

International Women's Day

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER BY HRDN



MESSAGE FROM CEO

After spending many years of my career in non-profit management, I feel especially honored to be writing this message as Chief Executive Officer of the human resource development network. The eventual aim of our organization centers on the sustainable development of marginalized and destitute strata of our society. In my outlook development is a headway of positive change quantitatively & qualitatively which instigate a society in ways that enrich its capacity to mobilize and manage resources sustainably, which resultantly empowers the poor and permits all people to become the subject of their destiny. That's why development is the heart-line of the Human Resource Development Network (HRDN). By keeping in view this apparition, our organization also worked on certain projects correlated to women's empowerment in which we conducted certain activities which instills a number of training workshops, orientation settings, women worker conventions, and women workers meetings in order to form their network formation and facilitation of their ahead coordination with trade unions. These all activities purpose to upsurge the women workers' awareness about their rights. The target class of our projects was inclusive in nature as it embraces working women, labor, factory owners, chambers of commerce, and the general public. Every country should not superintend the importance of the role of women in the progress. If we deliberate the role of women in the development of Pakistani society, here it is, evidently perceptible of male dominancy and women are widely and openly discriminated against. They are repudiated by their social and domestic rights because of gender bias, inherent Islamic structures, and traditional practices. They are still subjugated, sexually abused, and not treated fairly. Hence, the prevailing social, political, and family status of women in Pakistan is a staple of great concern to all social reformers, right thinking leaders. The role of women in Pakistan's development in the real sense is the need of the hour. It is high time that they are fetched in the political mainstream. I believe it would be a very positive and forward step benefiting all people of society if women are given their due status in personal, social, and family crises. For the comprehensive and implausible development in Pakistan, they should have reservations of seats in educational institutions, employment, and services in Pakistan, as the role of women and Pakistani development is interrelated. In short, we can say that progress for Pakistan has a long road that has a lot of impediments so there are voluminous miles to go. Thus, it's the duty of the world as a whole, to take account of women in the path to national development so that every single woman plays her role in the development of her country.

INTRODUCTION

Empowerment has been the subject of immense discussions and contemplations for the last few decades. Women's employment in society can designate any nation's overall development. Without the involvement of women in any economic and political activity, the evolution of a country can deteriorate. It is said that a large number of the world's female population have remained unable to gain anything for their future prosperity. Elements to support such approaches vary from country to country depending on political, social, and economic circumstances. To empower any women, a few significant factors need to be considered. Firstly, basic services must be provided with ease and without deferral to improve their access and effective use by women from poor classes. This largely hinges on economic factors, if women are part of active participation in the economic force, they will contribute significantly to the stability of economic growth. The major problem is rejecting them from equal access to economic opportunities. Pakistan is included in one of the underdeveloped countries struggling with the conditions of its financial system. Women's economic participation is truncated in the formal sector, Indicators show that 73% of the involvement of women is only in the informal sector of Pakistan, and this has remained unchanged over the past few decades.

In Pakistan, women have been a part of the 'working poor' in the active labor force, which lives below the poverty line, barely fulfills their needs, and mostly relies on subsistence living. The longer the individual is working poor, the less likely they can access opportunities to lead them out of poverty. This is one of the foremost reasons women need to be more focused because as a vulnerable segment of society and not have access to economic opportunities, social assistance needs to be engrossed among women, exclusively in rural areas.

"A WOMAN WITH A VOICE IS, BY DEFINITION, A STRONG WOMAN."
-MELINDA GATES



HISTORY OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

International Women's Day is a global holiday celebrated annually on March 8 to venerate the cultural, political, and socioeconomic accomplishments of women. It is also a crucial point in the women's rights movement, conveying attention to concerns such as gender impartiality, reproductive rights, violence, and abuse against women. International Women's Day is celebrated in many countries around the world. It is a day when women are renowned for their accomplishments without concern for divisions, whether national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic, or political. International Women's day was initiated by labor movements in North America and Europe during the early 20th century. The earliest version of this day was supposedly a "Women's Day" organized by the socialist party of America in New York on 28th February 1909.

