpose but to provide essential goods or services such as electricity, gas, oil, water and even municipal services that all citizens had rights to. WTO included the global pharmaceutical industry that began to dictate medicines and the privatization of the healthcare sector worldwide. Chemical corporations have managed, among other things, to intervene in agriculture and force most governments to uphold exports above domestic food security.

The Beijing Conference took up '12 critical areas' of concern that listed Women and Poverty, Women and Health, Women and the Economy, Education and Training of women, Violence against women, Human Rights Of Women, Women and Armed Conflict, Women in Power And Decision-Making, Institutional Mechanism For The Advancement Of Women, Women and the Media, Women and the Environment, and The Girl-Child. It's the first six that have to be tackled properly to make the rest possible.

A reasonably good list, but leaving out other critical areas such as women and the local and national Commons, women and global corporatization, women and finance, women and the constitution and parliaments, and some very specific special areas of

concern, namely women's right to land and credit/money for survival and security. Poor landless women, rural or urban, will never be able to realize their rights and needs without access to land.

What did the lists achieve? It enabled researchers, academics and NGOs to focus and flesh out with figures women's current miserable status, not necessarily with doable solutions and intensive advocacy. Unfortunately the list was also over-compartmentalized. In many countries and societies, several areas are intertwined and have to be looked at holistically rather than separately as many problems occur to women concurrently. For example, poverty, health, violence, environment, the economy, and human rights needed to be clubbed together to be viewed in their inseparable interlinkages.

One doesn't have to belabour the poverty of most women. The reasons why and the solutions need to be more drawn out. World Bank did the original damage, first with ill-advised export-orientation of former colonies before people were able to stand on their own feet, and then with the introduction of structural adjustment – deviously pushed by an interim government in Pakistan that did not have the authority to do so, in the early 80s.

What is astounding is that no elected government to date has put a stop to what remains an outrageous violation of human rights – slashing budgets for health, education and other vital areas, using this 'saved' money to repay ill-advised, odious interest-bearing loans. It revealed World Bank and IMF long ago to be cut-throat loan sharks, hardly development banks, worse than any commercial bank. There's no dearth of shocking documentation of the systematic destruction of economies through World Bank/IMF's interventions, no less criminal than the governments they've corrupted. Just because parliamentarians don't read or don't want to know, doesn't mean women do the same.

Among the rural poor, women grow and process, cook and serve most food. But they don't necessarily get to eat what they grow. And they don't really get enough of what they need to eat. They may not be paid for their work, or underpaid, and may have to buy part or all of their food. This situation could be entirely or considerably resolved by rights to land, whether through recognized and declared rights to the commons – community lands – in their respective areas, for growing food collectively; or through usufruct rights to land which once existed in South Asia and many other countries.

The moment women have such access to land, non-transferable and unable to be seized by the husband or other male member, multiple purposes are served. Although an acre for every woman would be ideal, even a quarter-acre would do to give her and her family food security, self-employment, secure shelter (since they would be living on it) — provided rights and protections are upheld by the government. The same could and should apply to urban areas which have been damaged by over-urbanisation and urban sprawl, which have only increased the cost of living rather than over-expanded markets benefiting the consumer. Some countries have already

2016

Feb

Sunday 28

Monday 29

Notes

OPINION

BY FAISAL BARI



Women and work

Can a country afford to under-utilise resources and still perform economically?

AFTER she graduated, Sobia was not allowed to work. She was told that she had to get married. Her parents felt that if she started working, people would feel that the family's economic problems had forced Sobia into it and this would affect her marriage prospects.

But, in the couple of years she waited to be wedded, her parents did allow her to do all sorts of diploma courses so that she could keep busy. She got training as a beautician.

Sobia did get married. She had two children in the first five years. But then her relationship broke down. Her husband became interested in someone else and contracted a second marriage, divorcing Sobia thereafter.

By this time, Sobia's father was no more, so she could not move back to her parents' place. In her late 20s, Sobia was a single mother of two, and had no source of income or physical assets to her name.

Her education and training as a beautician came in handy. She got a job at a local beauty parlour. She rented a couple of rooms near the parlour and shifted there, put her children in school and started working 12-15 hours a day to make enough to survive. Sobia has been working at the parlour for a few years now.

She feels she cannot make more money by continuing to be an employee. She has been investing in her skills by learning whatever she can, on the job, about the beauty parlour business. She feels she could open and manage her own parlour and could do a good job of it. This would give her the opportunity for the growth that she needs, and it would also allow her a higher income — something she desperately needs to improve her standard of living, the quality of education she can provide for her children and for ensuring some build-up of a savings cushion.

She does not have any capital, money or assets she could pledge to raise investment for her parlour. She feels, given her skill level, that the business risk is not too high. She has approached, through some of her contacts, a few banks, for exploring the possibility of a loan. But even for the relatively small loan she needs, she has been told that she needs to offer collateral or get some credible personal guarantees in place before any bank would become interested.

She does not have physical collateral to offer, and her skills/reputation are not considered to be collateral by lenders in Pakistan. She does not have people who could guarantee her loan with their assets or personal guarantee. The typical microcredit loan is just too small to be of any utility.

She is stuck. The job gives her barely enough to manage her household. By the fourth week of every month, she is almost always out of money. She has not had a break from work for a long time as she cannot afford not to work. And even with all this, she has not been able to save anything.

Even the smallest of shocks sends her into a tailspin. When her daughter got chicken pox, the bills from the doctors were significant. More importantly, Sobia had to take a few days off from work. This was not taken well by her employer and her salary was docked for the days she missed. She had to borrow money from a neighbour to make it through that month. And given the lack of slack in her budget, even this small loan took her months to repay. When her son broke his arm and needed surgery, it was a nightmare: a year later, she was still in debt.

Her worst nightmare is a shock that affects her. She has had two children, is in her late 30s now, but she has not been to a doctor for years, even for a normal check-up. She is a bit overweight (has no

time for exercise), eats poorly, has bad teeth (has not been to a dentist in 15-odd years), and is overworked and stressed all the time. How long can her health hold out? What happens if she has to take time off? Or has to spend on her own health? It will spell disaster for the household.

More and more women are getting educated in Pakistan, and some data is indicating that at secondary and even university level women are outperforming men academically. But, at the same time, fewer women are entering the workforce. Female workforce participation, for Pakistan, is estimated in 17-20pc range. Bear in mind the contrast: in Bangladesh, female participation rates are around 40pc.

A lot of children never get the opportunity to go to school in Pakistan. But, even of those who go, and even of the small numbers who are able to proceed to post-secondary level, we are allowing too many of them, mostly women, to not even enter the workforce. Can a country afford to under-utilise resources and potential at this scale and still be able to perform economically?

Access to resources, physical or human, in our economy is based on who you are born to, and what sort of resources your ancestors acquired. If you are a part of the elite, the probability that you will continue to be in the elite is high.

However, if you were one of the masses, it is quite unlikely you will achieve major economic/social mobility. And, instead of opening up, the last two decades seem to have reduced opportunities for mobility even more. If you add the gender angle to this, the story becomes almost tragic: can the Sobias of Pakistan have any hope? ■

The writer is a senior research fellow at the Institute of Development and Economic Alternatives and an associate professor of economics at LUMS, Lahore.

Dawn — March 27, 2015

خواتین کو بااختیار بنانے بغیر غربت کا خاتمہ ناممکن: شمینہ فاضل

پائیدار ترقی کے لئے خواتین پر مرکوز حکمت عملی اپنائی جائے: لبنی شہباز

سے منعقدہ کاروباری خواتین کی ایک نمائش کا افتتاح کرتے ہوئے کہی۔ شمینہ فاضل نے کہا کہ مدد و قرضوں اور تربیت کے بغیر خواتین کے لئے کامیاب کاروبار کرنا مشکل ہے۔ حکومت، این جی او اور شعبہ بینکاری کو معلوم ہونا چاہیے کہ خواتین کو بااختیار بنانے بغیر ملک ترقی نہیں کر سکتا۔ خواتین کو نیٹ ورکنگ، کاروباری منصوبہ بندی، مارکیٹنگ اور مالی ریکارڈ رکھنے اور بینکاری کی مہارت سیکھنے میں مدد کی ضرورت ہے۔

اسلام آباد (آن لائن) اسلام آباد وکون چیمبر کی لبنی صدر شمینہ فاضل نے کہا ہے کہ خواتین کو بااختیار بنانے بغیر غربت، بھوک اور جہالت کا خاتمہ ناممکن ہے۔ مواقع کی کمی برسرِ لاکھوں خواتین کو بے روزگاری کے جہنم میں دھکیل رہی ہیں۔ گھروں کے معاشی معاملات مرد چلاتے ہیں۔ مالی معاملات میں نہ بھجریہ کاری کی وجہ سے خواتین کے کاروبار ناکام ہو جاتے ہیں۔ یہ بات انھوں نے لبنی شہباز اور ڈاکٹر لبنی حسن کی جانب

Nawa-e-Waqt — February 25, 2012

“Poverty has a woman’s Face”



Hajra, Khatija and Sakina: three friends and neighbours living in Karachi’s Lyari area. Hajra lives alone with her three daughters: her husband left her when the youngest child was merely six months old, because she couldn’t give birth to a son. Khatija’s husband is as good as absent: he’s a drug addict. Survival, with a little daughter and a son, is one terrifying day after another. She lives in dread that her son may adopt the same path as his father. Sakina is divorced, without support from her former husband. She continues working to support her children; they’re not yet at the age where they could start earning a living.

Hajra and her friends are just a few of the millions of Pakistani women whose lives are constrained by extreme poverty. Studies, and even just observation, frequently highlight women’s disproportionately high representation among the country’s poor. As Dr Mahbub ul Haq once put it, “Women have been reduced to economic nonentities.”

Globally, poverty remains a challenge: the World Bank estimates that 1.29 billion people live in absolute poverty; the sad fact is that about 70 per cent of them are women. In Pakistan, it is no different, but without a national census, it isn’t even possible to gauge the correct picture. Poverty is difficult to quantify: the methodology used by the government has been challenged by the World Bank and the UNDP, while independent organisations consider poverty to be above 28.3pc.

However, according to the Human Development Index, 2009, 60.3pc of Pakistan’s population lives on \$2 per day. According to Unesco, 71pc of eligible girls did not attend secondary school in 2009. Gender discriminatory practices shape poverty: as

expected, more women are at the suffering end. They suffer poverty of opportunities far more than men. Poverty gives rise to social powerlessness and political disenfranchisement, and these add to the vulnerability of the poor.

The reasons for such high poverty levels are several: corruption, illicit capital flight, debt and loan conditionalities, high defence expenditures, and now, extremism. Those are the general ones.

To quote Tahira Abdullah, "Poverty has a woman's face." Women face the triple burden of child-bearing, child rearing, and domestic unpaid labour; they have been denied opportunities for growth, are without access to adequate healthcare, education or income, and simultaneously forced to live in the tight bind of culture and tradition.

Their poverty is multidimensional; not only of lack of income, but also of nutrition and health; they are denied education and the ability to earn an adequate income, their vulnerability prevents them from advancing their innate capabilities. To add to that, gender biases and patriarchal/misogynist mindsets permeate every aspect of their lives. Living with discrimination and gender-based violence is a daily reality for many.

Poverty levels in the country have crept upwards and are considered to be among the highest in South Asia. Unfortunately, the Planning Commission does not reveal the exact data on female poverty. Women bear the brunt of appallingly high socio-economic disparities; their poverty extends from the small and large denials within the home to the wider denials they experience in the community. Often they're not even recognised as heads of households; their labour in the agricultural sector is largely unremunerated; they remain exploited, deprived of income.

The Economic Survey of Pakistan barely acknowledges their presence and their contribution — the female labour force participation rate is the lowest in the South Asian region. A survey by Yasir Amin (in *Economist*, April 12, 2012) noted that women's contribution to the labour force had actually shrunk from 33pc in 2000 to 21pc in 2011.

The risks of increasing poverty grow in parallel with the number of women-headed households. Single mothers are at highest risk, as are their children, who are likely to be deprived of adequate schooling and nutrition. Like most women, they have no alternative to poorly paid, informal employment.

It is no surprise that women are over-represented among the country's poor; discrimination against them exists at all levels, within the family, with its unequal gendered division of responsibilities and labour, inequality in access to healthcare, to schooling, to social protection. Tradition ordains that their mobility be restricted.

Unsurprisingly, few poor women have hope of escaping this poverty as there are so many odds stacked against them. Despite laws that favour them, even richer women are regularly denied land inheritance by emotional coercion, forced marriage and even by 'marriage' to the Quran.

The current political situation prevailing in the country presents a mixed picture

for women's progress and development. On the one hand, there are several forward-looking laws and amendments, widespread provision of safety nets like the Benazir Income Support Programme and increased school enrolment for girls. On the other hand is the snail's pace at which the bureaucracy moves to implement those laws. Then again, there's society's stubbornly 'eyes shut' attitude to women's rights and progress, the lack of recognition that women's progress requires an acceptance of their constitutionally guaranteed equal status as citizens of this country.

If women are to progress and participate effectively in the economy, they must receive equal education, equal training, in rural and urban sectors and equal dignity and income. Pakistan cannot achieve progress on the efforts of less than half its population.

Hilda Saeed, Dawn — April 14, 2013

'Poverty main cause of girls' early marriage'

By Our Correspondent

NAUSHAHRO FEROZE, Dec 21: About 80 million girls were forced to get married in young age due to poverty in developing countries, playwright Fayaz Kalari said while speaking at a seminar on 'role of women in educating children' on Tuesday.

The seminar was held at

the Women's Elementary College in Moro.

Mr Kalari, Ms Sahibzadi Jaiser, the principal of the college, and a lecturer, S. Naseem Memon, delivered lectures on the topic.

The playwright said that according to a recent survey report women of the Third World felt insecure in respect of their children.

He said that honour killing incidents were taking place in Sindh due to involvement of the feudal class.

The principal of the college and Ms Naseem Memon said that a few women in Sindh despite family and social pressures had decided to play their role to guide their children.

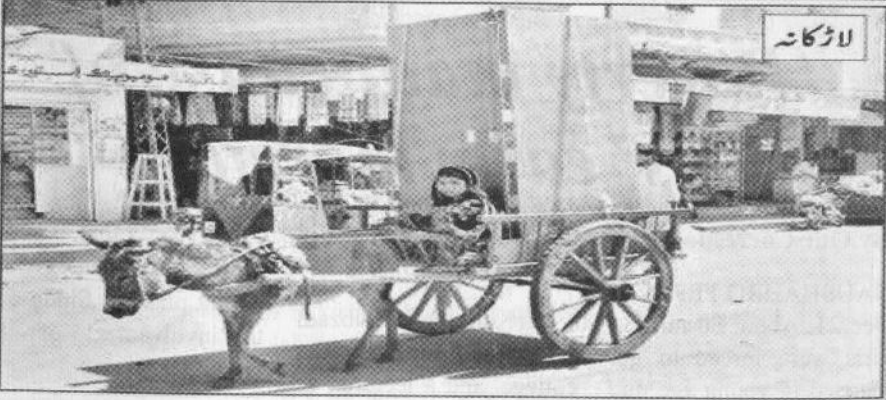
Dawn — December 22, 2005

ملک کی 51 فیصد آبادی خواتین کی زندگی کے مختلف رنگ

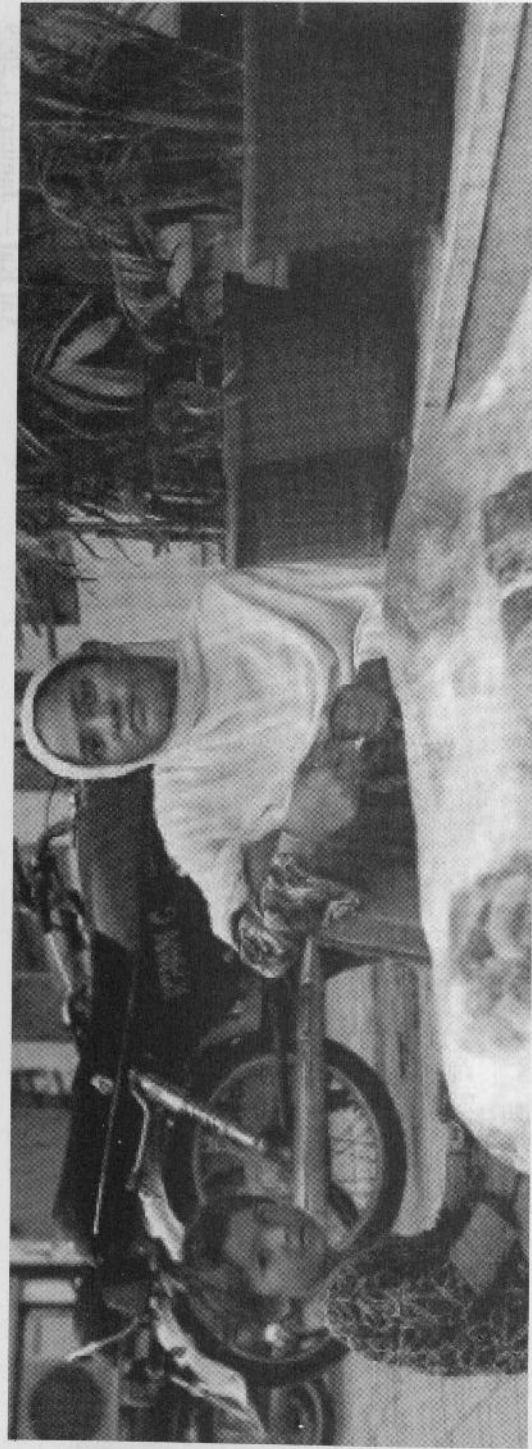
حیدر آباد



لاڈکانہ



پہلی تصویر میں حیدر آباد میں غریب مزدور خواتین اپنے خاندان کی کفالت کے لیے تھکتی دھوپ میں سڑک کی تعمیر سے قبل صفائی میں مصروف ہیں دوسری تصویر میں ایک نوجوان لڑکی لاڈکانہ میں گدھا گاڑی پر جست کی الماری رکھے جا رہی ہے جبکہ آخری تصویر ملتان کی ہے جہاں خواتین کپڑوں کی نمائش میں لان اور گرمیوں کے کپڑوں کی نئی ورائٹی کا جائزہ لے رہی ہیں، یہ تصاویر ملک کی 51 فیصد آبادی خواتین کی زندگی کے مختلف رنگوں و پہلوؤں اور عوام کے معیار زندگی کو ظاہر کرتی ہے، ایک طرف اگر زندگی کی بنیادی و لازمی ضروریات کے حصول کی سخت ترین جدوجہد ہے تو دوسری طرف زندگی میں بہتر اشیا کے انتخاب کی سہولت حاصل ہے۔ ممکنہ طور پر انتخاب کی سہولت رکھنے والے طبقے کے مسائل بھی یقیناً کم نہیں، وسائل کتنے بھی ہوں پاکستانی روپے کی قدر میں کمی، افراط زر، مہنگائی سے سب ہی یکساں متاثر ہیں، مہنگائی میں اضافے نے غریب سے دو وقت کی روٹی چھین لی ہے تو متوسط طبقے کو بھی غربت کی دہلیز پر لاپھینکا ہے اور غربت اس سطح پر آگئی ہے کہ اب خواتین بھی سخت محنت مشقت کے کام کرنے پر مجبور ہو گئی ہیں، کبھی آنکھیں، کبھی آساں، گزر رہی ہے حیات کے مصداق زندگی گزر رہی جاتی ہے



“My husband and I moved from our village near Sargodha to Rawalpindi. We live in a rented room that fits two beds, and he works at a wholesale vegetable market while I sell hair accessories on the roadside in F-10. My daughter Aimen is three years old, so she comes with me because there is no one to take care of her at home.

I’m pregnant with my second child, but I’m happy during this pregnancy because I can visit an actual doctor at Pims. I delivered my first baby at home, with the help of the women in the family, because there were no doctors in our village.

We moved in search of better opportunities. It’s hard to make a living. Rents are high and food is expensive, but we are willing to struggle to provide a better life for our children. Sometimes, when we are here on an empty stomach, people feed us. Sometimes I eat. Sometimes I don’t have money for the both of us so I just buy my daughter food. Today it’s going to rain which, for me, means no sales. I don’t know how I will eat and pay the bus fare to get home. Every day comes with its own challenges, and they make me stronger.”



معمربانوان ءهوان وکی ءهوانی سر یرا اهانے معاشی مسائل کا مقابلہ کر رہی ہے۔

Aaj Kal — January 4, 2009

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What Pakistani Women Voters Want

KARACHI, Pakistan, May 09 (IPS) - As Pakistan inches closer to the May 11 elections, and the accompanying heat and dust get even thicker, it is pertinent to stop for a moment and ask: what do women voters in Pakistan want?



Many rural women in Pakistan have never voted. Credit: Zofeen Ebrahim/IPS

Just three square meals and an education for their children, according to Shabina Bibi, an unlettered woman in her thirties who lives in a shanty near the Kemari port in Karachi.

"My husband lost his job last month," she told IPS, "and for the first time in my life, I have had to venture out, looking for a job." A mother of four, she now works as a domestic in Karachi.

It has taken Bibi - and her husband - tremendous courage to step out of this boundary. The participation of women in Pakistan's labour force is just 28 per cent, according to the World Bank's World Development Report 2013. Gender roles in this society are defined very strictly: a woman has to stay home to look after the family, while it's the man's job to go out and provide for them.

There is nothing more that women voters want in this election than to be able to move beyond the traditional stereotypes and walk shoulder to shoulder with men. No longer content to be confined to the shadows of home, they want to step out into the light and participate actively in the public sphere.