**THERE IS NO TOOL
FOR DEVELOPMENT
MORE EFFECTIVE
THAN THE
EMPOWERMENT OF
WOMEN**

-Kofi Annan



Mar 8 • International Women's Day

**“No matter
who you are,
no matter where you
come from,
you are beautiful.”**

Michelle Obama



This inspired German delegates at the International socialist women's conference to endorse "a special Women's Day" organized annually, albeit with no set date. The following year saw the first demonstrations and commemorations of International women's day across Europe, then after women gained suffrage in soviet Russia in 1917 international women's day was made a national holiday on the 8th of march. It was subsequently celebrated on that date by communist countries. The holiday was associated with far-left movements and governments until its adoption by the global feminist movement in the late 1960s. International women's day became a mainstream global holiday following its adoption by the United Nations in 1977. This day is commemorated in an assortment of ways worldwide, it is a public holiday in several countries, and observed on a social basis or locally in others to rejoice and endorse the accomplishments of women. The united nation perceives the holiday in connection with an exacting type of issue, campaign, or theme in women's rights. In some parts of the world, International Women's day still reflects its political origins, being manifest by protest and calls for radical alteration, but in other areas principally in the west, it is largely socio-cultural and centered on a celebration of womanhood.



AZADI AURAT MARCH IN PAKISTAN

Since those early years, International Women's Day has implicit a new global dimension for women in developed and developing countries alike. The mounting international women's movement, which has been reinforced by four global United Nations women's conferences, has facilitated to make the commemoration of a reconvening point to build sustenance for women's rights and participation in the political and economic arenas such as gender impartiality, reproductive rights, violence and abuse against women. In the framework of Pakistan, International women's day is celebrated as Azadi Aurat March, as an annual socio-political demonstration in different cities. Spurred on by the universal female suffrage movement that had begun in New Zealand in the mid-19th century, in which some people pursued amending voting laws to permit women to vote. National and international organizations formed to harmonize efforts toward women voting, particularly the International Woman Suffrage Alliance was founded in Germany and is an international non-governmental organization that works to promote women's rights and gender impartiality.

The Aurat Azadi March known as Women's Emancipation March was started in 2018 in Pakistan by members of Women Democratic Front and some other organizations like the Women's Action Forum, young teachers Association, Home-based workers union, Awami workers party, and Awami Jamhoori party also joined the march on International Women's day in Islamabad on 8th march, 2018. Azadi Aurat March and Aurat March are organized by diverse groups of women since 2018. Aurat Azadi March is systematized by a group of socialist feminists however Aurat March is organized by clutch of liberal feminists, it was also started the same year by a group of individual women known as "Hum Aurtein" jointly in Karachi and Lahore. Azadi Aurat March is apprehended in diverse cities of Pakistan to fight against tyrannical forms of social, economic, and political erections (imperialism, patriarchy, capitalism, and colonialism) in contradiction of women however Aurat March is held with tenacity to contest the harassments and violence, minority rights and for economic, environmental and reproductive uprightness. In contrast to Azadi Aurat March the Aurat March demands for grander accountability for violence against women and ropes women who practise violence and harassment at the influences of security forces, in public spaces, at homes, and in the workplace.

AZADI AURAT MARCH MANIFESTATIONS

In 2018, Azadi March was apprehended on the 8th of march when the women's democratic front (WDF), was instituted at the national press club, in Islamabad. After the foundation congress, the contestants held the march from the press club to Nizamuddin Road Hovering slogans against war, violence, mistreatment of working-class women and anti-women tribal and feudal traditions, whereas the 2019 Aurat Azadi March was structured in Islamabad by women democratic front, ending violence against women and girls (EVAWG) alliance, progressive students federation, teachers, political workers, Pakistan trade union defense campaign, advocates, women action forum, film-makers, the transgender community, musicians, Sindhi Aurat tanzeem, domestic and health

workers. In the third Azadi Aurat March which was held on International Women's day on 8th March 2020 on the call of women's democratic front in front of the National Press club Islamabad. Due to the cultural and religious dynamics which persist in our country that elucidate that women should not be cogitated as equal to men, therefore, the organizers of this march handled many hurdles before and during the march from anti-march elements. Aurat Azadi March 2020 also released and sang an anthem song "Hum Inquilab Hain" (we are Revolution). In Islamabad, on 8th march 2021, Aurat Azadi March was started at the National press club and participants streamed toward D-chowk.