It's not easy being a woman in Pakistan, said Tahira Abdullah, an Islamabad-based peace activist. It's worse if you occupy the lower rung of the economic ladder, she added, speaking to IPS from the capital, Islamabad.

"Women face disproportionately high levels of poverty, work in exploitative labour conditions, get little or no remuneration, face the double burden of housework and reproductive responsibility, and are subjected to gender-based violence."

Abdullah wants to see this changed in these elections and hopes for a more emancipated leadership. "It's time political parties woke up to the feminisation of poverty in Pakistan which is resulting in disproportionate misery and injustice for women," she said.

However, in a conservative society such as Pakistan's, that is asking for the moon. "Most men still believe in their own chauvinism and consider women taking a back-seat as appropriate to their gender," said Najma Sadeque, a veteran journalist in Karachi. "The process would have been faster had we got rid of the feudal system and fundamentalists."

There are some 37 million registered women voters in Pakistan, making up 44 per cent of the country's 86 million-strong electorate. Another 11 million women are eligible to vote but have not registered.

Women seldom get heard or find leaders on decision-making bodies to carry their voice.

In addition, their aspirations for their country are often radically different from men's - but these, again, are never articulated.

Women, Islamabad-based gender specialist Naheed Aziz told IPS, are more concerned about day-to-day affairs like food, water, health, sanitation and the welfare of their children.

"The country a woman wants is one where she is not treated as a secondary citizen," said Aziz, "where she can live with peace and dignity, has a say in the affairs affecting her life, and is not subjected to age-old negative socio-cultural traditions; where her honour and life are not threatened within her home or her community, where she feels secure, where she and her family members will not be subjected to violence and exploitation, where the rule of law prevails, and where everyone has equal and equitable justice."

"Women want a welfare state, not a nuclearised security-driven state," said Abdullah. And, unlike men, who are obsessed with their own selves, their 'biradari' (clan), feudal and tribal politics, women worry about the future of their families.

"Women are inherently peace-loving and envisage a world free of weapons, war and strife," Abdullah said. They prefer lawmakers to devote their energy to solving the nation's problems rather than worrying about who to go to war with or how much money to spend on defence, she added.

Endorsing this sentiment, Sadeque said that women have rarely started or propagated wars. "There are few Margaret Thatchers among women," she remarked to IPS.

Yet, women are the ones affected disproportionately by conflict and disaster situations, she noted. To help change this, women must be better represented in political

bodies and must have a say on the various issues affecting them.

The Aurat Foundation, an organisation working for the rights of women, has long been advocating an increase in the representation of women in the national and provincial assemblies, from 17 per cent to 33 per cent.

The foundation has also asked political parties to hold internal elections for women and to have specific women-only constituencies, to ensure a level playing field during elections. None of these recommendations has so far been accepted.

The foundation had, in fact, come out with a handbook of suggestions on women's empowerment, for the election manifestos of political parties.

While a few parties included some of the recommendations in their manifestos, most were "relegated to a separate chapter, without cross-references or linkages to mainstreaming," said Abdullah, who co-authored the handbook with Aziz.

Among the suggestions that were included were the repeal of discriminatory legislation against women and /or minorities, action against negative socio-cultural practices, legislation against domestic violence or violence against women in general, and giving title deeds to women when allocating land to landless peasants.

A few parties even promised to ban 'jirgas' (tribal or village councils), but most of them hedged and suggested an alternative dispute resolution system under the local government.

Unfortunately, very few women are members of the manifesto committees of political parties. "The female to male ratio among those who have helped with party manifesto documents is, on average, three females to 20 males," Aziz said.

What chances do women have, then, of being heard in this election?

They have a long way to go, certainly. Of the 23,079 candidates seeking general seats in the national assembly, only 3.5 per cent are women, according to the Election Commission of Pakistan. Political parties refused to acquiesce to the pressure by civil society to reserve 10 per cent of the spots on tickets for women candidates.

As a result, only 36 women across Pakistan have been able to secure spots on tickets to run for general seats in the national assembly. There are 817 women candidates, though, who are standing for the 60 seats reserved for women in the national assembly. In addition, there are 64 women candidates fighting on an independent ticket, outside of any party affiliation.

What women are doing, however, is getting out into the field and campaigning for their leaders. Party leaders are "ensuring women's participation in their election rallies through their women's wings, to garner their votes and nominate them for their reserved seats," said Abdullah.

It's a small, but significant, start.

Zofeen Ebrahim, Inter Press Service News Agency — May 9, 2013

When mothers eat too little

The malnourished mothers of Tharparkar are not breastfeeding their babies like they used to

SHEEMA KHAN

KARACHI:

Clad in a ghagra that swirls as she walks, she presents a colourful sight, unlike her often colourless life. Her arms are covered in white bangles worn almost up to her shoulders, a mark that she is married. But the arms of Najma Chandio are much too thin; her skin is shrivelled more than it should be for a 28 year old woman. She shows signs of malnutrition.



WAIT: Thari women stand in a queue with prescriptions in front of a medical officer. PHOTO: ANAND KUMAR

Najma gave birth to Ghulam Siddique four days ago. She is currently admitted in a private clinic in Tehsil Chachro, district Tharparkar. "I cannot feed my baby. I cannot produce milk for my infant," shared Najma, sounding frustrated. She travelled from her village Rawatsar to Chachro, a distance of 80 kilometers, to get to the private clinic for treatment.

Health and Nutrition Development



HOPPE: A Thari mother, with hope in her eyes, stands in a queue holding her baby waiting to collect her bag of food. PHOTO: ANAND KUMAR

opment Society (HANDS) have observed a change in breastfeeding trends in Tharparkar. According to a survey conducted by HANDS, there were 39 per cent women breastfeeding their babies before the drought calamity, which has reduced to 28 per cent. "The main reasons are malnourishment, poverty and lack of awareness," said Dilip Kumar, Acting General Manager of the health department at HANDS. According to him, a lot of the

women are unaware of the duration that their children should be breastfed.

Another case in point is Nazeeran, a 29 year old, mother to a four month old baby Shakeel Ahmed in the village Nasrullah Sand of Tharparkar. "It has been three months since I breastfed my son. This is because of less milk. I cannot feed him properly." The infant has fever every now and then. "He is always cranky and

crying because I am unable to feed him properly.”

The data provided by Association for Water Applied Education & Renewable Energy (AWARE) confirms that Thari women are having problems breastfeeding their children. In March 2014, 140 women attended Out Patient Department (OPD) of Chachro's Taluka Headquarters Hospital. The AWARE team shared that when they spoke to the hospital's staff, they said there are no supplements or any medicines for lactating mothers. This is why malnourished women are becoming even more malnourished.

Doc talk

When a malnourished woman gives birth, her baby will be underweight, says Dr Moti Khan, senior dietician at Aga Khan University Hospital. “In Pakistan, pregnant women do not follow a prescribed diet plan.” The expert was of the view that non-affordability of edibles and

not knowing what kinds of foods are healthy is the reason behind malnutrition.

According to Dr Sadia Ahsan Pal of the National Committee for Maternal & Neonatal Health (NC-MNH), a malnourished mother's poor health will affect the baby's health when she breastfeeds. Pal said that malnutrition in rural areas is high because of poverty. She added that there is no family planning in villages. “Mothers don't take a gap of two to three years before getting pregnant again. A mother needs this time to regain her health before she is fit enough to give birth again and breastfeed the baby,” said Pal.

While speaking to *The Express Tribune*, Pal added that “Getting girls married at a young age is a recipe for disaster. They get pregnant when their bodies are not completely mature and fit. Malnutrition then becomes obvious.”

When asked about the symp-

oms of malnutrition, Pal was of the view that there are different indications. “Some women will begin to lose weight and will look weak,” she said, adding that some women may apparently be healthy, but have internal deficiencies like those of vitamins, iron, protein etc.

According to Pal, in most families in our society, women eat in the end after they are done feeding other family members. “Women, especially in rural areas, do all the field work, whereas the men sit on chaarpais and smoke the hukkah. Isn't this enough to make women grow weaker?”

For Dr Razia Korejo, professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Bahria University Medical and Dental College, a mother cannot breastfeed her baby if she is weak. “If a malnourished mother keeps breastfeeding her baby, her health will deteriorate even more.”

Korejo was of the view that a female will only be able to take care of her health and her child's if she is educated and aware. “Rural women have no knowledge of anaemia. Instead of going to the doctor for advice, they get pregnant.” Korejo said that this leads to complications when the woman goes in labour and the baby is born underweight.

Ground realities

According to the team at AWARE, there are lady workers who are working in Tharparkar, but not enough. For example in village Nasrulla Sand, there are only two lady health workers and they are working for eradication of polio. Nasrullah Sand and Rawatsar villages are near the Indian border. A Rural Health Centre was established in 1979 in Tehsil Chachro; however, there is no lady doctor or pediatrician available.

The Express Tribune — April 8, 2014



WAITING FOR CLIENT: A woman vendor waiting for customers at her makeshift stall on a roadside in Peshawar Monday — M Sajjad

54 million women need adequate food to survive

Islamabad: While we celebrate International Women's Day today (Thursday), estimates and simulations show that over 54.6 million women in Pakistan are in dire need of adequate food and the required nutrition as almost 48.6% of the country's 187.3 million population (July 2011 estimates) is reported to have been food insecure, 60% of which are women.

The FIAN International (Pakistan Chapter), housed at the Journalists for Democracy and Human Rights (JDHR) here, demands of the government of Pakistan to strengthen its efforts to realise women's right to adequate food at a time when women in rural and peri-urban areas are bearing the brunt of food insecurity and poverty fuelled after the 2010-11 floods in parts of the county, says a press release.

According to the UN, 925 million people across the world were chronically hungry, 60 per cent of them are women. "Women's right to food is still one of the

most violated rights in the world, said Flavio Valente, secretary general of the International Human Rights Organisation, fighting for the right to food.

In a statement, presented by FIAN to CEDAW, women explained their situation: "Often we do not know what we will eat and feed our children the next day. When we eat we have to be limited to one snack per day, which only consists of rice or noodles. Lack of access and availability of adequate food, insufficient protein or vitamins affects our health, learning ability of our children and our capacity to work."

"Monitoring and mechanisms to achieve state accountability must proceed with an understanding of the need for overcoming the specific barriers of discrimination and structural violence that women face when attempting to fulfil their human right to adequate food," concludes Flavio Valente.

The News — March 8, 2012



A WOMAN and her daughter push a hand cart loaded with the bark torn off the trees to use as fuel in the cold in Murree. —Online
Dawn — April 6, 2008

صحافتی ہاتھ حوصلہ افزائی چاہتے ہیں۔۔۔ "سودے بازی" نہیں! تصویر کہانی
ایم ابراہیم خان



آکر کوئی زندگی کو فروغ نہیں دیتا تو یہ اس کی کوتاہ نظری، قدر ناشناسی اور نا شکری ہے۔ لیکن صاحب! جنہیں زندگی ایسی اہمیت دے کر خرچ کرتے ہیں کہ وہ اس کو اپنا بچہ سمجھ لیں۔ یہ بھی تو بچہ ہے۔ اس طرح طرح کی آسانیاں میسر ہوں تو زندگی حلوے کی بجائے ہو جاتی ہے۔ مگر یہی حلوہ اس وقت لوہے کے پتھریلے چپانے کی منزل تک لے جاتا ہے جب وسائل کم اور مسائل زیادہ ہوں۔ قدم قدم پر رکاوٹیں ہوں، ارادے بھٹتے اور نیتیں ریت بن جاتی ہیں۔

ماڑی پور کی امینہ بی بی کا بھی کچھ ایسا ہی قصہ ہے۔ ان کی زندگی بھلاؤ دیکھو۔ ان سے اپنی بیٹی کی شادی کر دی ہے۔ امینہ بی بی کی زندگی بھی مشکلات اور پریشانیوں سے گھرا رہی ہے۔ انہوں نے دس پارہ کی مر سے اپنی بیٹی کے ساتھ بیگم شادی کر دی ہے۔ بھلاؤ دیکھو کہ وہ شہر کے مختلف بازاروں میں بیچا کرتی تھیں۔ شادی کے بعد بھی یہ سلسلہ جاری رہا۔ یہ اللہ کی رضا تھی کہ ان کی مشکلات کم ہونے کے بجائے بڑھتی گئیں۔ دو بیٹے ہیں۔ ایک جسمانی طور پر اور دوسرا ذہنی طور پر معذور ہے۔ جن کے حوصلے کمزور ہوں ان کے فکر و عمل پر ایسے حالات، بہت تیزی سے بھلاؤ دیکھو۔ امینہ روزانہ ماڑی پور سے لیاقت آباد کی مارکیٹ میں آکر بھلاؤ بیچتی ہے جو اس بات کا زندہ ثبوت ہے کہ اس کے حوصلے نے حالات کی کوکھ سے جہنم لینے والی تمام مشکلات اور مایوسی پر بھلاؤ پھیر دی ہے۔ ہمارے معاشرے میں جن خواتین کے جوان ہکڑا پوت ہوں وہ بھی سکون سے سوتی نہیں پاتیں۔ ایسے میں امینہ کے حوصلے کو داد دیجیے کہ وہ اب تک صرف اپنے جسم و جان ہی کا رشتہ برقرار نہیں رکھے ہوئے بلکہ اپنی اولاد کا بوجھ بھی سہارا رہی ہے۔

ستم یہ ہے کہ شہر کے ایک سرے سے دوسرے سرے پر آکر رزق کے حصول کی کوشش کرنے والی امینہ بی بی کو "سودے بازی" کی منزل سے بھی گزرنا پڑتا ہے۔ دیکھا گیا ہے کہ عیدین یا شادی کے موقع پر صرف کپڑوں کی دھن دھن بڑوں روپے آؤ بیٹے والی خواتین نہیں بچھیں روپے کی بھلاؤ دیکھو کہ وہ معاملے ایسی سودے بازی کر رہی ہوتی ہیں جیسے عداکرات کی میز پر پاکستان اور بھارت کے دو میان معاملات طے کئے جارہے ہوں! امینہ بی بی کا کہنا ہے کہ وہ بھلاؤ کے پتوں اور پھال سے جو بھلاؤ بناتی ہیں وہ بچھیں روپے میں فروخت تو مستعمل منافع ملتا ہے۔ خریدار آتی ہیں اور ان سے دام گرانے کی فرمائش کرتی ہیں۔ بچھیں والی چیز بھی پندرہ اور کبھی دس روپے میں دینی پڑتی ہے! امینہ بی بی بھی کیا کریں؟ کسی نہ کسی طور گھر کے لیے کچھ بچھ کر جاتا ہے۔ غریب کا بنیادی مسئلہ یہ ہے کہ وہ آج کی کمائی کو کل پر نہیں ٹال سکتا۔ امینہ بی بی کو بھی "سودے بازی" کی بازی ہاری پڑتی ہے۔ بقول ساحر لدھیانوی

جول کیا آئی کو قدر بچھ لیا۔۔۔ جو چھن گیا میں اس کو بھلاؤ چھ لیا!

جنہیں اللہ نے توڑا ہے وہ روزانہ اس کی خریداری بھی کرتے ہیں جس میں صرف خسارہ ہوتا ہے اور دولت کے اس شیان کا انہیں کچھ خاص رنج بھی نہیں ہوتا۔ ایسے میں اگر امینہ بی بی جیسے لوگوں کو ہم چند روپے زیادہ دے دیں تو کیا ہے؟ بھلاؤ بچھیں چیز ویسے بھی اس قابل تو نہیں کہ اس کی خریداری میں سودے بازی کی جائے۔ کیا یہی بہت نہیں کہ امینہ بی بی کسی کے آگے ہاتھ نہیں پھیلاتیں بلکہ محنت کے کھاتی اور کھلاتی ہیں؟ امینہ بی بی عمر کی چھ دہائیاں مکمل کر چکی ہیں۔ بھلاؤ دیکھو کہ وہ بناتے بناتے اب ان کی آنکھوں میں موتی اتر آئے ہیں۔ وہ کسی سے کچھ لینا چاہتی ہیں مگر ہاں اس قدر اتنا ضرور ہے کہ کوئی موٹے کا آ رہیٹن کر دے۔

ہم زندگی بھر طرح طرح کی خریداریوں میں بہت کچھ لانا ہے۔ کیا ہی اچھا ہو کہ ہم اپنے ماحول میں ان غریبوں کو تلاش کریں اور ان سے ذرا سے زیادہ یا انہی کے بنائے ترخ پر مال خرید لیں جو خراب حالات کے باوجود محنت سے جی نہیں چراتے۔ ہاتھ پھیلاتے سے گریز کرنے والوں کی حوصلہ افزائی ہم سب پر فرض ہے۔ جو لوگ محنت کرنے والوں پر بھیک مانگنے والوں کو ترجیح دیتے ہیں وہ در پردہ معاشرے کی بنیادی اقدار پر بھلاؤ پھیر رہے ہوتے ہیں۔ اگر کوئی زندگی کی دوڑ میں پیچھے رہ گیا ہے تو یہ نہ بھلاؤ لیا جائے کہ اسے زندہ رہنے کا حق ہی حاصل نہیں۔ جن کے حصے میں آسانیاں آتی ہیں انہیں دوسروں کی مشکلات دور کرنے پر متوجہ ہونا چاہیے۔

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Ata for women education to cut poverty

ISLAMABAD, Feb 19: Minister Incharge Science and Technology Prof Attaur Rahman has said investment in science and technology is one of the strongest weapons to combat illiteracy among the women of South Asia.

"The government with the assistance from Unesco is launching major projects to improve literacy rate among women. Their financial status will also improve through popularization of science in rural areas," he said while inaugurating the second workshop of the sub-regional network of non-formal scientific education and popularization of science on Thursday.

The seminar titled "Empowering adolescent girls to become the agent of social transformation in South Asia" was organized by the Pakistan Science Foundation (PSF), Unesco and Isesco.

"Science education for adolescent girls is imperative for breaking poverty cycle. However, South Asian governments have

paid insufficient attention to education and training of women.

Due to gender discrimination, women from less privileged classes of society have not been able to contribute in mainstream development activities," Prof Ata stated.

Emphasising quality education, he said, "the science and technology element of these projects include development of various programmes for providing technical and basic formal and non-formal science education to adolescent girls".

He said projects were being launched that would enable rural communities to utilize scientific know-how to solve their problems and maximize agricultural production, protect environment, conserve water and prevent diseases.

He suggested initiation of cross-sectoral and cross-boundary preventive programmes to empower women. Dr Farid A. Malik, Chairman PSF, said illiteracy and poverty were

two major concerns of developing countries.

"Science and technology is the best weapon of choice to tackle this major concern. The governments, however, have failed to take adequate steps to use S&T for economic uplift."

Prof D. Balasubramanian, Director of Research, Hyderabad Eye Research Foundation, India, believed that cooperation between South Asian countries was the best solution to break the poverty cycle of women.

Terming adolescent girls agent of change, Isesco representative Renee Clair said they planned to bring quality education to the doorsteps of people to make effective contributions in socio-economic development.

Unesco representative Ingeborg Brienens said world community had failed to meet the needs of people. They had failed to deliver the essentials required for healthy upbringing of children, she added.

Ms Brienens said figures of illiteracy touched alarming rates in South Asia. She stressed that governments must invest in education using science and technology as a ve-

hicle for economic growth and for improving quality of life.

"Unesco believes that it is unacceptable to allow gaps between the haves and the have-nots. It is

high time we took steps to abolish poverty similar to the ones taken to eliminate apartheid and slavery." Representatives from Bangladesh and Nepal also attended the programme.

Jamal Shahid, Dawn — February 20, 2004



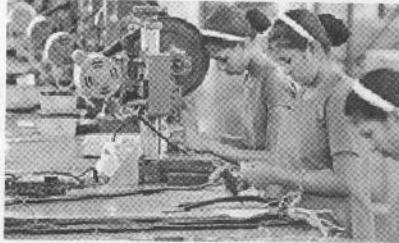
In Search of Life: An old woman looks for food in Hyderabad garbage.—INP

The Nation — September 1, 2015

Why the 'feminization' of poverty happened: *Men designed culture and economies that way!*

It has probably got something to do with the male psyche or genes or an invariable kind of conditioning that is as old as hills. There was once a belief that poor men treated their womenfolk better because they understood the pains of poverty. Not necessarily.

It came as a shock that this poor man regularly hired out his family as a work gang to zamindars or middlemen. Not quite forty, he is usually found in a horizontal position, not even sitting up to talk to the visitors. He never exerts himself. His wife, older children, sister and mother do all the work. He just collects the payment from the contractor. Nor would he reveal how much he's paid. Was it per worker? Or a lump sum for all? Family members received nothing directly, nor would they dare ask.



What if they demanded it of him? When a couple of them were taken aside and asked. They were scandalized. Such things were not done. They would get beaten, maybe thrown out of the family. Where would they go then? They would be ostracized by the community. He was the head of the family, and what he said, goes. His qualification for such an elevated status? He was a MAN. A woman was nothing without the 'protection' of a man (even if the woman had to earn her keep?)

Men who employ them find this arrangement perfectly 'normal' and advantageous. Women get half-wages or less for the same work; children are just family 'helpers', their productivity not counted. The man ensures they work satisfactorily, so no supervisor is needed. Maintaining the subordinate position of women is an unspoken understanding.

In the rural interior, one finds countless such gypsy-like landless families moving from farm to farm seasonally to earn their living. The men work too - but not all. There are good guys and bad guys; the problem is that the bad guys who are aggressive and have no scruples about using unwarranted and excessive force, always have the upper hand, especially if they have guns. The good guys treat their female family members well, but lack the guts to take a stand against bad guy behaviour.