Aurat Azadi March Islamabad manifesto asks for economic justice for women, rearrangement of the non-combative defense budget to be distracted to social programs with a subject devoted to "feminist care in the times of the covid-19 crises". The Aurat Azadi March 2022 was held on the 6th of march, and its manifesto investigates "strengthening and sustaining feminist unity" against social, and economic oppression faced by women in society.

CRUX OF MANIFESTOS IN AZADI MARCH

Each section of the Aurat March has its own declaration with the Karachi chapter directing on wages, security, and peace. Lahore on reimagining justice, Multan on reimagining the education system, and Islamabad on justice, security, and freedom. The Karachi chapter's three main demands call for the conveyance of a living wage based on access to safe housing, quality education, and affordable healthcare for workers and their families, the provision of social security and protection through monthly stipends for all women and the transgender community and arranging child welfare by stroking an end to child labor, trafficking for work, and bonded delivery. Meanwhile, the Lahore chapter came up with its manifesto after extensive research and meetings with relevant communities, including families affected by enforced disappearances, domestic workers, survivors of sexual violence, and religious minorities. It demands more holistic reforms which seek to transmute society, and provide psycho-social sustenance to survivors of violence as well as restoration for perpetrators. The Lahore section advocates structural reforms that avert patriarchal violence rather than short-term explanations such as capital reprimand and chemical castration.

**A CULTURE THAT RESPECTS A
WOMAN AND VALUES HER IS
SOMETHING THAT WE SHOULD
LOOK UP TO**

Educate a woman,
Empower a woman



Bloom where you are
planted

IMPORTANCE OF THIS DAY

Every 8th march, the world recognizes women international day to rejoice the accomplishments of women in areas like culture, politics, the economy and society at large, but the question arises that why it is significant to celebrate women international day? Following are the reasons that why International Women's day is deliberated as important occasion in history

- First of all, each year reconnoiters a diverse theme, for instance, there are several topics correlated to women's and gender equality, so it's merely appropriate that each International Women's day highpoints a specific theme. 2022's theme was "gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow" it focused on gender equality in the context of environmental and disaster risk reduction, as well as climate change. As these concerns affect the whole world but women are in more danger for the reason that they make up more of the world's poorest communities.
- Secondly, this day has a long history and today it is renowned as International Women's Day as a global event concentrating on women's rights and gender equality, but it is instigated as a part of the labor and voting rights movement. Therefore, venerating International Women's Day benefits us in better understanding the spirit of the day in terms of radical change.
- Thirdly, it's a prospect to celebrate women's accomplishments as women have permanently played indispensable roles in the engagements for voting rights, civil rights, LGBTQ rights, labor rights, children's rights, and much more. They have also consummate great things in every field, comprising medicine, science, and literature. Subsequently, International Women's day is a prodigious opportunity to recognize all these accomplishments.
- Fourthly, the day highpoints the work that remains to be done, International Women's Day celebrates how far women's rights and gender equality have come and it also accentuates recognizing what still needs to be done. According to the UN, women make up 70% of the world's 1.3 billion people in poverty. Therefore, commemorating this day highpoints that there still needs to be done more work for women in society