That explains a lot about the state of our society, politics and governance. There are also countless cases of educated wives who are sought as wives for less qualified men, so that they can earn and support the husband and family better.

Women sometimes raise the issue of wage gaps between male and female workers. The 'experts' and decision-makers, mostly male, employers or government servants, have the same biased mindset. They neatly evade identifying the gender of those guilty

of practicing and perpetuating inequality. They understand one another. They may be willing to give women some latitude. But somewhere they draw the line. Women, they believe, are not really equal to men because they are biologically made that way. Or they are not quite 'ready' or evolved to be equal.

It is not just in our country or region. It is a global state of affairs.

70 per cent of the world's poor are women. The UN finds that women "earn only 10 per cent of the world's income and own less than one per cent of the world's property." This, in spite of women putting in two-thirds of the world's total working hours. They also produce over half the world's food but get to eat the least of it. It all boils down to discrimination and exploitation, easy against the physically weaker.

Have women always been the poor majority? Not according to archaeological and anthropological research. Contrary to our impressions which we get from what we see and read, women actually did not get the wrong end of the stick for most of history. Certainly gender differences greatly determined the kind of work taken up, but everyone's work was equally valued and viewed as complementary.

Ironically enough, the problem began with material improvements and quality of life, when 'progress' and affluence came for some - but not for all. The stronger used force or deviousness, or both, to appropriate control over resources. Leaders introduced private property for themselves and its inheritance, often exclusively for male heirs. They could employ disadvantaged people without choice, for their services.

The captives of conquest and ethnic or religious or other discriminated groups became slaves, and they and their children became the property of their masters. The status of women was demoted to being the 'weaker sex'; they became the property of fathers and husbands, and subordinate to all males. Often, even women from well-off families could not own property or have legal rights.



Feudalism and monarchy became the stepping stone to future capitalism. It was easy enough to invent racial, religious, biological or other reasons with which to justify women's dependence and 'inferiority' to men as being part of the 'natural order'. As unpaid or least-paid labour, women became poorer and poorer.

Over time slavery was no longer economically worthwhile, even where legal. Slaves required guarding, feeding and maintaining, which cost the employer time and money. It transpired that it was cheaper to use them as 'free' wage-labour and let them bear the responsibility for their own survival. This held particularly true during early capitalism.



When factory production came about in the west, millions of poor women were forced into the highly exploitative wage-based labour market. There were many jobs that men and women could do equally well. But because women were docile and could be paid less for the same work they were preferred as workers. Because they were desperately in need, they accepted what was offered rather than not get the job at all, not least because they had to support children and family, often as sole breadwinners.

Things haven't changed much since then. Globally, on an average, women earn half as much as men for the same work and productivity; in some countries a third or fourth. On top of that, unpaid chores designated 'women's work' - cooking, cleaning, washing, housework, carrying water over distances, fuel gathering - constitute between a quarter to half their labour, which means working even longer hours alongside paid work.

In earlier societies, it was understood that all of nature's endowments - especially land, water bodies, forests, wild plants and minerals - came free, and therefore everyone was entitled to a fair share or its equivalent for survival. But when some groups or rulers appropriated and claimed exclusive ownership of natural resources under any pretext such as 'divine right', the dividing line between the rich haves and the poor have-nots became sharply delineated. People became even poorer when denied access to land on which they grew their food and got a surplus for sale.



So violation of natural rights began long ago, first with the violation of women's rights. They suffered discrimination and violation in the home, the workplace as well as in public spaces.

With capitalism came heightened violation of human rights. As far as today's economists, planners, political representatives, statisticians and other 'experts' are concerned, 'work' applies only to those activities that get paid for, although without women's housework and child-rearing, men would not be able to take women's home services for granted to be able to go out to work.

Even today, women working outside the home are expected to continue being the primary care providers at home. Those who can afford nannies are exceptions. Globally, most working women work 'double shift', paid for farm or factory work, but without any remuneration for housework. Raising children who have special needs, costs money, and for most families, two incomes are necessary. Women work to cover all or most of that cost, while earning proportionately less. When only one income comes from the male, it means the needs of the woman and children get less served, contributing to the **feminization of poverty**.

At the cost of low-paid and exploited women factory workers, Asia's export industries have done extremely well over the past decades, especially in textiles and clothing. Most are contract workers who are permanently 'temporary'. A look inside

Pakistan's barred factories and export-processing zones, if one can sneak in, would be very revealing.

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), women earn between 50 per cent and 96 per cent of men's wages depending on the country. Most women's jobs are found at the lowest levels, where wages are lowest and there is no job security. These include factory jobs, and home-based work, referred to as the informal sector which is not subjected to labour regulations and inspection, so that the women are exploited at will.

This is not confined to South countries - even in Northern industrialised countries, between 65 and 90 per cent of all 'part-time' workers are women. "This cycle of poverty cannot be broken until women receive fair wages," states ILO.

One-third of the world's total factory workers are women - that's over 60 million women. Not that the World Bank and IMF care, but the ILO is among many global institutions confirming that economic hardships in the South are caused by structural adjustment programmes. Prices rise, and wages lose purchasing power. When employers seek to cut corners and find opportunity, men working in the formal sector are



replaced by ill-paid women as contract workers. Women have made no progress in the past decade.

If you think discrimination doesn't happen to well-educated, highly-paid women professionals in the west, think again. An interesting story comes from Bloomberg, the international business news agency. In 1998, a woman manager in a multinational corporation received an anonymous note. All it stated was her monthly income along with the pay of three men doing the same job, all of who started to work the same time she did 19 years ago. But all the men were earning much more than she was - between 15 to 40 per cent more. That really hurt. She raised a stink which all came out in her 2012 book, titled, 'Grace and Grit: My Fight for Equal Pay and Fairness at Goodyear and Beyond'.

An award winning labour economist at Cornell University found that in USA, women, on an average, earned 77 per cent of what men did. It was better than the 60 per cent they earned in the fifties, but it still wasn't fair.

So it really must have something to do with the male psyche or genes or an invariable kind of conditioning ...

2016

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Notes

ANOTHER MOTORWAY ANNOUNCED

ARE WE GOING TO
GET FOOD, SECURITY
AND
EDUCATION
— NOW?



Teenage girls turning suicide into a solution for poverty, uncertain future: HRCP

Floods exacerbated an already challenged human rights scenario

By Our Correspondent
KARACHI

To escape from poverty or an uncertain future, teenager girls in Karachi are turning towards the option of ending their lives, said the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan in its annual report, 'State of Human Rights in 2011' released on Wednesday.

Everyday around five to six teenage suicide attempts are taking place in the city.

Last year, around 1,153 people attempted suicide across Pakistan and 2,131 were successful. HRCP cites data from the National

Poison Control Centre in Karachi which receives five or six cases in which people have deliberately tried to ingest poison to end their lives. About 60% of all reported cases are of teenage girls whose families do not want to register the cases as attempted suicide.

HRCP Chairperson Zohra Yusuf said that young women are committing suicide because they are unable to cope with the pressure of everyday life. "Factors such as poverty and forced marriage are making young women commit suicide," she said.

Law and order

Apart from deliberate self harm, around 1,715 people were killed in Karachi last year, making it the most violent city of the country. Four

months, from May to August, were the deadliest because of ethnic, sectarian and political violence and 906 people were killed. July was the deadliest month of 2011 as 355 people lost their lives. Kidnappings in Karachi went up with 125 cases reported – the highest in the decade.

Women and children

Out of the 943 honour killings reported across Pakistan, the majority of cases were in Sindh. But there has been a downward trend of domestic violence here.

Around 2.4 million children were affected by the floods in Sindh, and 30% are malnourished, said the HRCP. Out of 15 child marriages in Pakistan, five were reported from Sindh. In Karachi, around 32,000 children are living on the streets.

The Express Tribune — March 29, 2012

The poverty trap

Poverty, and all that comes with it, is perhaps the biggest issue our country faces. It is also a fact that women suffer worst as a result of deprivation, standing last in the line within families to receive education, medical care — and food. The disparity in the division of resources on the basis of gender has been pointed out in numerous reports, coming in from local and international groups.

Given the lack of attention the issue has received at home, it is good to see parliamentarians showing some degree of interest in the matter. Awareness raised within the assemblies could help matters, by bringing key issues to the top of the priority list. At a discussion and lobbying session on 'gender-responsive budgeting (GRB)' mechanisms in Pakistan organised recently by Human Capital Management Institute (HCMI) and Noor Pakistan in collaboration with Evidence and Learning Based Learning Alliance (ELLA) to create awareness about gender gap challenges, parliamentarians from four major political parties said that women and girls in rural areas lagged far behind men in terms of human development and gender empowerment.

MNAs from the PPP and the PTI both emphasised the need to educate men about the problem and sensitise them to the matters involved. This, of course, is important, but what is also crucial is that we take a look into the future, and recognise that the continued deprivation of women would be a disaster for our nation. The need is to begin a process of change now. This can happen only by giving women a higher status in society — notably in districts where they face the worst discrimination. The disparity in this respect is also very marked: If the resource gap for women is to be narrowed, they need to be given greater powers and a say in decision-making. There are many factors that hold this back. We must hope more such initiatives on the line of the present one can be taken to alter the situation we face today and grant women a more equitable role in society. They deserve this.

The Express Tribune — March 3, 2014

International Widows' Day:

Alone and dependent

Long-term solutions are needed to help widows become economically empowered.

ISLAMABAD: While the new government brings in the good news of a 10% increase in the budget for widows of pensioners, this in essence only provides temporary financial relief to these women. The real and much needed solution lies in coming up with ways that help Pakistani widows of both government and non-government sector stand on their own feet.

From one man to another

With widowhood being a stigma in a conservative society, women who are widows are still considered 'unlucky'. Society does not have an inclusive attitude when it comes to the remarriage of widows. This exacerbates the economic struggle of widows.

Widows are often remarried into the same family, either the younger brother of the husband or

the cousin, and these are women who have never been empowered at any stage. "It's like giving the control of her life from one man to another without being given a choice," said Farzana Bari, human rights activist and professor at the Quaid-e-Azam University. Once a woman loses her husband, either her brother-in-law or father-in-law starts controlling. "These women are never made to believe that they are self-sufficient," said Bari. This lack of self-reliance translates into an economically dependent mindset that stifles creativity and subdues empowerment.

Lack of self-reliance translates into an economically dependent mindset that stifles creativity and subdues empowerment

In Bari's opinion, Pakistan does not have a well-defined policy for women because women here generally get married at an early age and are dependent

on their husbands. If a woman loses her husband she not only suffers from economic hardship but also finds it extremely difficult to adjust socially. "Most women are not prepared for employment due to cultural restraints, lack of education, skill and experience. Hence a woman losing her husband suffers from great turmoil in a conservative society such as ours," she said.

Still not enough?

Even with the increase in budget, the ones who get support seem less than satisfied. "Even with the 10% increase in budget, the amount is not sufficient enough," said a government employee, also a widow of a government employee, on condition of anonymity. In her opinion, although the government gives family pension which includes perks such as free education for children up to 18 years of age, free health facilities at a government hospital, allotment of plot, employment for the wife and children of deceased government servants,

yet the amount given is not enough in this era of inflation.

Long-term solutions

While the government does have a policy and budget for widows of government employees, the new government's policies in this regard seem charity-centric, but ignore a sustained development approach. Financial stipends may help widows temporarily, but the ultimate aim should be to help them stand on

their own feet. "What the budget is offering is within the framework of charity, rather than empowering them," said Bari.

"Widows do not get exemption of property tax. Although there are very few of those who have property to begin with, it is still important," said activist Rakshanda Parveen.

Widows of the non-government sector

"All widows go through

similar personal problems when they lose their husband. However socio-economic challenges do vary," said Bari, adding that "those that get support from the government are better off than those who do not get anything at all." Beneficiaries of deceased government employees still manage to make ends meet; it is the non-government sector that needs to come up with better solutions.

Maha Mussadaq, The Express Tribune — June 23, 2013



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Impact of food crisis on women

THE impact of food crisis on Pakistan has been deep for the poor people, specially women. Increased workload at home and on agricultural farms, as well as stress and pressure by men to cut back family food consumption, has severely affected the health of women and children.

As a result, most of them are suffering from malnutrition. Due to food shortage and price hike, families are compelled to pull their children out of schools so that they can serve as additional earning hands for the family or share the family's workload in agricultural fields or other work.

Economic hardship has increased tension within families leading to quarrels, domestic violence and even suicide or has been weakening the family system.

Across the world, women play significant roles as producers and providers of food and nutrition while their contribution to the economy and household survival is immense.

In fact, our prevalent social system contributes

to marginalisation of and discrimination against women in more ways than one.

In Pakistan the food crisis has created a critical situation for women and children. Overload of work at home and then hard work at farms harshly tell upon the health of the ill-fed women and children.

Moreover, the economic crisis has led to rise in the crime rate, as well as to domestic violence, suicide, etc.

All over the world women participate, along with men, in all economic activities whether at home or on the farm or in factories or in offices but unfortunately in Pakistan the gender discrimination stands in the way of women.

To address the economic crunch faced by the women in Pakistan, the government has launched a new programme called 'Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) in the federal budget for 2008-09.

An amount of Rs34bn will be given to the poorest of the poor under the BISP.

The amount will later be raised to Rs50bn. Under the programme, cash grant of Rs1,000 per month will be given to each qualifying household, through banks and post offices.

The government is also distributing agriculture land among poor women peasants/haris.

The decision was taken at a meeting chaired by the Sindh chief minister. According to the decision, deserving poor women will be selected through open kutcharis to be held across the province.

The first phase of distribution of land has been started with Thatta district and each poor hari woman will get at least 25 acres of cultivable land. Distribution of such land will soon start in other districts. A total of 64,717 acres are cultivable and readily available for distribution to poor women.

The government is also seriously considering various legislations in the country to improve the lot of the women. In the Sindh Assembly my three bills on women issues, i.e. Sexual Harassment at Workplace Bill; Domestic

Violence against Women and Children Bill and Acid Burn Bill, are under consideration.

All our efforts to protect women's rights, enhance their economic

expertise and secure their social standing are in the way Benazir Bhutto wanted them to proceed in the country as well as in the world, without any fear or favour. It's a long journey

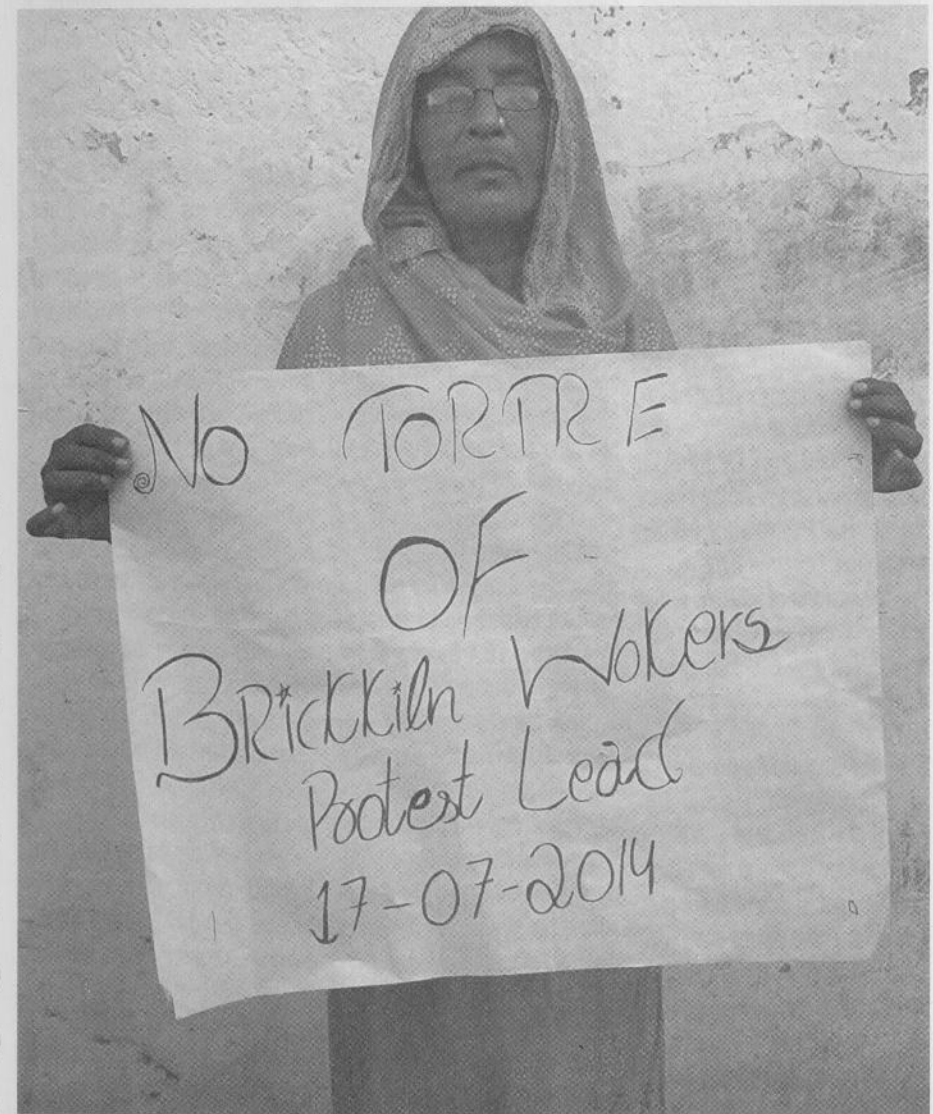
fraught with great dangers but destined to succeed in the end.

HUMERA ALWANI

Member, Sindh Provincial

Assembly Thatta

Dawn — February 4, 2009



<https://globalchristianvoice.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/protest.jpg>

Poverty, malnutrition main causes of growing maternal deaths

SEEMA KIYANI

ISLAMABAD—Poverty, low literacy, malnourishment, inadequate health services and gender discrimination are main causes of death among women during pregnancy related complications, health experts said.

"Over 80 per cent of deaths occur due to hemorrhage, eclampsia, sepsis, ruptured uterus and abortion and that is a proof of inadequate maternal health in our society," said Prof Dr Surraya Jaffery, Chairman National Forum for Maternal Health while talking to Pakistan Observer here.

"Thousands of women suffer from temporary or permanent disability. Lifetime risk of maternal deaths in Pakistan is 1 in 38 as compared to 1 in 230 in Sri Lanka, 1 in 5,100 in the United Kingdom and 1 in 6,000 in Sweden," she said.

Dr Jaffery said, "Young women face death at the prime time of their lives which are preventable. These deaths have profound consequences on their children who not only deprived of love and comfort but are more vulnerable to death and disease."

She opined that about 25 per

cent of all babies born are of low birth weight i.e. less than 2.5 kg. Every year an estimated 400,000-500,000 babies are either born dead or die within the first week of their birth and that is a reflection of the nutritional and health status, and the healthcare available to the mothers.

In this regard, she said skilled healthcare providers could carry the mothers safely through pregnancy and childbirth in their own settings. They can deal with the problems and refer them appropriately and timely for full medical treatment.

Discussing role of Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs), she said it is neither necessary nor possible for each delivery to be attended by a doctor. TBA training in the past had no impact.

In Europe, particularly Sweden, even before the advent of modern technology, professionally trained midwives used to play role in reducing maternal morbidity and mortality. Today, a midwife is the key person providing maternal care, she added.

Unfortunately, midwifery is a neglected profession here in Pakistan, she said adding that there is a critical need for providing

training to competent midwives, she said.

Dr Jaffery said according to reports, less than 30 per cent women have access to proper care while over 55 per cent are anaemic. One third of the lactating women eat less than 70 per cent of the calories recommended for them. Just over 54 per cent of the women are fully immunized against tetanus. About 95 per cent deliveries take place at home are attended by untrained and traditional birth attendants (TBAs).

During three ten-year periods maternal mortality ratio (MMR) has been reported as 899, 710 and 883 respectively at various hospitals. There are approximately 32 million women in the reproductive age group i.e. 15-49 years. Majority of them are poor and not literate. About 4-5 million births occur annually i.e. 8 to 9 babies are born every minute.

According to WHO, the UNICEF reports the (MMR) is estimated to be 340 while estimates from other sources range between 300-530. Report said 30,000 maternal deaths occur annually i.e. one woman dies every 20 minutes, Dr Jaffery said.

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'Actions not Words are Needed to Enable Women to Progress'

By Moniza Inam

Dawn April 14, 2013

Interview with Tahira Abdullah

Question: What are the basic reasons for persistent poverty of Pakistani women?

Answer: Several factors contribute to exacerbate the feminisation of poverty in Pakistan. These include the increasing overall national poverty rates, of both women and men; rising inflation, food insecurity and unemployment. A female/male poverty ratio of 3:1, as acknowledged by successive military dictatorships and civilian elected governments over the past decade and a half, is shameful and totally unacceptable for a developing country like Pakistan.

Home-based, low-income, urban women workers suffer huge exploitation from middlemen, contractors and employers; but for rural agricultural women (the vast majority of women workers in Pakistan), the situation is even worse, as they do not get paid wages at all, due to being termed as 'family helpers' and thus sink lower into chronic poverty.

Men working in agriculture (known as mazaaras and haarees) are also exploited by the rich feudal landowners, by being either unpaid serfs/peasants/bonded labour through generations, or by being paid inadequately in kind, a fractional portion of the harvested food crop, but women peasants are not paid at all, and have no control over or access to their spouses' wages.

Conversely, it is the women who are responsible for the food security of their immediate and extended family (husband, children, in-laws), as well as for the triple burden of work: (i) domestic household chores, (ii) economically productive agriculture, livestock, fisheries and forestry activities, (iii) reproductive functions of child-bearing and rearing. Women also suffer greater ill-health, anaemia, mal/under-nutrition, and reproductive health (RH) complications, without access to free public sector or affordable private sector RH services.