- It's also a prospect to raise funds for women's issues because it highlights the issues faced by women in society. Organizations working for gender equality and women's rights like a center for reproductive rights, Amnesty international, save the children and many local organizations donate funds to challenge the subjects connected with women.
- It's an opportunity for schools and organizations to provide education, while women's rights and gender equality are always imperative topics to acquire about, celebrating international days are opportunities for more focused education and awareness. So, by marking a specific day, there's a concentrated influx of information and education that isn't normally present. For instance, schools can find resources online or host events, workshops, and other collaborations. Any organization can also take advantage of IWD to focus on the women's rights most relevant to its mission.
- It also provides an opportunity to crisscross on corporations that claim to be progressive, lots of establishments use the language of development and the promise of gender equality for good branding, but many don't follow through international women's day is a great day to check on corporations and see that whether they are pursuing gender equality or giving money towards causes or improving parity within their own organization or not?
- This day also associates people from around the world because as the name says, International women's day is about women from all around the world. IWD is a day to rejoice activists on a global level, floating awareness of their work and the challenges they face. It's a great prospect to network and connects with people devoted to gender equality.
- Lastly, International Women's Day is a call to action. IWD staples because at its core, it's a reconvening cry. Some may use it to endorse a rose-colored view of the world, but it's an indispensable prompt that progress doesn't happen by accident. All the accomplishments and success the world rejoices didn't come effortlessly but they prove what's possible. As a call to action, international women's day expresses us to aspect at what we've been, see how far we've come, and keep struggling for come.

ORGANIZATIONS WORKING ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN PAKISTAN

- UN Women
- Bedari
- Acid Survivor Foundation
- Shirkat - Gah Women Resource Center
- Women Rights Association
- Tehreek-e-Niswan
- Women Association Struggle for Development (WASFD)
- Awaz-e-Niswan
- FEHRO- Female Human Rights Foundation
- Women Shade
- All Pakistan Women Association
- Kiran Ahmed Welfare Association
- TWWA- The Tribal Women Welfare Association
- INGAD- Interagency Gender & Development Group
- PWHRO- Pakistani Women's Human Rights Organization
- Aurat Foundation
- GRAP- Gender Reform Action Plan
- Progress Foundation

ORGANIZATIONS WORKING ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AT LOCAL LEVEL



AURAT FOUNDATION

The Aurat Foundation is a national women's CSO in Pakistan with a widespread grassroots-level linkage. Aurat foundation has executed dozens of large-scale social, economic, and educational agendas for grassroots women and leaders throughout Pakistan to upsurge women's economic and political capital, with the tenacity of spawning an extra just, representative, and caring society. Aurat foundation emphasizes subsequent thematic areas.

- Women with disabilities
- Ending child marriages and honor killings
- Economic empowerment
- Political participation



ACID SURVIVOR'S FOUNDATION

ASF-Pakistan is a Pakistani non-profit organization working since 2006 to exterminate acid violence from Pakistan and endorse the human rights of acid burn and other burn survivors, through a peaceable democratic process. It was legitimately registered in August 2007 under Voluntary Social Welfare Agencies Ordinance 1961. ASF Pakistan's directive is to work with manifold relevant stakeholders, through peaceable and democratic processes, concerning the elimination of acid violence in precise and GBV at a larger level, and towards the empowerment of survivors - women and children in exacting- so that they can work out their basic human rights.

Acid survivors foundation emphasizes subsequent thematic areas;

- Psychological support services for women
- Rehabilitation and reintegration
- Rehabilitation strategies include advocacy, service delivery which indicates several pieces of training, free medical treatment, legal assistance
- Advocating awareness by conducting campaigns in schools & colleges, community meetings



BEDARI

Bedari is a nationwide non-governmental, voluntary, development organization in Pakistan functioning with women and children for the preferment and fortification of their human rights. It started its activities in 1991. It got registered in 1992 under the Societies Act 1860. It recognized Pakistan's first crisis center for women fighters of violence. In the past 24 years, it has established capability on issues of gender empowerment, addressing violence contrary to women and children, and processes of attitudinal change.

ORGANIZATIONS WORKING ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN PARTNERSHIP WITH HRDN



WORLD VISION

World Vision International is an evangelical Christian humanitarian aid, development, and advocacy organization. It was founded in 1950 by Robert Pierce as a service organization to provide care for children in Korea. In 1975, emergency and advocacy work was added to World Vision's objectives. World Vision works a lot to eradicate the violations against women in our society. They are also working on child protection and their focus is on helping the most vulnerable children, overcome poverty and experience the fullness of life, as together we can protect children today and empower them for tomorrow.

ORGANIZATIONS WORKING ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AT INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

CAMFED (CAMPAIGN FOR FEMALE EDUCATION GLOBAL GRASSROOTS)

The international non-governmental organization CAMFED has contributed for more than two decades to social conversion intended at remedying the rejection and facilitating the access of millions of girls to education. It catalyzes the power of the most susceptible girls and young women to generate the forthcoming they envisage for themselves, and for their communities. It serves girls and young women in impoverished districts across the world.

CENTER FOR REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

The center for reproductive Rights (CRR) is a global authorized advocacy organization that pursues to progress reproductive rights, such as abortion. The organization's specified undertaking is to "use the law to spread reproductive freedom as a fundamental human right that all governments are officially obligated to protect, respect, and fulfil this Right

UN WOMEN

The United Nations entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women also known as UN Women is working for gender impartiality and the enablement of women. UN Women advocates for the rights of women and girls and LGBTQ+ rights, and emphasizes on a wide array of issues including violence against women and violence against LGBTQ+ people. It was established by the merger of the United Nations development fund for women and other entities and became operational in January 2011. Following are the main thematic areas of UN women;

- Leadership and political participation of women
- Economic empowerment
- Ending violence against women
- Humanitarian actions
- Governance and national planning
- HIV & AIDS

PROJECT ON INCREASING WOMEN'S VOICE & LEADERSHIP IN PAKISTAN

Women Voices Leadership-Pak (WVL) Women's Voice and Leadership' in Pakistan is a proposed five-year project that seeks to increase the enjoyment of human rights by women and girls and the advancement of gender equality in Pakistan. In order to contribute to this ultimate outcome, Oxfam proposes to work with 10-12 diverse Women's Rights Organizations, who through this organizational capacity building, core, and responsive programmatic and knowledge-based support will be better equipped and positioned to effectively realize the direction of change they prioritize and their vision of gender justice.



TRAINING OF LOCAL ENTREPRENEURS INCLUDING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS ON SMALL ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING APPROACHES FOR MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS

NRSP is implementing a project which is based upon Menstrual Hygiene Management in Partnership with WaterAid Pakistan with the funding of Global Affairs Canada (GAC) in the rural tehsil of Mirpur Sakro of district Thatta, in the province of Sindh. The project aims to tackle the economic and social exclusion regarding MHM..



EVENTS CONDUCTED BY HRDN

MOU signed with COMSATS UNIVERSITY for sharing of human resources for development and research.



The young women leadership conference was to seek and build the capacity of the next generation of leaders who can contribute to the political, social, and economic development of Pakistan.

HRDN celebrates international women's day in collaboration with IUCN by planting some trees.



Launch of the National Climate Change Gender Action Plan of Pakistan by the Ministry Of Climate Change and IUCN Pakistan

Interview session with Ambreen Ajaib



Ms. Ambreen Ajaib is a known women's rights activist based in Islamabad. She is working in the development sector for the last 18 years and her experience ranges from working at the grass root level to the senior management level. Ambreen has two master's degrees, M.A. in Human Rights and Social justice from London metropolitan university London, UK, and M.sc in psychology from Quaid-e-Azam University Islamabad. She also has a diploma in Social Enterprise Management from Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) Lahore. Ambreen's work has been published. A paper on "addressing violence against girls in and out of school" was published in a book titled "combating gender-based violence at schools" edited by professor Fiona leach of University of Sussex. The publication "youth strategy paper" was printed by action aid. A paper on "early marriages of girls; a comparative analysis of india Pakistan and Bangladesh" is published by SPO. SPO also published another paper of her titled "women's Political Participation During Election 2013" .