This not only increases the burden of poverty for women, but it also decreases women's productive capacity, as well as increasing their poverty of opportunity (including lack of education, information, mobility, socio-cultural restrictive norms and other constraints). This concept was introduced by the eminent Pakistani economist Dr Mahbub ul Haq, who coined the terms Poverty of Opportunity Index (POPI), Human Development Index (HDI), Gender Development Index (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM). Pakistan, regrettably, still does not

fare well on any of these indices.

What practical measures do you suggest to eradicate the high incidence of poverty in women in the local context?

The lesson to be learnt from the failure of the mala fide, badly conceptualised and highly politicised Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) is that monthly charitable handouts do nothing to alleviate poverty — it was simply a meagre social protection measure to ensure votes in the next elections, and fostered dependency and beggary.

Long-term poverty eradication measures first require transfer of land to women for building women's assets ownership in their own name, in order to increase women's credit-worthiness and provide collateral for loans for women's entrepreneurship.

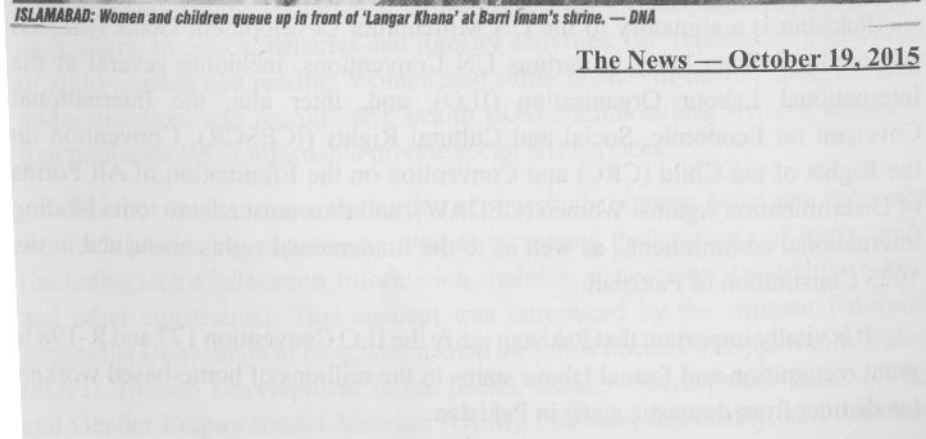
The incoming governments (both federal and provincial) need to increase and encourage the private sector to also increase their investments in rural development, agriculture and agro-based industries, especially food crops (vs cash crops such as cotton).

Women's and girls' education and vocational skills training, in both rural and urban areas, needs huge investments, in order to increase women's registration and eligibility for formal sector employment, trade union membership and labour benefits, particularly health, children's education and social security.

It is most important that the government recognise the huge contribution women are making to the GDP, albeit invisible, unacknowledged and uncounted in national statistics, due to outmoded and unjust definitions of "labour force", which exclude the entire agriculture sector and home-based workers from the formal, organised sector labour force.

Pakistan is a signatory to the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and is also a State Party to various UN Conventions, including several at the International Labour Organisation (ILO), and, inter alia, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and thus must adhere to its binding international commitments, as well as to the fundamental rights enshrined in the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan.

It is vitally important that Pakistan ratify the ILO Convention 177 and R-198 to grant recognition and formal labour status to the millions of home-based workers (as distinct from domestic staff) in Pakistan.



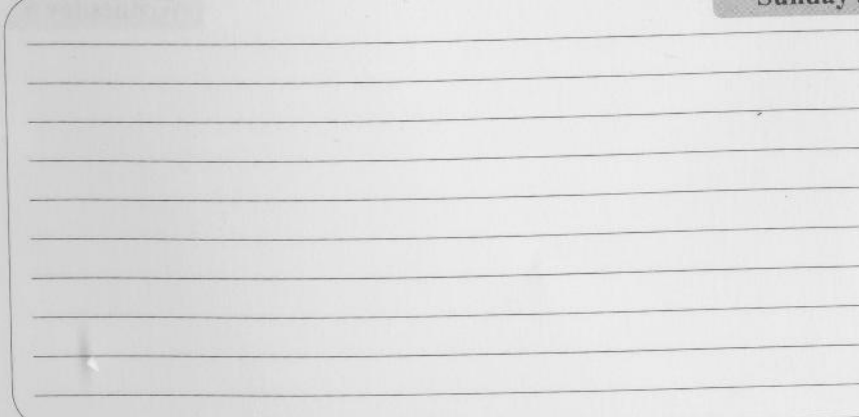
The News — October 19, 2015

July

Friday 1

Saturday 2

Sunday 3

This is a blank, lined page from a notebook. The page is white with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is a small, dark, rectangular mark in the top right corner, which appears to be a piece of tape or a sticker. The page is otherwise empty of any writing or markings.

Plight of senior widows

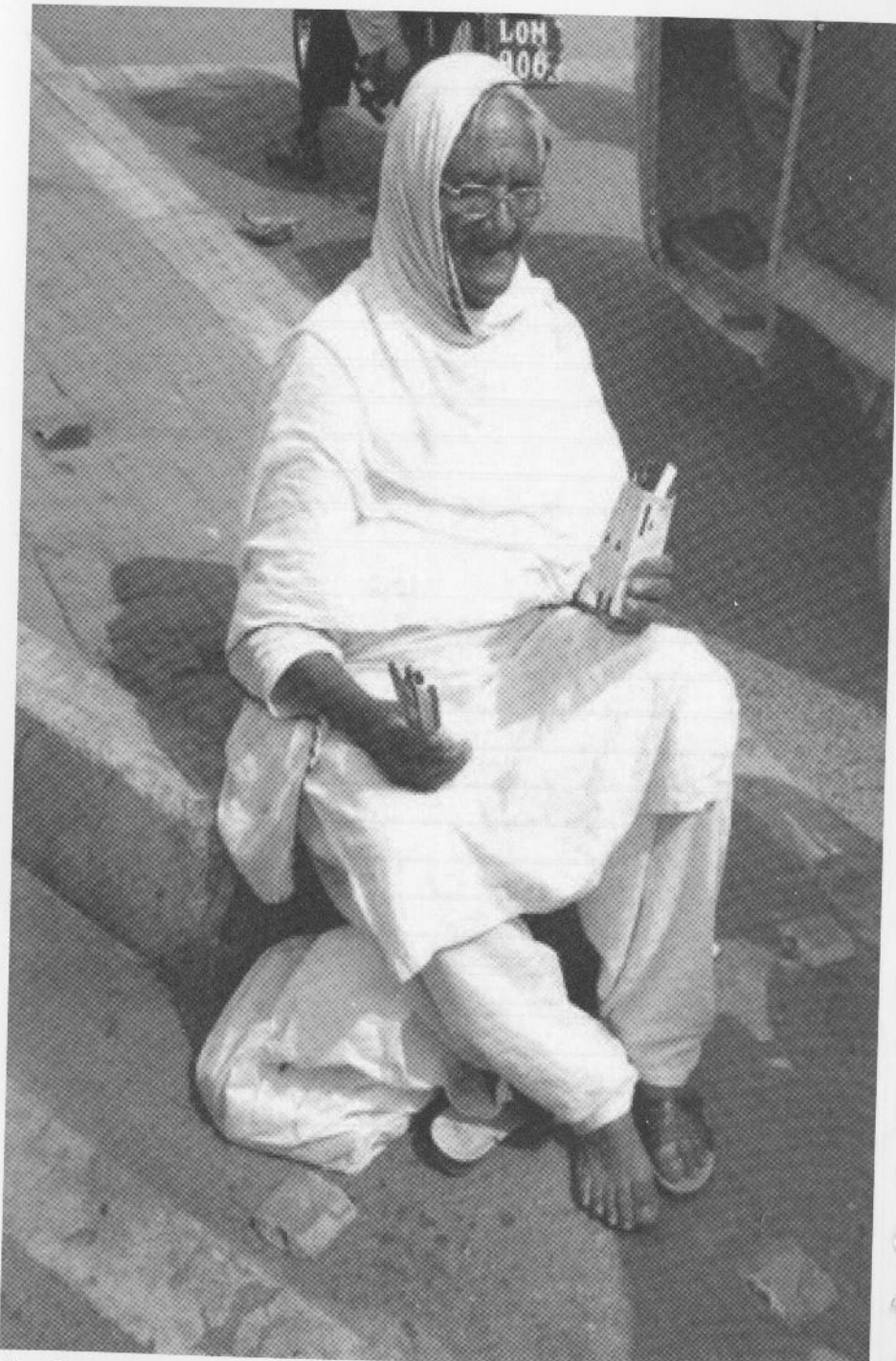
I keep reading in these columns about the difficulties faced by senior citizens at the national savings centres. First, I do not understand why when Finance Minister Shaukat Aziz gives such a rosy picture of our economy, senior citizens are made to suffer, specially those like myself who have to survive on interest alone. Inflation is going up, medicines on which most senior citizens live these days are getting very expensive and transport fares, etc., are becoming unaffordable.

How does our government expect senior citizens, who have no other income but interest on their savings certificates to live upon, to survive on almost half the income, i.e., the interest rate falling from 16 per cent to almost eight per cent? Is the government trying to alleviate poverty or increase it?

Also, the national savings centres are small and so crowded that women like myself who are widows aged 75 and more cannot go alone to the centre, stand in long queues and then bring cash all by themselves. What if somebody follows someone and robs? It is so risky.

I would request the finance minister to look into the matter and let at least all senior citizens invest their SSCs in their respective banks, where interest can go straight into their accounts and there is no hassle or risk of withdrawing the whole amount and putting it in a bank every six months.

A senior widow,
Karachi





AN old woman carries a huge load of tree branches as she heads home in Islamabad. — Photo by Tanveer Shahzad

Dawn — March 16, 2014

Women, poverty and Pakistan

Hina Muneer Haleem

THE Quid-e-Azam emphasised that men and women should have equal privileges and opportunities — have right to attain education and to take up professional careers which in turn help to eliminate poverty leading the country to march on the road to progress with flying colours.

Today we claim that we have abandoned our typical culture where women were just an object, supposed to stay at home and look after their families. Well to certain extent it is correct that women have become career oriented and are in different professions and making a remarkable achievement, right from diplomatic front to political arena via a judiciary, banking and other professions. Yet, this journey is painfully slow and must accelerate on fast tracks in the wake of rapid global changes.

Economic development demands from a government to be oriented towards development. The government has many roles to play and amongst others it must identify priority infrastructure projects and make the needed infrastructure and social services available to the whole population equally for men and women — and not to a few selected ones.

While the unemployment rate has decreased by 8.0 (from 17.3 to 9.3 percent) percentage points, this decrease in unemployment also indicates increase in poverty. The statistics further reveal that female employment in agriculture and service sector has decreased by 4.0 and 1.9 percentage points respectively over the period of 2002-2006 whereas their employment in industrial sector had shown an increase of 5.0 percentage points during the same period. It may be because of rising inflation both the male and the female have to work and run their families at respectful level.

If we notice in urban and rural areas we will find the exact picture where women are not treated equally and are not given much importance as compared to men. This in justice leads to many women's issues in Pakistan and among them women poverty is the one. This is basically a vicious cycle.

When a girl is born in poor families she gets malnutrition and no education and sometimes hardly gets an inadequate basic education and ultimately suffers from poverty. It is acceptable that in rural areas women are poor because they have family constraints and are bounded by male dominated society and again another important cause is lack of education. In rural areas girls are discouraged for education and keep them away from schools and in wake of that they are not aware of their rights and obligations and in turn they are forced to work according to will and wish of male members. They have a rat race that they work in fields almost from sunrise to sunset and get back to home where domestic work is awaiting them. This unjust behaviour leads to migration of rural women to cities where they either compelled to begging or have to work as maids in houses while some of them engaged in unlawful activities and ultimately the economy is adversely affected due to such practices.

Coming back to urban areas the situation is altogether different — women to work and support their families but

are not given a proper approach of the male members in the family. In Balochistan, NWFP and Sindh literacy rate is below 30 percent though Punjab tried to raise its literacy rate to 100 percent with its campaign of the "Parha Likha Punjab Scheme" but all in vain.

A point to be taken into consideration is that the meaning of literacy gets changed in our country so that the figures could be distorted even further. Sometimes they say one who can read and write is a literate, while at times they say a person who has reached 5th standard is a literate and again sometimes it was believed that a person who could calculate is also deemed to be a literate. Now, everyone knows 2+2=4, how amazing! However, the overall literacy rate is 40 percent and as a matter of the 100 percent literacy is not a reality but a dream in our country. It is therefore high time that we should stop dreaming and rather make efforts to turn our dream into reality.

The main and common cause of poverty is women's lack of education. Education is the most important and vital tool. It is a famous saying that educated women is like a university. It is a paradoxical situation that either it's an education that is a cause of poverty or due to poverty women could not get education. Moreover, due to globalisation and advancement in latest technologies women could not perform their professional tasks because of lack of education, which could meet the requirements of the day. In fact training and education is a continued process in order to get awareness and remain updated with ever changing technologies.

Even when governments are trying to advance their countries, the cultural environment may be an obstacle to developments, especially in our country. Besides, cultural or religious norms in the society may block the role of women, for example leaving half of the population without economic or political rights and without education, thereby undermining half of the population in its contribution to overall developments. Denial of rights to women including right to education results in increasing these problems. Her lack of education means that she has few options in the labour force. In these settings women often lack basic economic security and legal rights — when they are widowed their social circumstances turn even more dreadful and they are left completely improvised without hope for improvement.

Certainly it is not only the government that can handle this issue all alone — especially under the current global economic situation, which is in troubled waters. The collective and effective efforts from all levels make the big difference.

The government, the NGOs and individuals — this is like a triangle and if this triangle is good enough we can make good progress in vanishing the poverty amongst the women in our society and the country can march ahead with faster pace towards economic gains thereby witnessing amazing growth in our economic and social sectors. Let this triangle be made strong enough before it turns into Bermuda Triangle.

With concerted efforts we shall be able to put Pakistan on the right path, as envisioned by our great leader, Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

The writer is a student of SZABIST Karachi.

The Post — October 27, 2008

Single-parent families fall below poverty line

PESHAWAR (inp): Teenagers who live with poor single mothers are more likely to get into trouble at school and have poor marks and are less likely to think they'll go to college, says a fresh study.

HollyHeard, an assistant professor of sociology, analyzed data from thousands of teens who took part in the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health.

She sought to determine whether the economic hardship often found in single-parent households increased teens' risks for poorer grade point

averages, increased school disciplinary problems, and low expectations for college education.

The study revealed that income had a "strong" association with all three school outcomes, "and consistently explained the deficits faced by children living with single mothers," Heard said in a prepared statement.

Single-mother families are among those most likely to fall below the poverty line for a family of four. Heard noted.

"Single mothers may not feel that they have

the financial resources to pay for their adolescents' education and thus do not make as strong of an effort to encourage their children to attend college", Heard said.

"However, it is also possible that, despite their economic deprivation, single mothers who do hope their children will receive a college education are less able to convey that goal to their children effectively", she said. She sought to determine whether the economic hardship often found in single parent households increased teens' risks for poorer grade point averages.

The Frontier Post — September 1, 2004



It doesn't matter how a mother supports her children — be it through beggary. A beggar mother and her daughter unaware of the World Mother's Day festivities enjoying their siesta on footpath along Bara Road outside Qayyum Stadium in Peshawar, Saturday — Muhammad Sajjad

The News — May 11, 2003

A tale of women fighting for life and hope amid poverty, illiteracy and terrorism

By Farahnaz Zahidi
Moazzam

woman

ing, physical intimacy with her husband or even bugging her children.

her children.

Zarphosha seems frail. She is initially unwilling to talk freely, but over time exchanges of smiles and handshakes seem to ease her. Her story is typical. She has travelled to Peshawar with great difficulty from a remote tribal area. An earlier surgery by an unskilled surgeon resulted in her fistula deteriorating even further. Luckily, someone referred her to the Lady Reading Hospital. A successful surgery later, she is better but

[illegible][illegible][illegible]

Her typical story



Azra's story is one of ostracisation. Her husband was murdered by robbers, and later she was accused by the whole community of having been an accomplice and a partner in crime with another man in the village.

"Promote Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment". But ground realities mask. These seem far-fetched ideas. "Where the main reason for maternal deaths is that she cannot reach the hospital on time due to lack of infrastructure, poverty and now security issues, how do we propose to meet the MDGs?" says Dr. Faiz, posing a pertinent question.

Age 35, a resident of village Islambad Karuna in KPK, is a widow and a mother of 3. I meet her at the "APNA Primary Girls' School" where she works as an says (nanny) for the students. When Azra smiles, it is such a rare flash of sunlight on her usually morose and tired face that it takes one by awe. And she usually smiles only when her 8-year-old daughter Sipra comes and narrates what she learnt at school that day. Azra's story is one of

[illegible]



ISLAMABAD: A girl collecting food for herself and her family from a heap of garbage on World Food Day. – APP

The Nation — October 17, 2015

2016

Aug

Monday 1

Tuesday 2

Wednesday 3



ON THE ROADS: A girl accompanies her mother on a road in Peshawar on Saturday. PHOTO: INP

The Express Tribune — May 13, 2012

Increased hardships forcing women to take up beggary

Neer Aftab
Rawalpindi

Female members of a number of poor labourer families are now seen begging in different areas of the twin cities after losing hope for employment opportunities to make both ends meet.

It is generally seen that professional women beggars approach passers-by especially in commercial areas but an interaction of this correspondent with some of them revealed that financial constraints coupled with a lack of any source of livelihood in the face of the unprecedented price hike have compelled these 'poor souls' - most of them the sole breadwinners of their families - to adopt this profession.

"We are not professional beggars and love working for hours to earn livelihood, but these days, there are no employment opportunities and it is really hard to feed the kids," said Saira Bibi, a divorced woman who got involved in this profession some months ago.

According to critics, last year was one of the worst years for the struggling families, who had to face the increasing price hike amid the growing economic recession despite some repeated tall claims by the democratically elected government to provide the common people with early relief.

"I worked for two years in a pharmaceutical company in Sector I-9 that greatly helped me raise my children in the absence of any financial support from my husband. After being removed from my job last month, I struggled hard to find out another opportunity but to no avail," said

Samia Akhlaq, a beggar who is usually seen begging in Khayaban-e-Sir Syed.

Dozens of labourers waiting on the roadsides for any hirer to come and offer them work is quite a common sight, but the presence of many female workers along with those labourers is a somewhat new phenomenon that indicates the growing level of hardships among the struggling families belonging to the poor strata of society.

Many 'chappar' hotels operating in the twin cities are often surrounded by groups of women and children, who get engaged in convincing the 'arrogant' owners to provide them with free food.

"It is possible for us to provide free of cost food to a limited number of people, but how can it be possible to entertain all the people, who come here in bulk everyday," said Kala Khan, a waiter of a 'chappar' hotel in Sector G-7.

There are some owners of local hotels, who provide two-time free meals to poor people in areas including Peshawar Mor, Aabpara, Sharnsabad and Dhoke Najju, but it is not enough to meet the requirements of all those who lack financial resources to spend a normal life.

The establishment of rehabilitation centres can partially help these poor people where they can learn various skills helpful in gen-



erating income. But those who have closely monitored the performance of a handful of rehabilitation centres set up in the twin cities opined that a comprehensive mechanism is needed to ensure that those who attend the offered training programmes pursue their careers in a befitting manner.

"Majority of the child beggars, who were picked up for professional training by some rehabilitation centres established by the Punjab government in the past, failed to learn any skill under the uncongenial environment," said Muhammad Bashir, who worked for sometime at a rehabilitation centre in Rawalpindi.

—Photo by Naveed Akram

Female beggars on the rise in Capital

BY OUR STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD – It is very deplorable situation in the Capital that most of streets, roads, and markets are crowded with female beggars along with their three, four, or six children, who are mostly dressed in rags and begging from every passenger, some features of these people revealed in a survey conducted by *The Nation*.

Many poverty reduction plans were chalked out and implemented to reduce the evil of begging but no tangible results were produced. Those who fall prey to this evil have been forced by the society to beg for fulfilling their basic needs of life.

One female beggar said that instead of being able to work for an honest livelihood, we are forced to adopt this illegal profession for sustenance of our helpless infants.

It is agreed by all, that number of children in the arms, or on the backs, or at the heels of their mothers, and frequently of their fathers, is the deplorable factor of the state.

Most of people who lead their luxurious lives, think that these poor beggars very seldom pick up a livelihood by stealing until they arrive at six years old but

there are many children as Noman who sell flowers after school time to help his parents financing.

He lives in a small house along with his parents and six sisters and he is the only son of his parents. He said "I go to school in the morning and work in the evening but though I am unable to pay my fees."

Noman said that books are very expensive and the government would be obliged by the poor by reducing the fees of the schools. He said critically.

"My school teacher does not allow me in the class if I do not pay my fees", he said.

Noman said, "I can live without taking lunch but I cannot beg to the people."

"Beggars are not born. This milieu make beggars and the government is responsible for it, one female beggar said.

She said that when we do not get work, then we start begging. We do not earn good money through begging.

"We know that begging is a curse but if a child starve of hunger and nobody is willing to give us work, then the last choice is the begging because beggars are not choosers, they are made by this society", another female beggar said.

The Nation — July 19, 2003

THE INVISIBLE AND DAMNED

By Reema Abbasi
in Karachi

LIFE is stripped to the bone as a portrait of poverty spreads bare at Jogi Mori in Qayyumabad. A sea of low-hanging sheets of cloth over dark hovels, many bodies, and naked refuse in a mesh of lanes create a typical landscape of destitution.

Aashi, a fiery activist and feminist, stands at the corner of the path leading into her slum. She has a triumphant smile and speaks excitedly of last night's battle at the neighbourhood's water supply office.

"We didn't have water for over three days. They were selling it to homes in their vicinity and we survived on these dirty puddles. I led a large group of protesters and we created havoc; broke everything and set their pumps alight. Now there is a steady stream despite the destruction", she smirks.

Smells of weed and spices rise through a taut community. Men are scattered in slobbish huddles; the women in bright saris, breeze through wearing headscarves.

"There were a lot of nashas here. We don't have the means to control this scourge, even my husband is an addict," adds Aashi as two approach a cement platform under an old pipal tree, strewn with langul bottles, goats, garbage and effluent.

Perhaps the affluents patch here, the space belongs to Krishan Bhandari, a temple attendant who was formerly a poultry seller. He pulls up two charpoys and a few older women play hosts.

"We have been without electricity for a while. I can't put a pedestal fan for you but we will wave the flies away," he smiles.

Between laughs and banter, we talk about



A MARWARI-Gujarati Hindu woman residing in Jogi Mori, Qayyumabad, displays a CNIC application that was rejected by Nadra. Lack of IDs means unemployment and illiteracy for the Jogi community.—Fatim Siddiqi / White Star

the magnitude of this 60-year-old settlement comprising three separate sections of over 1,500 homes and nearly 4,000 Marwari-Gujarati Hindu inhabitants.

As Bhandari cuts to the heart of their collective distress, it's clear that the air of nonchalance is just another habit.

Our children left school because they don't have identity cards as Hindus, and problems of ill-fortune have escalated because not a single government team has visited since 2008 when 10 out of us procured cards."

Women and you are the only people who have Nadra offices cost fare and fortitude, without gain. "They make us go in circles. People with IDs are told to get marriage certificates for

their wives and children to have official documents. But where is the law that grants Hindu marriage permits?" says an aged mother of four sons.

"Three of them are wastrels. In the ongoing Karachi operation the security situation demands credentials hence our movement is acutely limited. Even government hospitals turn us away as Zakat funds cannot be used on us. So we beg for the body and intoxicate the mind."

Dhanya, now 20, was a mill worker for five years before he was dismissed for lack of an identity card. "From earning 10,000 rupees, I have become a daily wage earner. We make less than 500 per day to support a family of eight."

Aashi explains that debt is one of the area's

greater curses. "I have a loan of 55,000 rupees which I am paying off in monthly instalments of 3,500. It is not our cost of living but for our religious festivals and expenditure on worship rituals."

An imprint of brutal social injustice, this populace is shackled by vulnerability — deprived by the state and enslaved by administrators. A band of four men barges in to inspect us and monitor the flow of information.

"How did you enter without usaid's permission? We are not responsible if anything goes wrong... you don't know this place," says the chief ruffian. Aashi and Bhandari make attempts to placate without taking ownership of their visitors.

Fear is a heavy leftover. "Please meet Rashid Pappar when you leave. He sits in his nearby PPP office and supports us in daily battles," requests Aashi. Others maintain that his bureau is a lipa where their disputes are defused in favour of wealthier contestants.

The next mohalla is Lahu's and it's sealed for outsiders to the extent that drainage work cannot be implemented. They trade humanity for land."

Speaking about the squalor and desolation of his community, Sanjesh Dhanja, president of Pakistan Hindu Seva, says that his organisation has a strategy to salvage aspects of their sad condition.

"We want to install a health care helpline, arrange regular home tutorials, involve women in handicrafts and work with the municipality towards a sanitised environment. These measures will address health issues, restrict begging and drug use. But the primary dilemma of government documentation is beyond us," says Dhanja.

These people present the disturbing contrast between humanity and reality. But what they cannot come to symbolise is a nation's desire to assimilate at the cost of personal belief and identity.

Twitter: @ReemaAbbasi

FOOTPRINTS

۳۰ لاکھ خواتین روزگاری تلاش میں در بدر مولہتی ہیں

اخبارات میں اکثر پڑھتی ہیں کہس و قارٹ گری دہشت گردی پتو ریاں ڈاکے بھر یہ بھی پڑھا کر گرتا ہونے والوں کی آشریت پڑھنے لگے تو انہوں پر مشکل ہے اور جب یہ قانون کی گرفت میں آتے ہیں تو اس پر وہ کہانی غریب ہے روزگاری کے گھاؤ ہوتے ہیں صبر بہت بھی بیز ہے اور صراط مستقیم ہی رہنمائی ہے مگر سیرے وطن کے بچے اور بیٹیاں بے روزگاری کے عالم میں جب ڈگریوں لے کر گھر سے نکلتے ہیں اور قاتروں کی خاک جھان کر واپس لوٹتے ہیں پھر انہیں جب بے روزگاری کے تیر کاٹنے پڑتے ہیں تو پھر محنت لگن سے حاصل کی جیسے والی دگر بیاں انہیں ہے معنی لگتی ہیں اور ان کے قدم لنگھ جاتے ہیں ایسے ہی ہمارے معاشرے میں موجود جاگیرداروں و ڈیڑوں اور صنعتکاروں کو ان نوجوانوں کی غریب کا قاتلہ احساس کا موقع مل جاتا ہے اور جب ان بے روزگاریوں کی آکھیں کھلتی ہیں سبہ برائی میں بری طرح بھسن چکے ہوتے ہیں۔

جناب والا آپ کو قوم نے پاکستان کی تاریخ میں بے مثال کامیابی سے جتنا کر دیا اور اللہ نے آپ کو وزیر اعظم پاکستان بننے کا موقع فراہم کیا ہے آج صدر پاکستان بھی آپ کے نامزد کردہ ہیں اور سپر سلاہ جناب جنرل جیال کرکست صاحب نے بھی حالیہ بحران میں فوج کو سیاست سے کنارے رکھتے ہوئے جو رول ادا کیا ہے وہ مبارک باد کے مستحق ہیں اور قوم نے انہیں خراج تحسین بھی پیش کیا ہے۔ جناب والا کمیشن آتی ہیں جاتی ہیں وہ سہ کرتی ہیں اسی بھول جاتی ہیں اللہ نے آپ کو موقع فراہم کیا ہے تو ضرورت اس امر کی ہے کہ خلیفہ دوم حضرت عمر فاروق کے قول کو یہ نظر رکھا جائے یعنی ان کا کہنا ہے کہ میرے دور میں ایک کتا بھی بھوکا مریا تو عوام کا زور دار ہو گا۔ جناب والا اس بیک وقتی مسئلہ کو حل کرنے کے لیے جیسے تو کیا چاہیے تو جی اسے دل زمانے کے لئے "میں نے تیرے کر رکھا ہے کہ رشوت اور سفارش والی ملازمت ہرگز نہیں کروں گی اور مجھے اس فکر سے کہ ہمارے وطن میں جو کہ اسلامی جمہوریہ ہے رشوت اور سفارش کے بغیر طریقوں کو انصاف کیوں نہیں ملتا بسزائے طاقت پر پہنچا دیا ہے مگر ۳۰ لاکھ خواتین جو کہ بے روزگار ہیں وہ بھی سیرے وطن کی ہیں کب انہیں اور صحیح انصاف ملے گا رشوت سفارش کا خاتمہ کب ہو گا؟ بے روزگاری کا مستقل حل کب تلاش کیا جائے گا؟ ہمارے وطن میں نظام اسلام کا ایسا ایک ہو گا ملک میں تعلیم صحت پولیس تمام اداروں کے سربراہوں اور ذمہ دار پاکستان جناب جناب میاں نواز شریف صاحب سے اپیل کرتی ہوں کہ سسٹم کی خرابی کو دور کیا جائے۔ انصاف اور میرٹ کا خالق نہ بنایا جائے اور تمام قومی ادارے بھی اس میں معاونت کریں معزز قارئین کرام میری دعا ہے کہ اللہ تعالیٰ ہمارے وطن کا نظام درست کرے رشوت سفارش کا خاتمہ ہو اور ملک کا نظام روشن ہو آپ میرے لئے دعا کریں کہ اللہ میاں مجھے صحت دے تاکہ اپنی حسرت پوری کر سکوں اور اپنے وطن کے لئے جہن میں دیکھا گیا خواب شرمندہ تعبیر کر سکوں یعنی یہ یاد رکھیں۔

ماہرہ شاہین مغل

آپ کے بے باک قومی روزنامے کے توسط سے وطن عزیز کا ایک لام سسٹم وزیر اعظم پاکستان اور متعلقہ اداروں کے حکام ہلا تک پہنچانا چاہوں گی۔ یہ مسئلہ بے روزگاری کا ہے جس کی بذلت خود بھی شکار ہوں۔ وطن عزیز میں ہی نہیں بلکہ دنیا کے بیشتر ایشیائی ممالک میں پاکستان بھارت بھنگہ دیش سری لنکا نیپال خپان بھارتان وغیرہ شامل ہیں ان میں بے روزگاری اور غربت کی اصل وجہ غیر مساویانہ تقسیم نو بائیر داریاں آبادی میں ہے پناہ اضافہ دیبا قوں سے شہروں کی جانب تھل مٹائی دفاع اور قرضہ جات کی ادائیگی پر ہماری اخراجات تعلیم اور صحت کی سہولیات میں کمی کی غائر کرتی ہے کہ دونوں طبقات میں فرق بڑھتا جا رہا ہے جبکہ مغربی دنیا نے نہ صرف تعلیم پر خصوصی توجہ دی بلکہ فی کس آمدنی کی کامیابی بھی بڑھا کر مقررہ رکھا ہے۔ دوسری جانب ہمارے ملک میں فی کس آمدنی نیپال جیسے چھوٹے ملک سے بھی کم ہے اس بے روزگاری اور غربت کے اہم مسئلے سے ہمہ تن کار حاصل کرنے کا واحد طریقہ رشوت اور سفارش کا خاتمہ کر کے انصاف اور میرٹ کو شعار بنایا جائے۔ اور اگر سہ نظام کی اصل برا یعنی بھوک کی افست سے ہمہ تن کار حاصل کر لیں تو ملک میں نظام درست ہو سکے گا۔

آج کیلکولس صدی میں داخل ہونے کے لئے صرف ایک سال اور کیا زمانہ کا تقیلس عرصہ رہ گیا ہے یعنی اس کی دہلیز پر ہم کھڑے ہیں مگر ہمارے وطن میں غربت بے روزگاری کا یہ عالم ہے کہ ایک سروس کے مطابق ہمارے وطن میں صرف پڑھی لکھی بے روزگار میری بہنوں کی تعداد ۳۰ لاکھ ہے جبکہ بھارت میں تعداد اس سے کئی گنا زیادہ ہے کچھ عرصہ قبل بھی میں نے اپنے بے باک قومی ترجمان کی رسالط سے یہ صرف اپنی بے روزگاری بلکہ قرب و جوار کے حوالے سے بھی ایک ساتھ دیکھنے گئے حصول ملازمت کے لئے اکثر و زور دہرائی حاصل کردہ دگر بیاں کا بھی ذکر کیا تھا اور آئے روز کے اعلانات کہ انصاف آپ کی دہلیز پر ہے تو میں نے لکھا تھا کہ خود پیل کر آگئی ہوں دہلیز پر پہنچنے، خواست پڑھ کر انصاف کیجئے تو ابھی تک کہیں سے بھی کوئی حوصلہ افزا جواب نہیں ملا پھر یہ کیوں بھوکتی تشہیر کی جاتی ہے جناب وزیر اعظم اور محکمہ جات کے اعلیٰ حکام جناب والا اہم اسے کرنے کے بعد حصول ملازمت جو کہ میرا جہن کا شوق تھا۔ میں طرہ کی روشنی کو سیٹلائٹ کی وطن عزیز میں رشوت سفارش اور دیگر برائیاں کا خاتمہ کرنے کے لئے اعلیٰ ادارے میں جہاں کی تربیت دہن کی اور وہ وقت دور نہیں جب سیرے وطن سے بے روزگاری کا خاتمہ رشوت سفارش کا خاتمہ ہو جائے گا۔ مگر افسوس کہ میں نے خود محنت کے دوران دیکھا کہ میری دگر بیاں مجھ پر نہیں رہی ہیں چونکہ رشوت اور سفارش کے بغیر اہم سے عربیہ کی سی طرہ کی کوئی حیثیت نہیں ہے یہ دگر بیاں رشوت اور سفارش کی جھلک ہو کر رہ گئی ہیں

Monday, July 22, 2013

INTERNATIONAL
THE NEWS

WOMEN

Poverty and gender



By Amtul Hafeez

Poverty refers to the condition of not having the means and resources to afford basic human needs, including food, clothing and shelter. It is one of the major social problems at the national and international levels. Poverty can lead to several other social problems, such as corruption, theft, injustice and lawlessness. Poverty in Pakistan is a multidimensional issue that has its roots in the socio-economic and political setup of the country. The country witnessed a substantial

Millennium Development Goals report 2010, almost 35 percent of the population does not have access to safe drinking water and 37 percent live without proper sanitation facilities.

The analysis of poverty needs a gender analysis of the division of resources, power, work and responsibility between women and men in poor households. Across the world, women face gender inequality issues and are more deprived than men in terms of access to productive resources. Women represent a larger portion of the poor and are sometimes among the poorest of the poor. Thus, the policies to reduce poverty should consider gender disparity in order to highlight the difficulties faced by both poor women and men.

The correlation between gender and poverty is a complex issue that is now being talked about more than ever. The theory of human poverty tends to explain the association between gender inequality and poverty. Women are more susceptible to persistent poverty due to inequalities in the allocation of income and access to productive resources and gender biases

for their paid work.

Almost 79.3 percent of the women are housewives in Pakistan. As these housewives obtain no cash rewards, they are considered to contribute nothing to the economy. Housewives are usually dependent on male family members for their living. They have lower access to employment opportunities due to their relatively low education levels and other required technical skills.

In rural households, women mostly participate in agriculture-related activities. The burden of women's time consuming work at home increases their 'time poverty' and restricts them from participating in income-generating opportunities. Although women are key economic agents, they experience several hindrances in maximising their efficiency. For example, they often do not have sufficient access to productive inputs and face challenges in marketing their goods. Globally, they own 15 percent of the land, work longer hours and earn lower wage rates. They have significant representation in the informal market and among



decline in poverty from 34.5 percent to 22.3 percent between 2001-02 and 2005-06. However, since 2008 the poverty rate has increased due to high inflation, low economic growth and energy shortages. Furthermore, the 2010-11 floods further aggravated the situation.

The headcount poverty ratio is the most commonly used poverty measure in Pakistan. Such a measure fails to take into account several deprivations faced by the poor. The poverty of opportunity index (POPI) measures human deprivations, including lack of access to income, education and health. According to the human development report 2012, the incidence of poverty as measured by the POPI at 29.2 percent is higher than monetary poverty (\$1.25 a day) at 22.6 percent. This indicates that people living beyond the income poverty line could experience health, education and other living standards' deprivations.

Meanwhile, the incidence of rural poverty is almost twice that of urban poverty. As per the measure of hours spent by women on paid and unpaid work time combined is higher than men's. They are relatively time poor and much of their work is socially unrecognised because it is unpaid. The returns to labour are lower

prevailing in the labour markets. Usually, women do not have complete control over their labour income and men prohibit their wives from working and take their income. Hence, it becomes difficult for women to participate in income-generating activities.

According to the human development index 2012, Pakistan has a GII value of 0.567, which ranks it at number 123 out of 148 countries. Pakistani women hold 21.1 percent of the parliamentary seats and 18.3 percent of adult women have reached either secondary or higher level of education as compared to 43.1 percent of their male counterparts. For each 100,000 live births, 260 women die due to pregnancy-related issues. Female participation rate in the labour market stands at 22.7 percent as compared to 83.3 for males.

Across a wide range of societies, women participate in unpaid activities as compared to men. According to the United Nations Development Programme report 1997, the average number of hours spent by women on paid and unpaid work time combined is higher than men's. They are relatively time poor and much of their work is socially unrecognised because it is unpaid. The returns to labour are lower

seasonal workers. Yet, they have more insecure jobs and are not protected by labour standards.

The gender differences in terms of education, nutrition and health are higher among poorer households. Lack of investment in the human capital of girls leads to a chronic cycle of poverty.

Overtime, a number of efforts have been undertaken to reduce women's poverty. Increasing investments in agricultural productivity, improving livestock management and providing livelihood opportunities are the major ways to address the needs of rural women. Another more popular measure is microfinance (small loans for poor women who have no access to the formal banking system).

Lastly, increasing women's access to land will help improve women's economic conditions. Women, who own or control land, can use it as collateral to obtain credit or generate income for themselves.

Women can participate efficiently in the economy by obtaining education and training, in both the rural and urban areas, which will help them earn equal income to their male counterparts.

The writer is a researcher

Gender and poverty

While nearly two-third of the world's poor are in the Asian and Pacific region, two thirds of the region's poor are women. And poverty is particularly acute for women living in rural areas.

In poor families, the gender division of labour and responsibilities for household welfare mean that the burden of poverty falls most heavily on women. Given gender disparities in education, health care, economic participation and incomes, women are the most vulnerable category.

The number of women living in poverty has increased disproportionately over the past decade, compared to the number of men. Male migration in search of work, and consequent changes in household structures, have placed additional burdens on women, especially those with several dependents. In the Asian and Pacific region, the proportion

of households headed by females ranges from 20 to 40 percent.

The increasing feminization of poverty is now a well known trend. It has intensified with the recent Asian crisis, where adjustment programmes tend to exacerbate women's hardships, and in the economies in transition as a short-term consequence of political, economic and social transformation.

The disproportionate number of women among the poor pose serious constraints to human and social development because their children are more likely to repeat cycles of poverty and disadvantage. Improving the political, legal, cultural, economic, and social status of women is thus pivotal to escaping the poverty trap.

— JAFAR ALI,
KARACHI

The Post — January 5, 2007

Exhibition of rural artisans open

Women complain of rising poverty

BY LAMIA ZIA

ISLAMABAD — The menace of poverty mainly concentrates in rural areas of Pakistan and women belonging to different Rural Support Programmes (RSPs) complained about the rising incidence of poverty in their areas.

"We do not agree with the official circle who claim that poverty is declining in Pakistan as we are witness to its rapid growth, especially among rural population," a woman, Shamun who is participating in the three-day exhibition of handicrafts by rural artisans organised by Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) here on Monday.

The aim of the exhibition is to provide access to the underprivileged communities about the trade infrastructure and other services. It also aims to enhance the work of rural women and provide them opportunity to sell their work.

All the four provinces including AJK had set up more than 25 stalls exhibiting hand knitted wooden bedsheets, embroidered suits, shawls, rullies (local craft as

bedcovers stitched with different patches of clothes) and all kind of household items.

According to the official data, 32.1 per cent of the population live below the poverty line in Pakistan. However, General Musharraf had claimed that poverty was declining and basis of his claim was a survey conducted by the authorities concerned of only 464 households.

The multilateral donors and independent analysts believe that more than 40 per cent people live below the poverty line in Pakistan and is on the rise with every passing day.

While talking to the women who had set up stalls at the exhibition, they said that they have many problems and such exhibitions do not facilitate them as the people do not purchase their items. These exhibitions have been organized to show the authorities that RSP and CBOs are helping the poor, they said.

Replying to a question, they said that poverty and inequality still exists in the rural and urban areas where women are not getting their due rights in all re-

spects. Job opportunities for educated youth are still non-existent; people have no right to get affordable and quick justice and discrimination prevails in the different policies of government for rural and urban areas, they added.

Another woman, Khalida Bibi, who had set up the stall of embroidered suits, said that rural women who made all these items are not allowed to come here and market their work due to strong customs.

While criticising the rural support programmes, she said that we have no proper place where we can sell our work and RSP have yet not achieved its targets. They are not even able to define the word poverty, she said.

Later, she felt hesitant in answering questions when she was asked about the profit which they give to the women for their work.

People belonging to various walks of life visited various stalls and lauded the work but very few purchased anything. A vast majority of foreigners were present at the exhibition as traditional handicrafts always attract them.