Ambreen Ajaib thoughts on Women's Empowerment



Empowerment can be demarcated in many ways, however when talking about women's empowerment, empowerment means accepting and countenancing women who are on the outside of the decision-making process into it. Every woman in society as a respectful citizen should have the power to take decisions regarding their life, they must have such audacity to claim their rights they must be given such space by society in a way that they will take a stand for themselves against exploitation and all the social evils that act as a hurdle in a way to empowerment. Despite all advocacy efforts, aurat azadi highlights the issues faced by women in society, what still lacks in the implementation of all those rights is actually a question that society needs to think about it. If I deliberate the steering role of azadi aurat march in Pakistan, there are many constructive facets interlinked with this march. Formally, azadi march is considered an event that is only notable by the non-profit sector of Pakistan but with the passage of time many students, academicians, women worker's associations, and home-based union workers becoming part of it and construe it as a necessity to commemorate the accomplishment of women. Every year, Pakistan rejoices aurat march with diverse manifestations that stresses more holistic reforms which seek to transmute society, provide psycho-social sustenance to survivors of violence as well as restoration for perpetrators, but despite of all the advocacy efforts, I believe the biggest challenge that constructs hurdles in the implementation of all those reforms is the capitalists/material mindset of society. As for that mindset, women is the only object, they don't cogitate women as human being, as reverential affiliate of society, and they won't be certain of these women as equally different from men in society.

These capitalist mindsets apprehend women as sex entities that are only answerable for nurturing their families and stuff. Secondly, there is a patriarchal mindset that exists in society in which men govern over others, but can also refer to dominance over women explicitly, it can prolong to a range of manifestations in which men have social privileges over others to cause exploitations or oppression, such as through male dominance of moral authority and control of the property. These patriarchal mindset only want to control women in society. They don't allow women to use their agency, or free will they ruminate women as an inferior entities and consider themselves superior. As both these outlooks in society don't want women to be influential, authoritative, and empowered. They use different religious interpretations, and social norms, to create hurdles in the way to empowerment both of these slants are interlinked with the conception of control over women, which is culturally engraved in the thoughts of people that men in society are grander and they have control over women. Islam also gives rights to women and the constitution of Pakistan also assures the rights of women without any discrimination, due to this I don't construe azadi march as western agenda for the reason that If we talk about the scuffles of women about their civil liberties in the history of the subcontinent. At the time of partition, women played an imperative role. So, these marches are not something that is bought by the west in our country, the struggles of women are engraved in the history of Pakistan even before partition. Giving someone, the freedom to claim their civil liberties is the basic right of every person in society. Sadly, in Pakistan women are being criticized by everyone including the media for claiming their rights. Even in the political structure of Pakistan, politicians from diverse parties also use stratagem like character assassination of women that produce their agency to exercise their rights and impede their confidence. People really need to apprehend that these campaign's advocacy efforts are a great way to claim more holistic reforms for women in society. Religious extremism, it's only in Islam but everywhere in the world where there is religious extremism, it leads to clear division among people, and in Pakistan, it targets women in several ways. Islam promotes equity but our society uses Islam as per their will because its culturally engraved in our society that men are custodians and many people misconstrue this word as caretaker and think that they have control over women. I don't think that only Islamic structures are answerable for the deprived situation of women in our society, but I see it as though the promoters of Islamic structures are responsible to some extent. People are also responsible for promoting such a mindset in the name of Islam.

INTERVIEW SESSION WITH SADAF DAR

Sadaf dar is a program officer of gender and development at the rural support network of Pakistan



Q. In your opinion, what actually women's empowerment is?

In my opinion, women empowerment is when you gave choices to women to take decisions regarding their lives. When you empowered them in a way that benefits them to expound the difference between what is right for them and what is wrong for them? Therefore, in my outlook, this is the foremost step in the way to empowerment.

Q. Despite all advocacy efforts, the Aurat Azadi March highlights the issues faced by women in society, I want to ask what still lacks in the implementation of all those rights that are necessary for the empowerment of women?