The Nation — October 14, 2003

LES MISERABLES

Living from hand to mouth



ONE DAY AT A TIME: A woman has set up a dry fruits stall at Empress Market, Saddar, to be able to make money to support her family. The demand for dry fruits has gone down significantly since the beginning of spring. PHOTO: PTI



RAWALPINDI: A gypsy woman flanked by her children preparing toys at Shah Khalid Colony. — Khalid Raja

محرک کے خلاف تحریک کے لئے آبادی پر کنٹرول ضروری ہے

میڈیا اور سرکاری محکمے آبادی کو کنٹرول کرنے میں اہم کردار ادا کر سکتے ہیں

ایک (خصوصی رپورٹر) ملک کی آبادی بہت تیز رفتاری سے بڑھ رہی ہے۔ آبادی کو کنٹرول کر کے ہی معاشی ترقی اور غربت میں کمی لائی جاسکتی ہے۔ میڈیا، سول سوسائٹی، سرکاری محکمے اور انسانی حقوق کی تنظیمیں آبادی کو کنٹرول کرنے میں اہم کردار ادا کر سکتے ہیں۔ انسانی حقوق کی تنظیمیں آبادی کو کنٹرول کرنے میں اہم کردار ادا کر سکتے ہیں۔ انسانی حقوق کی تنظیمیں آبادی کو کنٹرول کرنے میں اہم کردار ادا کر سکتے ہیں۔

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آبادی کا سیلاب معاشی ترقی کے اثرات کو ساتھ رہا کر کے جانے گا۔ آبادی اور وسائل میں توازن پیدا کرنے والی قوم دنیا میں باوقار مقام حاصل کرتی ہیں اور ان کا شمار اعلیٰ قوموں میں کیا جاتا ہے۔ مقررین نے کہا کہ پوری دنیا معاشی جنگ کا سامنا کر رہی ہے اور انسانی حقوق کی تنظیمیں آبادی کو کنٹرول کرنے میں اہم کردار ادا کر سکتے ہیں۔ انسانی حقوق کی تنظیمیں آبادی کو کنٹرول کرنے میں اہم کردار ادا کر سکتے ہیں۔

Pakistan July 13, 2005

پاکستانی نظام سے نجات دلانے کیلئے عورتوں کو باہر نکلتا ہوگا "سگا"

پاکستانی جاکر سماجی حالات اور انقلاب کی محرک ہے، خواتین کے بغیر سسٹم ناممکن ہے

پاکستانی خواتین کو شہرستان پر کنٹرول ہے تو علاقے میں خوشحالی آئے گی، خواتین کے ہاتھ پر مقررین کا خطاب تھا کہ اس طرح کو دیکھنا ہے سگا اسلام آباد کے صدر ابراہیم گلپانی نے کہا کہ ساری دنیا میں انقلابی تبدیلیاں ہمیشہ خواتین کے ہاتھ پر رونق پاتی ہیں اور اس خطے کی خواتین فطرتاً انقلابی ہیں۔ ان کی صلاحیتوں کو بروئے کار لانے کی ضرورت ہے۔ محترمہ بینا سند نے کہا کہ سندھ کو طبعی نظام سے نجات دلانے کیلئے یہ ضروری ہے کہ شعوری تحریکوں، مطلقہ عورتوں میں خواتین کو اپنے شانہ بشانہ رکھا جائے۔

Pakistan March 9, 2006

Financial condition of every third household tumbles: survey

Just one out of five respondents to PSLM survey said they were better off

SHAHBAZ RANA
ISLAMABAD

One out of every third household has reported worsening financial conditions and just one in five said they were more prosperous while 43% said their conditioned remained the same, according to the findings of Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (PSLM).

As many as 35.4% urban households reported deterioration in economic conditions in the last fiscal year as compared to 38.4% of rural households, according to the PSLM survey, conducted by Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.

The findings also show that less than half of the country's population is satisfied with police services. A little over half of the population that used basic health units' services were satisfied with the level of government services.

GETTING WORSE

35.4%
urban households reported deterioration in economic conditions

no change in their economic situations.

In Punjab, little over four out of every ten households reported no change in their lifestyles, a ratio that was alarmingly at 52.8% in Sindh, 44.3% in what is believed to be the undernourished province of Balochistan, while little over one-third in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) said their conditions did not improve.

As many as 37.5% reported that their economic conditions have either worsened or much worsened in the last financial year. The results were somehow better than 2010-11

The results are based on the responses given by 75,520 surveyed households that have been contacted

STAGNATION

42.8%
household reported that their economic conditions did not change

When almost 43% reported deterioration in their economic conditions.

In Punjab, 38.7% reported deterioration in their economic conditions - the percentage recorded at 31.4% in Sindh, 41.3% in K-P and 40.4% in Balochistan. The results suggest that Punjab provincial administration was not as successful as the governments in Sindh and Balochistan. In Balochistan the respondents reporting worsening conditions decreased from 50% to 40.4% in K-P, the militancy-hit fed-

erating unit, the ratio of households showing unhappiness with their economic situation increased from 39.6% to 41.3%.

At national level, 19.5% households said their economic conditions either improved or improved a lot in the last financial year - a figure that was 16.6% in 2010-11. In Punjab 20% households became more prosperous as compared to 15% in Sindh and Balochistan and almost 25% in K-P.

Satisfaction with state's facilities

The survey's findings also reveal that 47.8% of the households showed confidence over police facilities and services. A little over half of the respondents in Punjab were satisfied with police services as compared to only 38% in Sindh, 55.5% in K-P and almost 50% in Balochistan.

The Express Tribune — April 8, 2014

Growing inflation pulls down poor woman's business

Saeida Khalid
Islamabad

With her weak stature, trembling hands and paining speech, 60-year-old Razia Bibi finds it hard to continue her business of cooked food due to the growing inflation that has led to a considerable decrease in her daily customers. Although, she is associated with the same business from the last 15 years, Razia claims that it was never too hard to make both ends meet as it is in the present era.

While talking to 'The News', she said although her kiosk is established in the heart of the capital's busiest Blue Area, considered to be the hub of offices and trade activities, her food business is witnessing a sharp decline, as there has been a 50 per cent cut down in her customers during the last six months.

"People now cannot afford to eat out in such rising inflation and prefer to skip their day's meal," she said adding that despite this changing trend, she has not modified her price list in congruence to the soaring prices of raw items, but still people do not buy ready-made food as they used to previously. Razia said the price hike in food items at the Utility Stores have added to her miseries, as her cooking cost has increased manifold, but still she is compelled to sell her food items at previous rates. "My customers argue if I ask them to pay more, she said, they will stop coming."

Razia's kiosk offers freshly prepared meat 'naan', 'chutney', 'bhajiyas', 'dahi', 'samosa' and 'Zinda' (sweet rice), but her business of food is now forcing her to look for other options. All of her children - four daughters and one son - have been married but fate continued to test her as her elder daughter died due to cancer and Razia had to feed her four grandchildren.



Moreover, her son left her soon after his marriage so now not only does she run this food business to raise her grandchildren but also looks after other domestic affairs.

Razia said she is too old to continue her business but the burden of responsibilities motivate her to go on. "I have never reached an age that makes me and have to look for other options to feed my family," she said.

Further, she does not have a proper outlet for her business, therefore, she remains insecure that someday, the authorities might ask her to remove her stall from the roadside. "The CDA officials have been very nice to me till now but who knows about the future," she said adding that she also doesn't have a permanent place to live and her family

is on the mercy of a house owner in Sector F-6, who has allowed them to live in his servant quarter. "Two of my granddaughters work in that house and if they discontinue, he will throw us out of there," she said.

Razia seems very disturbed with the present government, saying that it has made it impossible for a poor man to survive. "What can we expect for our future, as the present government has already crossed its limits during the initial months of their tenure," she said.

She said she could earn a better profit by establishing a permanent food outlet but her limited resources prevent her from doing so, and appealed to the authorities as well as the well-off people of society to assist her financially, so that she could marry her granddaughters and die peacefully.

— Photo by Muhammad Hanif

Poverty greater burden on women, says WHO

KARACHI: There is a growing realisation that women are shouldering the greater share of the burden of poverty with negative consequences on their health. It is estimated that 70% of the 1.2 billion people living below the poverty line in the world are females, according to a report of World Health Organisation (WHO) released here on Thursday.

In most developing countries, women are disadvantaged in areas such as education, skills, employment opportunities and mobility, which significantly diminishes their human development capacity and impairs their health status. The social and economic disadvantages of women often inhibit their access to basic health services and discourage their willingness to seek health care, it said.

Several major illnesses recognised as diseases of poverty, such as tuberculosis, malaria, HIV/AIDS, mental diseases, child ill health and malnutrition, have demonstrated their ability to trap human development and lead to a perpetuation in poverty, it said.

Tuberculosis is highly endemic in Pakistan, attacking at least 1% of the population directly with an estimated incidence rate of 171 per 100,000 every year. As a debilitating disease, tuberculosis can drive families into a perpetual poverty trap from which it is difficult to emerge. Malaria has a strong negative relationship with long-term economic growth and development. It is suggested that the relationship between malaria and poverty is at least partially causal in triggering off a significant cost to the long-term socio-economic growth and development, according to the report.

Mental health disorders account for 11% of the total global burden of disease. Because of their chronic nature, they usually impair productivity with ghastly effects on patients, their families and society at large. Studies have demonstrated that the economic impact of depression and anxiety in Bangalore was Rs 700 per month, while in Rawalpindi it was estimated at more than Rs 3,000 per month, which is equivalent to the loss of 4-14 days of an agricultural wage in India and about 20 days' work for similar workers in Pakistan. Twenty-two million people worldwide have now died of HIV/AIDS and the number is expected to rise considerably from its current level of three million per year, pushing the marginalised sections of these populations into abject poverty, the report said.

Every year in the developing world 12.2 million children die before reaching their fifth birthday, which works out to around 99% of the under-five deaths worldwide. Most of these deaths are due to preventable causes and can be prevented through minor financial and physical inputs. Thirty-six percent of these children die in Asia. When living in absolute poverty, the relative risk of a child under five dying is five times greater, and the major killers include pneumonia, diarrhoea, measles, malaria and HIV/AIDS, according to the report.

Nutritional problems of developing countries

include protein-energy malnutrition and micronutrient deficiency resulting in anaemia, vitamin A deficiency and iodine deficiency. These conditions, along with reduced breast-feeding and low-birth weight, are often associated with poverty and poor health, and lead to long-term deficits in cognition and school achievement. The interaction between nutrition and infection is synergistic whereby malnutrition reduces resistance to infection, and the latter negatively affects nutritional status. The caloric intake requirement defined in terms of a food poverty line reflecting the minimum food expenditure necessary is estimated in Pakistan at 2,250 calories per person, or 2,450 calories per adult equivalent in rural areas and 2,150 calories per adult equivalent in urban areas. This gives a proportion of individuals/households whose income or consumption level falls below the poverty line ranging between 32% and 35%. Caloric-based poverty doubled from 17.4% in 1987-88 to 30% in 1999-2000, it said.

With the current annual population growth of nearly 2.2%, Pakistan's population, which currently is 142 million, will double in approximately 33 years until concrete measures are taken to contain it. The relatively low level of contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) standing at 28%, a total fertility rate of 4.8 and a high unmet need for contraception at 38%, Pakistan needs a dynamic policy to effectively address this social challenge, the report said.

A way out of this problem can lie in the implementation and expansion of an integrated multi-sectoral programme by the name of Basic Development Needs. The programme was recently approved at a meeting of the Departmental Development Working Party for the Health Sector held under the chairmanship of the Sindh Secretary for Health, Ashiq Hussain Memon, at a revised cost of Rs. 20.636 million, extending its project life till June 2005. The ongoing scheme has been in progress since October 2001 and has brought about a significant difference in the quality of life of the population of the area of operation through a multi-sectoral approach, coupled with community involvement. The Basic Development Needs (BDN) Programme was launched in Sindh during 1996 in union council Babak of taluka Sehwan in Dadu district in order to bring about a better quality of life and resultant good health for its citizens.

During the replication phase the programme was expanded to the entire Sehwan taluka through a scheme approved at a cost of Rs 7.5 million in October 2001, signifying the total commitment and ownership of the government of Sindh in this initiative to involve the communities in the BDN poverty reduction process, in order to increase the response of government workers to address community needs. The main emphasis of the replication phase was social sector projects including health and other sectors such as family planning, education, women development, provision of safe water and sanitation that have a direct bearing on the health status.

While according formal approving to the scheme, the Secretary for Health appreciated the efforts of WHO Sindh and the Programme Manager Basic Development, Dr Khadim Hussain Lakhani, expressed the desire of the Department of Health to replicate the programme in other talukas of the Dadu district and to other districts of the province as well.

The WHO Operations Officer for Sindh, Dr Ghulam Nabi Kazi, while tracing the history of the programme since 1997 thanked the Sindh Department of Health for actively collaborating with WHO and the local communities and formally owning the programme since 2001, which had resulted in the yielding of highly positive results such as improving the health care delivery including preventive work in the area of operation through the revised project.

Dr Kazi mentioned that the EPI coverage had been raised to nearly 100% in certain union councils of Sehwan, efforts for the control of malaria and leishmaniasis were underway, 12 women's vocational training centres had been set up in an effort to empower local females through skills impartment and literacy, 6 schools or literacy centres had been started in uncovered areas, 10 hand pumps and 100 latrines had been installed for the provision of safe drinking water. He stated that a survey would be carried out soon to measure the impact of the interventions on the health indicators. He stressed that if the true requirements of the community can be identified, major outputs can be achieved with minimal inputs, according to the report.

Shahid Husain, Daily Times — October 4, 2003





THIS woman and her daughter picking pieces to sustain their poverty-ridden life in the capital as a few fortunate are preparing to celebrate the Eid on Monday. — Dawn

Dawn — December 31, 2006

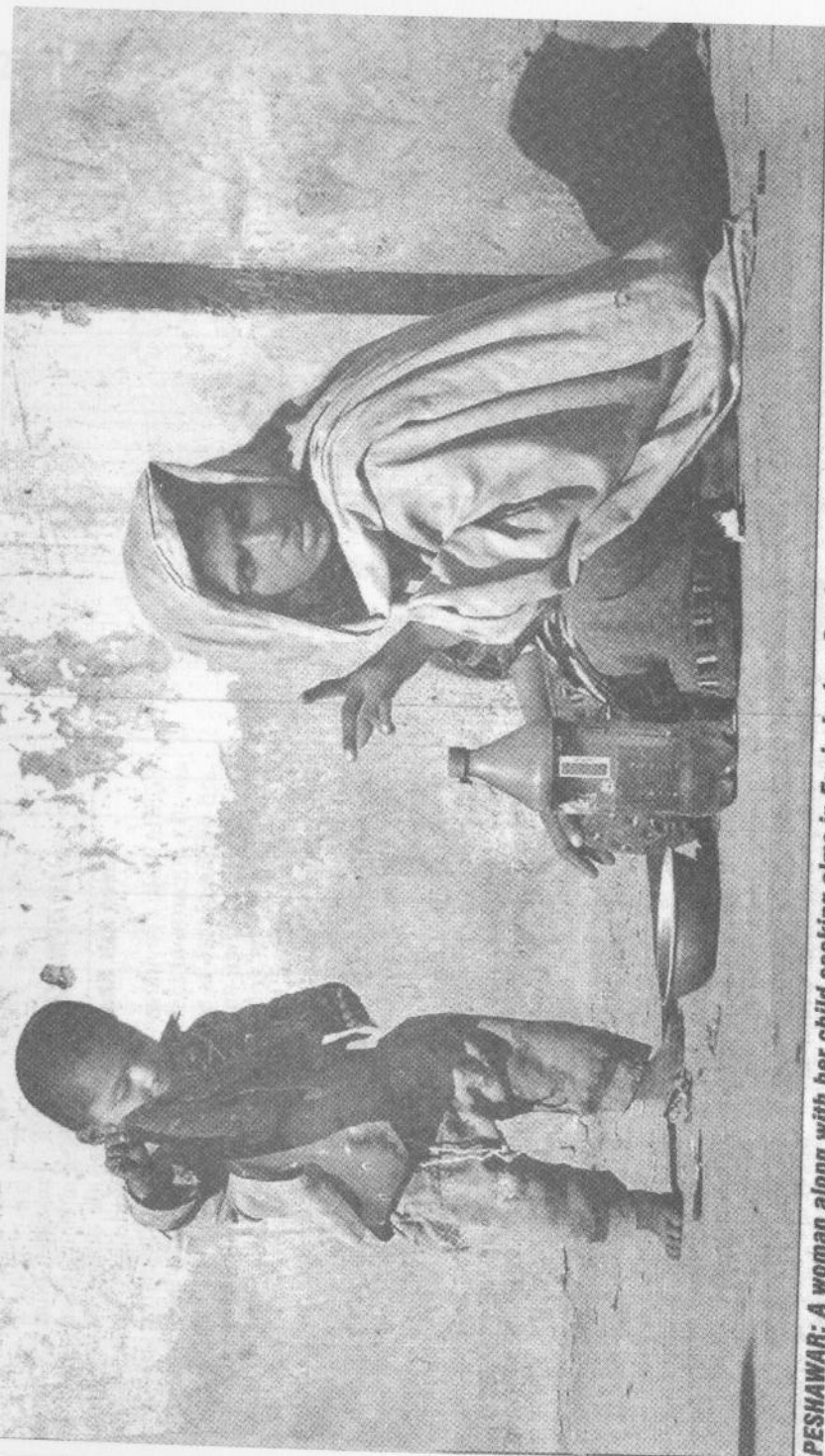
2016

Oct

Saturday 1

Sunday 2

Monday 3



PESHAWAR: A woman along with her child seeking alms in Fagirabad on Sunday. — Khurram Pervaz

The News — January 12, 2015

'Poverty major cause of domestic violence'

Our correspondent

CHARSADDA: Poverty, unemployment, class-based system and lack of education among women about their rights are the major causes of domestic violence against women.

This was the crux of the concluding session of a two-day district level workshop jointly organised by Jobs Creating Development Society and Thafuz, Lahore, here on Wednesday.

Member Provincial Assembly Arshad Khan, district councillors, political and social work-

ers, newsmen and large number of women belonging to all walks of life attended the workshop.

Director JCDS, Ali Akbar while addressing on the occasion stressed the need for awareness and empowerment of women by engaging them in different activities like, skill training, education and awareness about their rights. He said that women were confronting numerous problems but they have shut their eyes and ears to hear their cries.

Imtiyaz Ali and Sadia briefed the partici-

pants about the performance of Thafuz by providing legal support to victims of domestic violence.

They said to have registered 200 per cent rise in violence against women, while 50 per cent educated women fell victim to domestic violence. They claimed that 408 cases of burning women were registered in last year.

Ali Akbar was elected as district coordinator, while Farmanullah and Sabiha Ikram were elected conveners. MPA Arshad Khan was nominated sarparast-e-Aala.

The News — October 24, 2003

'Sinf aur Ghurbat' to be screened on Women's Day

Our correspondent
Islamabad

International Women's Day is celebrated in many countries around the world to recognise women's achievements without regard to divisions, whether national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic or political.

It is an occasion for looking back on past struggles and accomplishments, and more importantly, for looking ahead to the untapped potential and opportunities that await future generations of women. This year, in connection with the celebrations of International Women's Day, Sachet — Pakistan, a multi dimensional CSO committed to promote human development in Pakistan for the disadvantaged with gender perspectives is organising a couple of activities on the occasion.

Screening of 15 minutes documentary film 'Sinf aur Ghurbat' (Gender and Poverty) directed by Dr. Rakhshanda Perveen aims to sensitise people regarding gender discrimination and its effects on development.

Sachet is also launching a poster, which highlights Agehi (Advocates of Gender, Education and Health Information) Resource Centre's mission and its work on dowry violence. The event would be held today (Thursday) at Sachet Gallery.

Dawn — March 6, 2008



Being callous

Fighting parents cite poverty reasons to dump children

These six minor children left at Edhi Foundation shelter home because they were unwilling to raise them

● **RABIA ALI**
KARACHI

"But Abbu said he won't come back to take me home," "Umer, the eldest of six siblings, sadly told everyone who asked him if he wanted to go home. After crying for many hours, he stopped and sought comfort in a yellow toy car at an unfamiliar place where he and his minor siblings would now begin their new life.

The six children were left behind at the Edhi Centre in Mithadar, as their parents were unwilling to raise them. The foundation's spokesperson Anwar Kazmi told *The Express Tribune* that the children's parents, Zubaida and Irshaad, did not want to live together anymore and were reluctant to raise them as they were poor. "The woman has gone to live with her parents and has refused to keep the children citing financial constraints. The man, on the other hand, said he could not raise them on his own," he said.

The only option left for them was to leave the children at the shelter home. On Monday, the children arrived at the centre in shabby clothes and starving. Umer, 7, cried the most as the parents bid them adieu - probably the only one who understood what was happening.

A day later, the children, properly fed, washed and dressed in warm clothes, played with plastic balls and toy cars at the TV lounge of their new home. The youngest of the lot, an eight-month-old girl cried for someone to pick her up as the others were too preoccupied with their new toys. Two of them quickly tired and went for a nap.

The children come from a family where the mother was frequently subjected to domestic violence and where the young ones had witnessed it with their eyes.

"My father used to beat my mother with a roller and scissors. She was bleeding," said "Sarah, 6. The fights remains etched in her memory. "Ammi locked the door from the outside and then went away," she continued.

The children, who lived with their parents in Quaidabad, said that they did not go to school.

Kazmi confirms the man's violent behaviour. "Irshaad was jobless and would not work in one place. He often subjected the wife to violence," said Kazmi.

» The mother says she cannot keep the children due to financial constraints. The father said he cannot raise them on his own

Edhi Foundation spokesperson
Anwar Kazmi

They tried to sort the matter out and get police help but to no avail. Now, the woman does not want to live with him anymore.

Such cases are frequent at the Edhi Foundation, where after every two to three months, parents reportedly leave their children mainly due to domestic fights or poverty.

"Parents who leave their children are either too poor or the husband is a drug addict or if he remarries, the woman can't raise them. Sometimes they come to take them back but, more often than not, they continue to live here."

*Names changed to protect identities of minors

The Express Tribune — February 4, 2015

Poverty: mother of five commits suicide

By Our Correspondent

SAHIWAL, June 24: A mother of five children committed suicide because of extreme poverty in Sadig Nager near Harrapa Railway Station on Sunday.

Reports said that Shabeela Kausar (45) of Faisalabad had contracted marriage with Ghulam Bari some 18 years ago. On Sunday, she sent all her children out of the house and then took her life by hanging herself with the pillar of the roof by using her 'dupata' as a rope. Police sent the body to the DHQ Hospital for an autopsy.

SHO Rana Asif said the apparent reason for suicide looked to be extreme poverty.