As we know that scuffles of women for their civil liberties have existed long before the partition of the subcontinent, but what still lacks in the implementation of all those efforts at the grass-root level is unfamiliarity among people. I believe that if you want to see progressive transformation in all layers of society you need to embrace gender as a part of the curriculum and as a society, we need to give such space to children, and youth to construe the several quandaries that are interwoven with the empowerment of women. Gender studies should be amalgamated into the core curriculum of that supports them to construe certain dogmas at every earlier age. In conclusion, I believe that these perceptions should be imparted at an early age as the perception that constructs at the erudition phase of life have far-reaching implications for everyone. Furthermore, the integration of gender-centric sensation in existing laws and legislations in Pakistan is very crucial for their operative implementation, but for this incorporation political will of the government is very imperative. I must say that if the government wants to grasp reformist transformation in the stream of empowering women then they should consider this issue as their foremost priority in their policy agenda.



Islam also gives rights to women, and the constitution of Pakistan also assures that rights should be equal for all human beings without any discrimination then why azadi aurat marches are considered as western agenda, and stuff?

In my outlook, aurat azadi march is an event that venerates the political, economic, and social achievements of women. People who consider it as a western agenda don't expound how severe the concern of violation against women exists in our society. Commemoration of this event depicts a positive picture of women's empowerment in society and it also constructs awareness among people about the rights of women as differential citizens of society. If we look at the ground realities of these concerns, we will be able to know the fraction of sexual abuse and harassment faced by women within families and society, then if we comprehend the ratio of violence against women in Pakistan we came to know that every 3rd women in Pakistan are being violated by men. People who call it a western agenda are not gender sensitized, they don't expound that how much-biased mindsets people hold against the empowerment of women, or how much women are being sexually abused, harassed, raped, and violated in Pakistan. Mostly, people call it a western agenda as they think that these types of events are not a part of our culture nor promoted by our religion, but the question upsurges here that Islam has given equal rights to women and men, the constitution of Pakistan also protected these rights then why women are still facing problems like harassment and rape? Therefore, it is important to understand this phenomenon with ground realities in order to eradicate them from our society.

Are inherent Islamic structures are responsible for the deprived situation of women in Pakistan?

In my opinion, I don't think that inherent Islamic structures are responsible for the deprived situation of women in society. Islam gives equal rights to men and women without any discrimination based on race, color, sex, or gender. Islam has guaranteed gender equality and women's rights in every domain of their life

. Islam has guaranteed the rights of men and women to an equivalent degree and there is no discrimination between men and women. But due to the prevailing sociocultural norms and practices in our country sometimes the guarantee of Islam does not translate into tangible actions. Islam is a religion that liberated Muslim women by ensuring equal rights to them in comparison to their male fellows. There are some misconceptions prevailing regarding women's rights in Islam. Sometimes Muslim women themselves deceptively knew that they are backward and oppressed by their religion. Some make a great mistakes in the practices of Muslims connected to Islam. Islam does not dispossess women rather ensuring proper rights, dignity, and status but due to a lack of appropriate Islamic knowledge and awareness occasionally dominates or neglects some misconceptions prevailing in our country. To eliminate prevailing misconceptions regarding women's rights in Islam proper Islamic knowledge and awareness of women are very critical. Undoubtedly, there is no discrepancy in Islam between men and women as far as their relationship with Allah is concerned as both are promised the same reward for good conduct and the same punishment for evil conduct. The holy Quran, in addressing the believers, often uses the expression "believing men and women" to accentuate the equality of both males and females in regard to their particular duties, rights, virtues, and merits. Islam is such a religion that has first given to women a place of dignity and honor because, before the advent of Islam, there were huge discernments towards women. Islam abolished inhumanity, inequality, and discrimination towards women as well as giving a complete code of conduct for both males and females. Prior to the arrival of Islam, the pagan Arabs used to bury their female children alive, treated women just like slaves and they used women only for their sexual contentment who possesses no rights, dignity, honor, or position. Unlike, other religions, which regarded women as being possessed of inherent sin and wickedness and men are being possessed of inherent virtue and nobility, Islam treats men and women as being of the equal essence created from one soul. In conclusion, I must say that interpreters of Islam are responsible to some extent for the depriving situation of women in society.