Dawn — June 25, 2012

POVERTY

Woman 'commits suicide'

TAXILA. A poverty-stricken woman allegedly committed suicide in Taxila on Friday. The police said 29-year-old Naureen committed suicide after hanging herself from a ceiling fan in her house. The family had been reeling under poverty as the husband of the deceased was had been jobless for many months, neighbours said. Naureen married Javaid Joseph seven years back and they have two daughters, Ayesha, 6, and Anny, 3. The woman reportedly sent them to a neighbour's house before hanging herself, the police said. Neighbours told the police that the family had been unable to pay rent for the house they were living in. The police lodged a case. OUR CORRESPONDENT

Poverty drives woman to commit suicide

THE NEWSPAPER'S
CORRESPONDENT

TAXILA, Dec 7: Being unable to purchase new clothes for Christmas for her daughters, a Christian woman committed suicide in the limits of Wah Saddar police station on Saturday, police said.

They said the woman's husband had been unemployed since long.

On Saturday, her two daughters (aged 6 and 3) demanded new clothes for Christmas at which the woman became severely distressed. She

sent her children to the neighbours' house and locked herself in a room.

Later, her husband found the house locked from inside, and after breaking the door down, found the woman's body hanging from a ceiling fan.

Neighbours and other relatives collected a donation to meet the burial expenditure.

They told the police that the family had not paid rent for the past two months and had been in distress for long.

Dawn — December 8, 2013

The Express Tribune — December 8, 2013

Pregnant woman drinks acid over electricity bill

NNI
FAISALABAD

On being blamed for extensive electricity bills by husband, a pregnant mother of four consumed acid yesterday and died. Miraculously she gave birth to a healthy baby before dying.

Tragedy struck after a woman could not take her unemployed husband's nipping barbs over an electricity bill that they could not pay. "Samina, a resident of Kosarabad neighbourhood, unduly drew fire from her spouse after the power utility slapped them with a bill of Rs. 4500," a private television channel reported Wednesday. Her husband taunted her that she was responsible for the bill because she did show any care towards saving power. "She was accused of wasting electricity by not switching off the lights and fans running unnecessarily," sources said.

The mother of four could not take this uncalled-for humiliation at the hands of her jobless partner and consumed acid to end not one but two lives – she was full-term pregnant.

Miraculously, Samina delivered a healthy baby boy at Allied Hospital of Faisalabad...before dying.

Sources further added that the relatives of the deceased Samina do not want to take any legal action against her husband.

The Nation — October 15, 2015



RAWALPINDI: People buying subsidised 'atta' from 'Ramazan Sasta Bazaar' near Committee Chowk. —Khalid Raja

The News — July 23, 2014

DAWN THURSDAY DECEMBER 13, 2012

Poverty affecting children, women's survival: UN

By Amin Ahmed

ISLAMABAD, Dec 12: Persistent poverty is putting the survival and development of children and women at greater risk, fears a new UN analysis.

It further deplores that if the present trend of poverty continues, Pakistan may not be able to meet the poverty-reduction targets by 2015.

The 'Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Pakistan 2012' released by Unicef here on Wednesday referred to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) of Federal Bureau of Statistics which increased from 158.90 in 2007-08 to 244.26 in 2010-11.

The report says these negative developments are expected to increase the number of poor people in all parts of the country, including Punjab, which is home to around 60 per cent of the country's population.

Stating that poverty in Pakistan has always been higher in rural areas, the situation analysis states that in the absence of estimates of headcount poverty in rural and urban areas, it is difficult to provide evidence of emerging trends. Headcount poverty is an estimate which determines the number of people who live below poverty line.

However, prima facie evidence suggests that the gap between rural and urban areas may have further narrowed over the last five years.

About the implementation of 18th Amendment, the Unicef analysis says that decentralisation carries with it many unanswered questions about the effect it will have on resource allocations for public services, including education and health care, which directly impact the lives of children and women.

The report says that gender inequality in Pakistan is widespread, reflecting the patriarchal nature of society in which men dominate. This mindset permeates every domain, from the household to the community and the wider public sphere.

The 'gender gap' exists across most well-being indicators in terms of capacities, access to resources and opportunities; inequality within the family, in workforce, political sphere and in education and healthcare.

Regional poverty trends in Pakistan suggest that while poverty increased in all provinces in the 1990s, it was highest in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. At the beginning of the decade it was 33.62 per cent and by the end of the period it was 41.47 per cent.

It is also significant to note that the incidence of headcount poverty sharply increased in Sindh and Balochistan between 1998-99 and 2000-01.

The analysis breaks new ground in devising an index, crafted according to the realities and priorities facing Pakistan, to identify and locate the most deprived children. Child well-being is quantified by deploying a measurement of deprivations in five domains; child survival,

child education, water and sanitation, child protection, and shelter and information.

These are weighed and combined into a single indicative number, a Child Well-being Index (CWI), for each district. These district rankings are then mapped for each province or area. The results indicate that fully 57 per cent of the 132 districts, agencies and frontier regions in the sample return poor results for child well-being, according to the different sets of indicators devised for each province in determining the provincial CWI.

The analysis shows that although child marriage is technically against law in Pakistan, 70 per cent of girls are married by the age of 18, and 20 per cent by the age of 13; predictably, the figures are especially high in rural areas.

Some 264,000 children are found in domestic labour in Pakistan. Most of these children enter into domestic labour due to poverty and come from rural backgrounds.

Children and women are bought, sold, "rented", or kidnapped to work in organised illegal begging rings, domestic servitude, prostitution and bonded labour.

Illegal labour agents charge high fees from parents with false promises of decent work for their children, who are later exploited and subjected to forced labour in domestic servitude, unskilled jobs, small shops and other sectors.

The greatest problem is bonded labour, concentrated in Punjab in agriculture and brick making, which employ school-age children in arduous work under grueling conditions, it says.

The most common act of violence against women – domestic violence – mostly goes unreported. In 2009 only 608 registered cases of domestic violence were reported across the country.

Pakistan also lacks a universal system of birth registration. Its overall birth registration rate is believed to be very low; about 30 per cent even by government's own reckoning. Overall, the well-being of children and women in Pakistan is viewed in the analysis from a human rights perspective, with the aim of identifying the segments of the 80-million-strong child population of Pakistan who are the most vulnerable.

All too often, despite the periodic gathering of data through household surveys, the poorest and most marginalised communities are not systematically assessed and are often forgotten when national development plans are laid and resources allocated.

These communities are also the least likely to have a voice in global and national decision-making forums.

Disaggregating national data to identify these groups and assess the factors that exclude them is fundamental to designing equitable solutions, according to the analysis.

Dawn — December 13, 2012



اسلام آباد، ایک خاتون کچرے

سے کار آمد اشیاء ہونڈ رہی ہے

Pakistan — January 10, 2012

Christine Lagarde

Managing director of the IMF



”In too many countries, too many legal restrictions conspire against women to be economically active

The Express Tribune — February 27, 2015

Rural women can help end global poverty, hunger: UN

ISLAMABAD: On the occasion of International Women's Day, UN Women Executive Director Michelle Bachelet, in her message on Wednesday, said, "Unleashing the potential of rural women will make a major contribution to ending poverty and hunger across the world."

This year, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), along with the entire UN system, will be commemorating International Women's Day today (Thursday) around the theme 'Empower Rural Women - End Hunger and Poverty'. A sustainable future can only be reached by women, men and young people enjoying equality together. While women have taken many positive steps forward in legal rights, educational achievements, participation in public life, and more women are surviving childbirth and can plan for their families, inequality still persists. Nowhere are disparities and barriers greater than in rural areas for women and girls where they work long hours with little or no pay and produce a large proportion of the food grown, especially in subsistence agriculture. The inequalities worsen in access to social services, land and other productive assets. **STAFF REPORT**

Daily Times — March 8, 2012



LARKANA: A gypsy woman collects used papers to earn her livelihood, near the railway station. APP

3



ISLAMABAD: A woman collecting useful items from a garbage dump to earn livelihood for her family as world celebrate Women Day. — INP

The News International — March 8, 2015

مزد روٹ ہیں خواتین کی مزدوری، بچے بھی مزدوری ہی کیلئے صادق

خواتین کو روزانہ کم از کم 10 روپے کی مزدوری ملنی چاہیے، ورنہ بچے بھی مزدوری کیلئے تیار ہوں گے۔

خواتین کو روزانہ کم از کم 10 روپے کی مزدوری ملنی چاہیے، ورنہ بچے بھی مزدوری کیلئے تیار ہوں گے۔

اس کے علاوہ کم از کم 10 روپے کی مزدوری ملنی چاہیے، ورنہ بچے بھی مزدوری کیلئے تیار ہوں گے۔



ایک خاتون زمیندار کی مزدوری کیلئے تیار ہوتی ہے۔

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ایک خاتون زمیندار کی مزدوری کیلئے تیار ہوتی ہے۔



ایک خاتون زمیندار کی مزدوری کیلئے تیار ہوتی ہے۔

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No share for poor women in economic cake

By A Reporter

ISLAMABAD, April 20: All the talk of women empowerment is hollow for the women of the poor strata as the government's economic policies hardly touch them, according to the Quaid-i-Azam University research scholar Noor Fatima.

Her observation made in the course of a presentation on the status of women started an engaging discussion at the Islamabad Cultural Forum here on Friday.

Ms Fatima argued that the economic policies pursued by the government had marginalised women. Women's work is

undervalued in the social sector where they are primarily employed, and in the service industries they lack access to credit and property right, she said.

Women workers are "usually the lowest paid and are termed as unskilled."

Their proficiency in doing things is not recognised as a specialised skill, and that is never marketed.

In her estimate poor women have not benefited from the new policies as they do not provide women the same access or control over resources as men gener-

ally have.

Renowned columnist and former principal of Gordon College Prof Khwaja Masud, who chaired the discussion, urged the government to include women's input in organising statistics, to reflect the true situation in economic activities.

He reminded that women equal men in the population and in producing the national wealth.

Even otherwise it was women's decade, he said, asking the government to take all measures to give women a fair chance and equal opportunities.

Dawn — April 21, 2007

Feminisation of poverty

Afiya Shehrbano



The tragic incident that claimed 30 women and children's lives in the Faizan-e-Madina stampede over the weekend, is in many ways reflective of the vulnerability of the weakest in society. The fact that the mosque was unsafe due to lack of adequate exits is as criminal as the prevention of crucial assistance to the female victims by rescue workers because they were non-mehrams.

The state has allowed religion, like the economy, to become privatised without safeguards or social security and thus, has abdicated all responsibility towards this end. Also, in the systemic cycle of violence against women, if men are not the perpetrators then they are at best, impotent spectators of women who are struggling for their lives.

Religion has become a survival strategy for many women, particularly those seeking dignity in a life devoid of any social or political importance. With increasing liberalisation and deregulation, social services and protection are non-existent and spiritual sanctuary is the only path where the youth and women can find compensation and promise for a better after-life.

On a structural level, studies on feminisation of poverty have shown that low labour force participation and lack of recognition of female contribution to the national income are causes for spiralling female poverty. The impact of globalisation has meant high redundancy rates which edge women out of production both due to lack of technological skills but most often because of cultural obstacles, which make women's access to meaningful employment impossible.

This means women sink into the unorganised sectors, domestic employment and home-based work, which are low paying and exploitative. Further, according to Siddiqui and Siddiqui (1998), earning differentials between men and women in the labour market in Pakistan are up to 20 per cent because of gender discrimination.

These are all classic assessments of the feminisation of poverty and in addition there is analysis, which looks at the inequality of women's participation in decision-making and inequitable access to institutional credit facilities, markets and technical skill or just basic education in our case.

On the one hand, women development workers have fought for the recognition of women's issues as part

of mainstream development. These have been influential but almost to a fault. International agencies and donors have found 'gender' a convenient and separate 'sector' that has become an appendage to nearly all programmes be it agriculture, poverty, health or environment. While all economic, social and political systems impact women differently from men due to patriarchal pre-determinants, yet the segregated approach to development is, one fears, further preventing a holistic integrated approach to change.

This is not to suggest that affirm-

On a structural level, studies on feminisation of poverty have shown that low labour force participation and lack of recognition of female contribution to the national income are causes for spiralling female poverty. The impact of globalisation has meant high redundancy rates which edge women out of production both due to lack of technological skills but most often because of cultural obstacles, which make women's access to meaningful employment impossible

tive action doesn't work. In the case of micro-credit facilities, South Asian women have been beneficiaries of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh and Kashf Foundation in Pakistan in a path-breaking manner. These credit facilities have enabled and empowered women because the vision behind the programmes clearly linked women's social disadvantage to lack of financial access and decision-making.

Micro-credit has been most successful where it has been sustained by

awareness raising and empowerment strategies for women. Not only does this assist the lenders towards a meaningful investment of the principal but women's borrowing habits show a trend towards communal ownership and reinvestment towards family betterment.

However, the trouble with micro-credit programmes is that they leave the burden of poverty on the poor. While they facilitate some upward mobility from absolute poverty, they reinforce the notion that the state is a neutral facilitator, rather than the perpetrator of free market policies that led to the increasing burden of poverty in the first place. It also postpones the inevitable structural question of women and land ownership, which is also a cultural and religious issue than simply an economic one.

The concept of poverty alleviation is such a self-defeating one when you consider that in effect it suggests merely mitigating or easing the crushing weight of poverty off the majority of the people. Imagine if we called it 'violence alleviation' whereby we acknowledge that there is bound to be tremendous violence at state and domestic levels, let's just alleviate it a little. It's also not enough to suggest, as in the Jeffery Sachian thesis, that the 'End of Poverty' means ending of 'extreme' poverty only.

Ultimately, so far all the development goals and formula have depended on either aid or the good will of rich nations. This 'enlightened globalisation' is essentially face-saving for capitalism and an effort to enable it to work by encouraging everyone to jump on board the waves of globalisation or (not in so many words), sink.

It's a bit like saying enlightened racism or benevolent patriarchy would improve the lot of minorities and women if they just accepted the premise of inequality on which these systems are based.

The poor have to realise that while we carve out agendas for their betterment, systemic poverty suits not only the rich nations' leadership but all powerful groups within them. Apart from political will and economic restructuring of expenditure on the social sector, there is an urgent need for land reforms and institutionalising social security.

If not, the poor and particularly the poorest (women and children) are going to sink not just further below the poverty line but into a sanctuary that is as unworlly as the unreal utopia that globalisation promises us.

The writer is a sociologist based in Karachi. She has a background in women's studies and has authored and edited several books on women's issues. Email: afiyaszi@yahoo.com

'Empower women to curtail poverty'

Our correspondent

LAHORE: The public and private sector should jointly take initiatives on education and increase equal employment opportunities for women in country to minimise poverty level.

These views were expressed by the experts in Jang Economic Session on 'Role of women in poverty alleviation and employment generation', here Thursday. The experts were Prof Mussarat Abid, Erum Shaheen Malik, Saeeda Nazar, Qaisra Sheikh, Farah Naz Naqvi and Fatima Qamar while the session was mediated by Sikandar Lodhi. Prof Mussarat Abid said that women were playing a vital role in economic empowerment of their families and country's development. She said Pakistani woman was poverty-affected and not getting health and education basic facilities. She called for change in attitude towards women and need to provide them equal opportunities to progress in all spheres of life. She stressed the need of women capacity building for their better economic contribution.

Erum Shaheen Malik

said that equal education should be provided to women along with promotion of vocational and skill development courses both in rural and urban areas. She said various organisations individually were working on it and providing education to the lower segment. She called for increase in women wages, free education and health facilities.

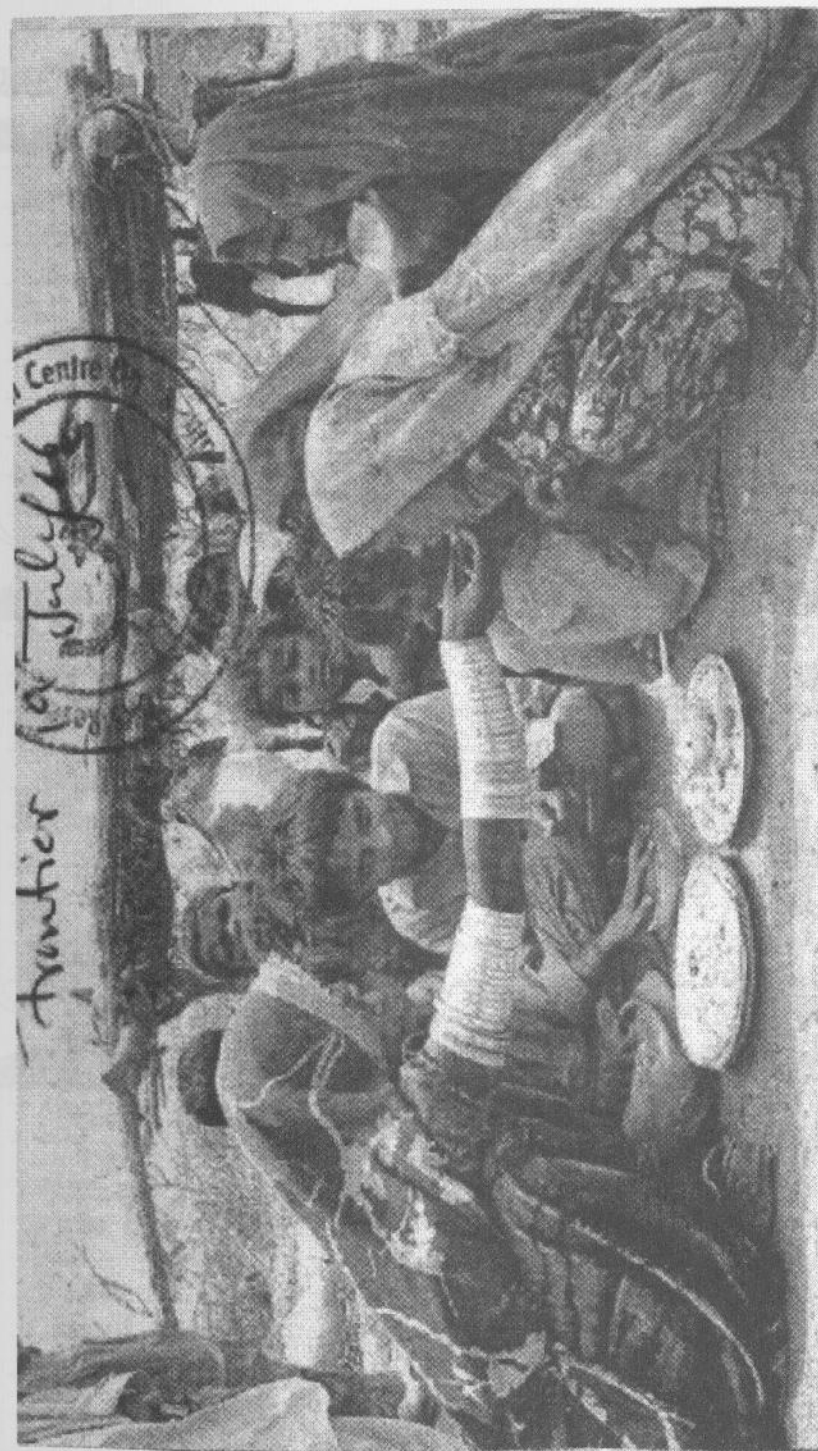
Saeeda Nazar said women were economically dependent on men. She said men support was vital for women to handle social and economic issues. She said women work did not include in GDP calculation as they were getting less wages than men. She said government support was required for women empowerment and independence. She called for separate statistics of women share in economic development.

Qaisra Sheikh said that Pakistani women were experts in stitching and embroidery but there was a need to provide better vocational training to rural women to provide them better employment opportunities. She said employment and independence would not only make them

integral part of society but also create an economically strong country. She said that Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry was training woman entrepreneurs to improve quality of their products for marketing at international level.

Farah Naz Naqvi said educated women could produce civilised nation; so women education should be made compulsory and initiatives should be taken at both public and private level to provide quality education to them. She said that change of mindset and education was vital for poverty eradication. Fatima Qamar said that Pakistani society was under the influence of Indian culture due to which both economic and social issues were growing along with artificial pomp and show. She called for adopting simplicity to resolve issues. She said education would empower women about their rights and employment would provide them independence. She said western culture should not be followed blindly; importance of simplicity should be highlighted and made part of syllabus.