What do you think about the laws and policies that exist in Pakistan, are they fulfilling the needs of women in the country? (If not, then what kinds of amendments should be done to make those laws/policies beneficial?)

In my opinion, there are numerous laws that exist in Pakistan that instill Rape, harassment, inheritance laws and etc. but the core problem is that laws be existent but enforcement and implementation don't. Due to this ineffective implementation laws and policies that exist in Pakistan are not fulfilling the needs of women effectively. Furthermore, I believe that the legal structure of our country is so male-dominated that obstructs the confidence of women to approach them for their fortification. People have no trust in the legal system of Pakistan as it is very complex to approach the higher authorities, then it is very costly and male-dominated that people indicate to unravel their matters on their own without pursuing aid from the police. I must say that all of these factors act as a hurdle for the practical implementation of laws in Pakistan. In addition, there is no gender sensitization in the legal structure of Pakistan.

Are the laws/ policies that exist in Pakistan ranged in the correct way, to accomplish the 2030 sustainable development goal i.e., (Achieving gender equality)? And, if not then how will we achieve gender equality in its true sense?

If we deliberate whether laws that exist in Pakistan are ranged in the correct way to accomplish the 2030 sustainable goal i.e. gender equality or not? I must say that all these policies and laws are not vacillated in that way to achieve gender equality by 2030. In order to achieve gender equality government should take some compulsory steps that involve the integration of gender studies into the national curriculum, and adopt certain approaches that make people aware of gender sensitization. If we see the non-profit sectors of Pakistan there are several organizations that work on women's empowerment and give priority to them. The prevalent challenge that Pakistan is facing nowadays is the ineffective implementation of existing laws.

For instance, every formal sector has its own gender policy that deals with cases of harassment at the workplace but the question upswing here is are those policies essentially instigated in an effective way to provide protection to women or not. In conclusion, I must say that it's a long way to go to achieve gender equality by 2030.

What steps have been taken to bolster women's leadership and equal participation in decision-making in all areas of sustainable development? (If not, in your opinion, what steps should be taken to bolster women's performance in all areas of life?)

I believe, that the only solution that upsurges women's leadership and equal participation in the decision-making process is the financial independence of women. Women's economic empowerment is central to realizing women's rights and gender equality. Economic empowerment includes women's ability to participate equally in existing markets, their access to and control over productive resources, access to decent work, control over their own time, lives, and bodies, and increased voice, agency, and meaningful participation in economic decision-making at all levels from the household to international institutions. When more women work, economies grow. Economic empowerment upsurges productivity and increases economic diversification and income equality in addition to other positive development outcomes. Increasing women's and girls' educational attainment contributes to women's economic empowerment and more inclusive economic growth. Education, upskilling, and re-skilling over the life course specifically to keep pace with rapid technological and digital transformations affecting jobs are precarious for women's and girls' health and well-being, as well as their income opportunities and participation in the formal labor market. It's my strong belief that the financial independence of women is an imperative step in order to accomplish women's leadership and equal contribution of women in all areas of their lives.

Lastly, if we talk about the ratio of reported cases of rape, and harassment in Pakistan it is very truncated and there are a lot of issues faced by women that remain unreported because of multiple layers of cultures exist in each society, so what inclusive strategy government should adopt to regulate it and aware people to report what tragedy they faced?

In my opinion, the strategy that government should adopt for the effective implementation of laws and legislations is that government should upsurge its outreach to rural areas of Pakistan mostly to the grass-root level. Despite using top-to-bottom approaches, I must say that government should espouse bottom-up approaches that instill people themselves in the process of implementation of laws and procedures of laws making. It is an approach that permits the local community and local players to express their views and define the development course for their area in line with their own views, expectations, and plans, as an espousal of these approaches results in the sustainability of diverse ventures that aims to eradicate all social aspects that create hurdles in a way to empowered society

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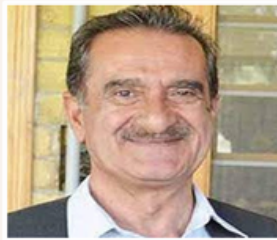
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