The News — August 17, 2015



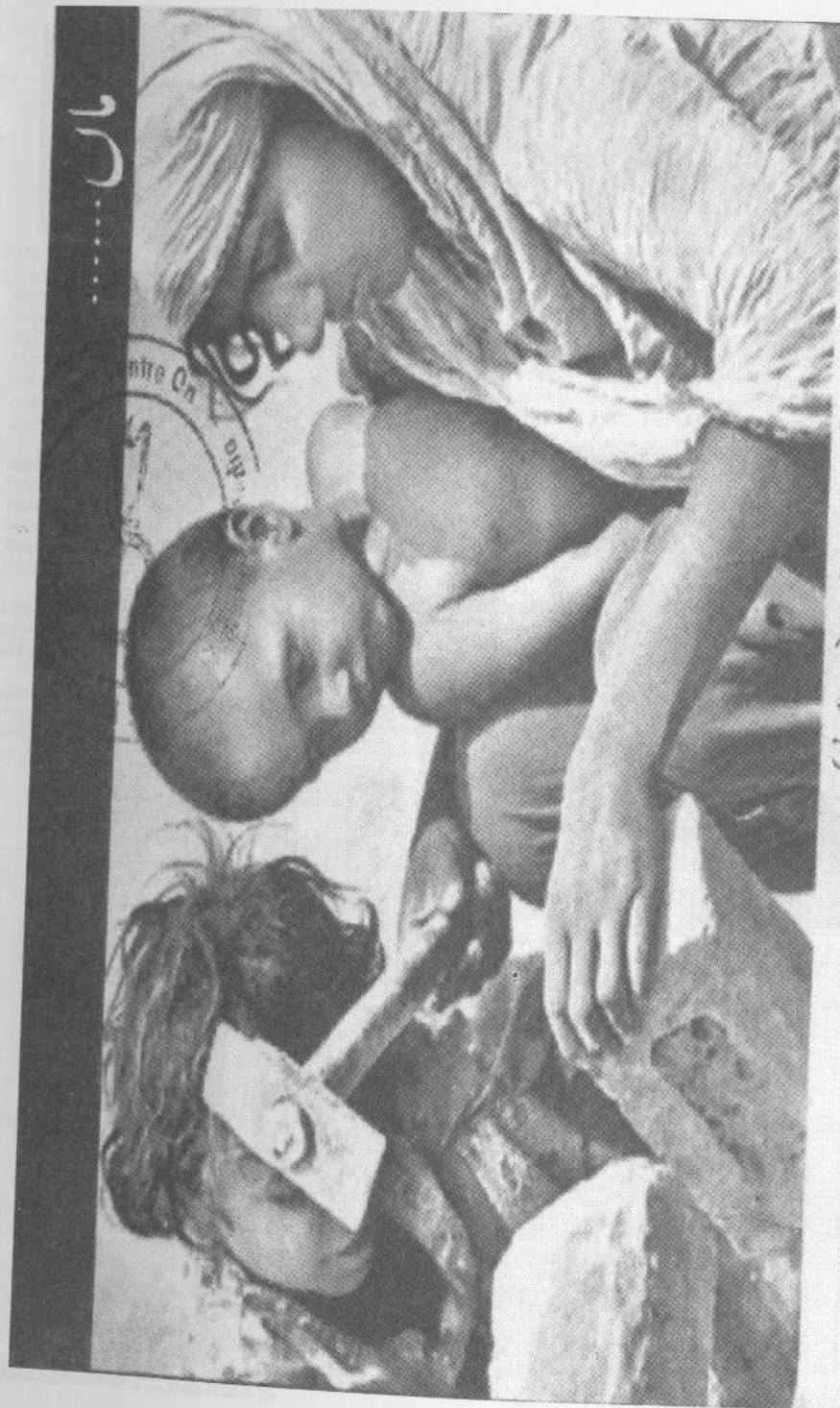
HYDERABAD: A poor woman feeds meal to her children outside a hut here on Tuesday.

2016

Dec

Saturday 31

Notes



ہجرت سے پرانے مائیں اپنے کو دوستوں اور اہل خانہ کے چہرے کو دیکھ کر کہتی ہیں (میں اللہ کی)

hai hai — May 12, 2008

Transparency in Poverty Reduction Strategies

SHR JAHFERY

ISLAMABAD—Sahar Ali, Country Representative Pakistan, Panos South Asia said that a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) is a document that sets out an analysis of poverty in a country and defines strategy for reducing it, based on consultations with different stakeholders.

She stated this in her opening remarks while welcoming the participants to a National Roundtable dialogue, jointly arranged by Panos South Asia and Uks Women's and Resource and Documentation centre here.

Sahar Ali said that PRSP processes are highly political and full of controversial debates and difficult decisions.

It is not always easy for journalists to uncover and report the stories involved. Much information on PRSP, where available, is provided by groups involved in the process:

governments, non-government organizations (NGOs), the World Bank and the international Monetary Fund (IMF).

She asked do ordinary people aware of the challenges at stake in discussions on dealing with poverty, and governments have communication strategies to involve the public? Journalists can bridge the gap between the interests of policy makers and the real daily concerns of the social groups PRSPs are supposed to address, investigating the issues, making them accessible, reporting key stories and creating a platform for inclusive public debate.

She added that there are many ways of defining and measuring poverty. This is an important debate because policy solutions in a PRSP will depend on how poverty is described.

The simple measure is the number of people surviving on less than US \$ 1 a day. More than 190 countries

have endorsed the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that include a target to have the number of people living on less than this amount by 2015.

Sahar observed that Sub-sistence farmers do not work for a wage. Basic needs, include access to food, water, shelter and clothing. UN's Human Development Index looks at quality of life including access to education, health systems and credit. Human security is another vital importance for the survival of the people.

Eminent Scholar and Journalist Syed Talat Hussain, Director Current Affairs, Aaj TV, acted as moderator in the first session. Others who made their presentations were Dr Pervez Tahir, Chief Economist, Planning Commission of Pakistan, Imran Rizvi Communication Consultant, KZR, Jon Barnes, Panos London and Meher Marker Noshirwani, Co-ordinator Shirkat Gah Karachi.

Pakistan Observer — July 23, 2005



Daily Times — March 7, 2014



ملالہ سحر

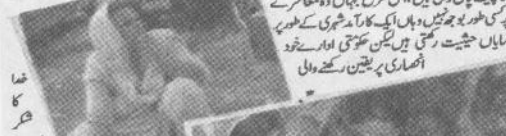
سے تازہ جسموں کو نہ مڑا آگ کے گھولوں کی ہزار
کر پاکیں اپنے بد حالات میں مری بھی کچھ
خواتین لکھی ہیں جو موت سے مقابلہ کرنے کے لئے
گھر سے باہر نکلتی ہیں۔ ان کے تیار کس بھی ایک خواتین
مردوں کے ساتھ رہنا عام ہزاروں پاکستانیوں
میں مختلف چیزوں پر مبنی سال لگتی ہیں، مردوں کی
طرح خواتین کا دکھ بھاری کرنا پڑتا ہے۔ ان کے لئے
لیکن مقام انہوں نے ہے کہ اپنے چھوٹے گھر ہزاروں
سے مشکل خواتین کی تلاش و سہو کیلئے حکومت کی
جانب سے آسان شرائط پر قرضے دینے کے دعوے
کئے جاتے ہیں جو حواسے زبانی منع خرچ سے آگے
نہیں بڑھتے۔ لیکن بی بی نے اپنے حالات زندگی کا

پاکستان میں جہاں مرد حضرات سخت جان سخت
کر کے اپنے خاندانوں کے پیٹ پر ہاتھ پڑھتے ہیں
وہاں ہماری سخت کش خواتین بھی کسی طور ان سے
پچھے نہیں ہیں۔ ہمارے معاشرے کی یہ سخت کش

حکومت ڈیٹا اکٹھا کر کے آسان اقساط پر قرض کی فراہمی یقینی بنائے

خواتین اپنی ہفتہ وار بازاروں میں سال لگانے والی
سہولتیں اور خواتین کی "خبریں" سروے میں گفتگو
کے ساتھ ساتھ ہفتہ وار بازاروں میں سال لگانے والی
سہولتیں اور خواتین کی "خبریں" سروے میں گفتگو

کا کہنا ہے کہ صرف شہری
کافی سے گزر رہی ہیں، جن کے لئے چھوٹے سال
معاشرے کی چیزوں پر مشتمل سال
لگا رہی ہیں



خواتین کے مسائل پر کوئی توجہ نہیں دیتے
ہیں خواتین نے ہفتہ وار بازاروں کا
خصوصی سروے کیا جہاں سال و ہفتہ وار خواتین نے عمل
کرنا خیال کیا۔

آئی جائے جہاں بازار چھوٹے کاروبار کرنے والی خواتین
میں کاروبار کرنے والی خواتین کے مسائل کے گروپ سے باہر آ سکیں
شہر میں آئے۔

ہوئے کہا کہ درجنوں خود کشی کے کیس ایسے سامنے
آئے ہیں جن میں متعدد ماؤں نے بچوں سمیت خود
کشی کی۔ بعض خواتین نے معاشی حالات سے تنگ
آ کر خود کو خاتم پائی کی لہروں کے حوالے کیا یا تو بعض

کا کہنا ہے کہ یہ خواتین کیلئے ایک بڑا مسئلہ ہے۔

Khabrain — June 27, 2015



حیدرآباد ایک مستحق خاتون فقیر حضرات کی جانب
سے دیئے گئے آٹے کے تھیلے پر اٹھائے جا رہی ہے

Jinnah — August 5, 2013

A determined poor lady braves the odds!

ISLAMABAD—Living in a single room along with three children and a handicapped husband on the outskirts of Islamabad city, Shamim Akhtar, 52, sobbing and crying with poverty and hunger at last turned into an entrepreneur through eight years of constant struggle.

The days were not so bad for her some years back when her husband was a private employee in Islamabad but an ill-fated event rendered him handicapped, unabling him to earn bread and butter for the family.

Shrugging off all the social taboos and odds, she opened up a small shop, now commonly known as "Mami Jee's Shop" in her small locality on Khanna road in an atmosphere of hostility and competition.

Through hard work and politeness she surpassed other shopkeepers and was able to raise adequate funds to build a small house and getting her

daughter married, spending more than rupees two hundred thousand.

After receiving a loan of Rs. 25000 from revolving fund of Islamabad Capital Territory, Women Development Wing some years back, she put up grocery items on sale at competitive prices and gradually filled up her shop with items required by the people including footwear. At one stage her brother pressurised her to close the shop as he said "it is shameful for the family". She humbly replied "is it not shameful for the family seeing my children and handicapped husband dying of hunger and nobody extending a helping hand".

Now her two children, including the youngest boy of 7 have started studying in a nearby school while her handicapped husband, once a desperate man had started extending possible help to her working wife and the children.—APP

Skills training transforms lives of young girls

By Mansoor Ahmad

LAHORE: Mahrugh Mir is a young girl in her early 20s and is looking after her family. Currently, she is drawing a monthly salary of Rs15,000 after achieving skills as a computer operator from an institute of the Punjab Vocational Training Council in 2004.

She is one of the six daughters of a widow who raised them from a meagre rent she got every year from the small agricultural land of her husband. After doing her intermediate, Mahrugh joined the skill training institute run on Zakat fund which provides free of cost market-based skills training only to the poor who can not afford to bear training expenses. These trainees are in fact also provided a monthly stipend of Rs1,000 during the training course.

After completion of her course, Mahrugh worked as an intern for three months at a local company to get on-job training. She was paid stipend during her internship as well. After completing her internship, she and two of her class fellow girls from the same institute were inducted as regular employees. Her starting salary was Rs4,500. With her dedication and hard work, her salary was raised to Rs10,000 this year. She has now



Mahrugh Mir

joined another organisation where she is getting Rs15,000 monthly salary.

She said her family lives in a rented house. The monthly rent is Rs2,500. She said that her mother had to sell the agricultural land to marry her elder sisters. "Now the entire family of two sisters and my mother depend on my income," she said, adding that one of her sisters is deaf and cannot speak while the other is doing her graduation.

She said she also obtained her BA degree during her service. Her computer skills helped her to move ahead in her career. She is looking ahead to an even better future.

Mahrugh is not the only girl but has been able to improve the quality of life of her family. Skills training has transformed the life of families of several girls who got the chance to learn these skills free of cost from PVTC institutes. Their families could not afford to bear expenses of training and most of them might have lived in extreme poverty had they not acquired market-based skills. They now stand a chance to move ahead in life.

Here are some examples. Sumaira Iqbal who is daughter of an handicapped person and belongs to a poor family. She has got training as clinical assistant and is currently serving as first air nurse in a reputable English school drawing a salary of Rs10,000 per month. She has three sisters and two brothers. Her younger brother after doing computer operator course is drawing Rs6,000 per month to supplement her efforts.

Nasreen Hanif, having computer skills, is drawing Rs10,000 per month. Mubashra, trained in auto-catalysis in 2007, is drawing Rs11,000 and makes drawings for an aluminum factory. She supplements her family income from Shahzad, who passed out in 2002 as computer operator, is drawing Rs11,000 per month.

Where women lead and men follow

They earn, lead and decide for their men, and their men dare not ask them about their whereabouts. Meet the women of the matriarchal Bagri community

● HARVEET TUNJO

DAHU/ARACHCHI
People call her Badabhab Zaidi (princess). The name seems apt, seeing the respect she commands when solving problems faced by her community. Living in Bagri Muhalla of Dadu district, 65-year-old Badabhab Zaidi is an unexpected activist. She has set a precedent by leading mobs, staging sit-ins and blocking off roads against injustice her people go through at the hands of government or local influential people. This bravery and boldness led her to win the councillor's seat in the 2001 local government elections. She is a leader of sorts in her community, and even the men are led by this strong woman.

"When two minor girls from our community, begging on the road, were kidnapped a few years ago, we protested and blocked the National Highway. This pushed the local politicians and district administration to intervene and our girls were released. The same thing happened when our Mandir (temple) was demolished. Since then, no one has harassed us," she says proudly, puffing away at the hookah.

"There are 800 plus registered voters from my community in this neighbourhood. Before I got elected, our people used to live in tents and makeshift houses. We had no drinking water, nor did the government provide us with sanitation. Men and women would go in nearby bushes for open defecation. Soon after I got elected as a councillor,

I provided all these facilities to my people. The government has now built around three dozen houses as well," she adds, as a group of men of her community stand by, nodding their heads in affirmation. Badabhab Zaidi belongs to the Bagri community (scheduled caste Hindus) which is considered matriarchal, where women mostly head the family and are more empowered than their male counterparts. The empowerment of Bagri women can be measured from the fact that their men cannot dare to even inquire if their women fall in love with anyone. "If any man comes to meet a Bagri woman, her husband can leave the house but dare not argue. This is so unlike other communities in Sindh where women are killed under the pretext of 'Karo Kari'," says local journalist Wali Chandio.

In every sphere of life, the women of this community make key decisions. They manage financial matters, look after the kitchen and control everyday expenditure. Without the consent of these women, their men cannot make decisions regarding marriages of their children. It seems the role of the men in this community is confined to assisting their women.

"Much is written about discrimination against women, focusing on women being victims of widespread prejudice and being harassed, tortured, and killed under the pretext of Karo Kari. But hardly anyone notices the Bagri community which is liberal and unique in its fabric," says Dr

Lal Chand Utkami, President PPP Sindh. Minority Wing. It is fascinating that the Bagris are a peaceful community and not a single incident has ever been reported in which they have killed or threatened anyone, according to Utkami.

"Bagris are one of the indigenous communities like Rihel, Menghwar and Kothli, but they (Bagris) are nomadic and keep travelling in search of livelihood," he says, adding that there are many tribes among the Bagris, and a majority of them have no personal property in Sindh.

"Some of them have now started living permanently at one place. Such folks may have purchased houses and land," he said.

Most of the women and children of this community leave their houses for begging in the morning which is a major source of their income. Some of them cultivate the agricultural land. The Bagri women equally partake in the cultivation, and are the focal persons from the community when it comes to dealing with the landlords and marketing the products in the nearby towns. The men only work in the fields.

Papu and Reeta are both hardly 17 years old. The couple tied the knot about three months ago. Both sell balloons, but Reeta keeps all the money with her as she wants to purchase a plot. "We believe God has given barakat in women's hands, which is why we rely on them to run the routine matters. This is the practice being followed in our com-

munity for centuries. Our forefathers did it too," says Pappu. Professor Dr. Najma Noor

Phulpoto, chairperson Sociology department Shah Latif University, said that since women have been breadwinners in Bagri community, their dominance is a natural factor.

"Bagri males are not so active; their women work hard and contribute majority to running the house." However this peaceful community is often misunderstood due to their religious beliefs and uniqueness. "We are not allowed to use utensils at hotels. Our people prefer to take their own plates, cups and glasses whenever they travel," says Murti Mal. "It is a common perception that Bagris eat wild cats and porcupines, and their lizard is their favourite dish, which is why Muslims do not prefer to share food and water with them," says Wali Chandio. Murti Mal confirms that Bagri com-

munity used to eat reptiles, but now most of them have given it up. "There was a time when people of our community used to celebrate whenever they caught a wild cat or monitor lizard, but now they mostly eat chicken and vegetable."

The Express Tribune — February 8, 2014

2017

Jan

Sunday 1

Monday 2

Tuesday 3

2017

Jan

Tuesday 10

Wednesday 11

Thursday 12

A 90-year-old woman, Sabi Bibi, whose home was destroyed in floods that occurred in Sindh in 2010, digs mud to build a house for herself on July 29, 2011, in Khaipur
<http://tribune.com.pk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/536475-womenPHOTOFile-1366138314-375-640x480.JPG>



Feminisation of Poverty

Tahira Abdullah — DAWN 17 February, 2013

“WHAT comfortable stereotypes we have created: ‘It is men who carry the major burden of economic work on this planet. They are the breadwinners. Women’s work carries no economic value.’ Such work may be essential but banish the thought that it should ever enter national income accounts, or even surface in separate satellite accounts. What a successful conspiracy to reduce women to economic nonentities.” — Dr Mahbub-ul Haq

It is a well-masked secret that in Pakistan, poverty and hunger have a female face. Sometimes, the mask slips, as happened during a federal minister’s presentation to international donors and creditors at the Pakistan Development Forum a decade ago. I was present, shell-shocked. Thus, the world found out that three-quarters of Pakistan’s abject absolute poor are women and girls, i.e. for every four Pakistanis in poverty, three are women/girls.

Those at the helm of power in the Federal Ministry of Finance, especially its Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper secretariat and the Planning Commission know this, but need to keep up the pretence of ignorance, to justify inaction. In fact, despite our right to information (Article 19-A), the finance ministry now even withholds from Pakistani citizens the national data on the poverty head count, by eliminating this vital information from the annual Pakistan Economic Survey (PES).

It is public knowledge that there is chronic intra-government disagreement, between the Planning Commission and finance ministry, on the definitions of poverty (inter alia, income poverty and daily calorific intake), its calculation methods and incidence. A respected former chief economist paid the price for his courageous refusal to endorse the then finance-cum-prime minister’s fudging of poverty head count figures, by arbitrarily changing the definitions and goalposts.

In the wilful absence of government data, academic research is utilised. The Oxford Poverty Research Institute and UN data parallel that of a number of highly respected, credible Pakistan-based research organisations, particularly the Mahbub-ul Haq Human Development Centre and the Social Policy and Development Centre.

From their independent research publications, poverty estimates are extrapolated, showing multi-dimensional poverty between 51-54 per cent of the population, and below-Rs200-a-day poverty ranging between 65-75 per cent.

The result of the Sustainable Development Policy Institute and the UN’s

collaborative national survey on food insecurity is alarming at 52 per cent; while food inflation has ranged between 18-25 per cent over the past five years. Even the government admits: “persistence of high double-digit inflation... has become intolerable;... it hurts the lowest income groups most, as 50-60 per cent [of their] expenditure is on food”.

And: “rich-poor gap increased in urban Pakistan ... [The] poor before price increases may now be on verge of hunger and malnutrition, and those who were barely above the poverty line may have slipped back into poverty” (PES 2011).

The female/male poverty ratio of 3:1 is shameful. Taken together with Dr Mahbub-ul-Haq’s quantification of the Poverty of Opportunity Index at over 40 per cent (1990s), and the continuing gendered dimensions of multiple deprivations, including hunger, under-nutrition/malnutrition, ill-health, illiteracy, unemployment, unremunerated/ uncounted labour, inadequate shelter, absence of basic utilities; added to gender-based violence, injustice, social exclusion and powerlessness — the emerging picture is not pretty.

The evidence clearly shows that women experience poverty differently and are worse off than men in poverty, additionally suffering lack of documentation, assets ownership, creditworthiness, information, mobility, a triple burden of unremunerated work, lack of control over remuneration where it does exist; lack of recognition of women-headed households; ghettoisation, exploitation and lack of benefits for women rural agricultural workers and urban home-based workers — exclusion from the formal, organised sector labour force as defined.

That is just the tip of the iceberg of the outrage that is the feminisation of poverty in Pakistan. But does anyone care? And why should anyone care? Women and girls comprise around 48 per cent of our population and, as equal citizens, are entitled to equality of opportunity and of outcome, through affirmative action, as enshrined in the constitution’s Fundamental Rights and Principles of Policy.

This requires not just token monthly charitable handouts as meagre social protection and vote-insurance actions, but actual longer-term poverty eradication measures.

These include, starting with assets ownership, a minimum of one acre of agricultural land per rural woman and joint title ownership of family assets, leading to creditworthiness; increased food security through enhanced investments in agriculture, livestock, agribusiness, agri-extension training and inputs; revised inclusive definitions of women agricultural and home-based workers in the labour force, leading to their registration and eligibility for social security, health and education benefits; and inclusion of women’s contribution to GDP. We need to demonstrate that we do care, as we should...



KARACHI: An elderly woman looking for useful items from a garbage dump at Frere Market.—Staff photo

2017

January

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
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February

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March

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April

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May

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14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

June

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
					3	4
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

July

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

August

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
				4	5	6
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

September

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
						2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

October

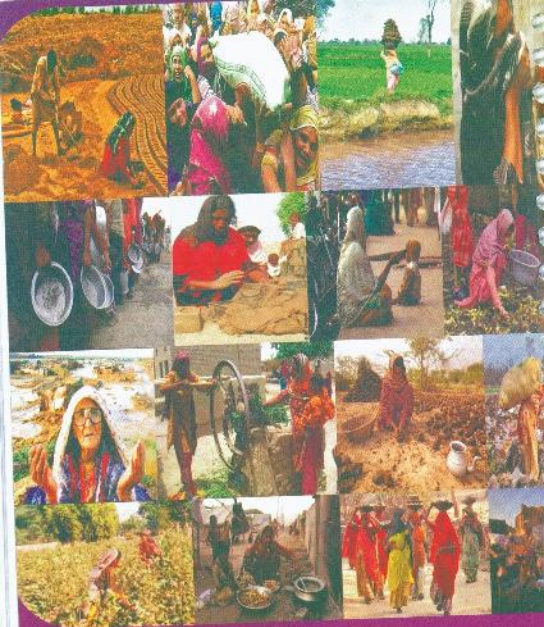
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1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

November

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
				4	5	6
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

December

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
31						1
						2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30



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