



UN Women Executive Director Michelle Bachelet meets with Pakistan's Head of Delegation and National Goodwill Ambassador on Women's Empowerment Fiza Gilani during the 56th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, at UN headquarters in New York, 2012

*Photo credit: UN Women*

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The 56th CSW session took place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 27 February to 09 March 2012. The priority theme this session was the **empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges.**

UN Women Executive Director Michelle Bachelet, in her opening statement to the session, stated,

***'to achieve the equality, human rights and inclusive growth that we all want, requires us to unlock and unleash the potential of the world's women, including rural women. Rural women are on the frontline of climate change. They are managers of natural resources. They are leaders. And none of us can afford to perpetuate the barriers facing rural women or to leave them out of decision-making. By expanding rural women's rights, participation, opportunity and choices, we can bring about healthier economies and societies'***

Pakistan's Head of Delegation and National Goodwill Ambassador on Women's Empowerment, Ms Fiza Gilani in her statement to the session, shared that the Government of Pakistan in recognition of rural women's contribution to the economy on 15 October 2010 declared the International Day of Rural Women as the National Rural Women's Day. Ms Gilani highlighted a number of economic empowerment initiatives undertaken to create income-generating activities for marginalized women in the country, including: the Benazir Income Support Program, a social protection scheme providing direct financial support to women of poor households; issuance of computerized National Identity Cards to over twelve million women in the last three years of which 70% were from rural areas; and distribution of land to landless farmers, of whom 70% were again women.

Next year, the Commission will examine the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls as its priority theme. *For further information visit: [unwomen.org](http://unwomen.org)*

UN Women's support to the Government of Pakistan in increasing women's leadership and participation, works towards adoption and implementation of legal frameworks and policies to advance women's rights to participate in decision-making. UN Women also supports gender responsive electoral measures and processes that lead towards an increase in women's political representation as both voters and candidates.

UN Women's technical support and advocacy towards policy frameworks on gender equality and women's empowerment at the national and provincial levels, has resulted in the launch of the State Government of Azad, Jammu and Kashmir's 'State Policy Framework for Empowerment of Women' on 27 April 2012.

## 2. Countdown to Elections 2013

On Monday 02 April 2012, UN Women in collaboration with UNDP, the Free and Fair Elections Network, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems and the Norwegian Embassy organized a national forum in Islamabad on '**Collective Action for Ensuring Women and Girls Participation in the Electoral Processes in Pakistan**' aimed at building political commitment and momentum on women and girls participation in elections, and to formulate recommendations to ensure the inclusion of women and girls in the electoral process.

The speakers at the event highlighted the need for women's and girl's participation in electoral processes as an important channel for ensuring that they have both voice and visibility, and are part of decision making processes essential for a strong democracy. The critical role of the Election Commission of Pakistan was also recognized. In its five year plan, the ECP focuses, among other reforms, on the need to formulate laws that ensure that marginalized groups including women, minorities and persons with disabilities are able to participate in the political and electoral processes. Civil society organizations, international and national organizations were encouraged to support the government's efforts in striving for this noble cause.

The forum presented a draft resolution recommending specific steps to be taken by policymakers in order to increase women's participation and representation in the electoral process at all levels. These include earmarking at least 10% of party tickets to women; 33% representation of women in parliamentary boards; to expedite the process of registering all women, issuing them CNICs and making them part of the electoral roles; improved facilities for women voters at polling

### Article 34: Constitution of Pakistan

- Under, Full participation of women in national life
- States, 'Steps shall be taken to ensure full participation of women in all spheres of national life'

### Article 7: CEDAW

- Under, Equal Rights between women and men in political and public life
- States, 'Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right to vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies'

stations; where there is evidence of women not being allowed to vote, the polls in that constituency should be declared null and void; and implementation of reforms at ECP according to their 5-year plan

UN Women together with the National Commission on the Status of Women, the Ministry of Human Rights, the Women Development Departments as well as the Women Parliamentary Caucus, has initiated and supports working groups at the national and provincial level to further leverage the work of key government departments, parliamentarians, gender advocates and civil society (particularly women rights organizations), on strengthening the participation and representation of women and girls in all aspects of the electoral process.

In follow up of this National level forum, a number of provincial forums are planned for May and June 2012.

### 3. Policy Framework on Gender Equality for the State of Azad Jammu and Kashmir

On Friday 27 April 2012, the Azad Jammu and Kashmir's State Policy Framework for Empowerment of Women was launched.

UN Women provided technical input into drafting of the legislation keeping it in line with agreed international and national gender equality commitments.

The Framework for Empowerment of Women, which is the outcome of a comprehensive state-wide consultative process initiated by the Social Welfare and Women Development Department, reiterating the commitments, legislation and policy measures of the Government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir in preventing all forms of discrimination against women.

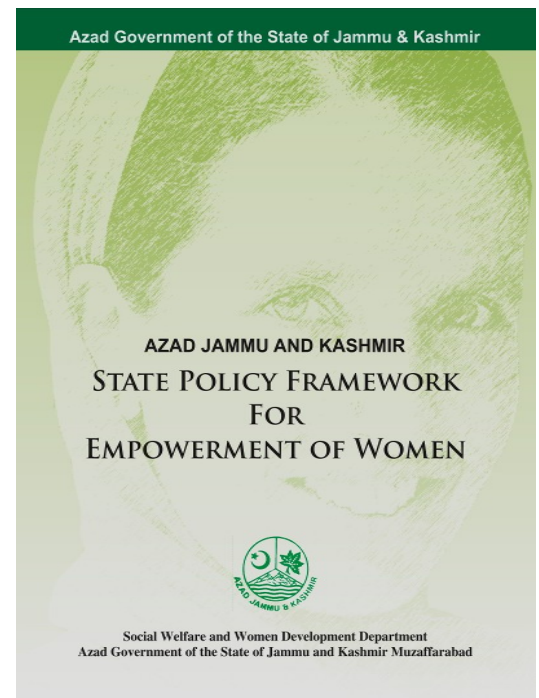
The Framework has drawn upon the Pakistan Government's National Policy for Development and Empowerment of Women (NPDEW) 2002, National Plan of Action (NPA) 1998 and their reviews in 2009 and 2010 respectively.

The prominent features of this Policy include the recognition that women are an integral part of society and

the Government's commitment to their empowerment. It aims to provide clearly defined strategies for empowering women in social, political, economic and legal spheres. Additionally it further asserts the need for a separate State infrastructure for ensuring that these Policy commitments are translated into practice for which the Government aims at establishing a separate Women Development Department and strengthening it through additional human and financial resources.

The Deputy Speaker of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, Ms. Shaheen Kausar Dar spoke on the occasion about the next steps towards the implementation of the policy through a concrete action plan.

For the women of Azad Jammu and Kashmir this Policy intends to ensure that the State machinery reflects gender perspective in all State policies and plans. It is hoped that the implementation of this policy framework will contribute substantially towards empowerment of women.



***“Women are an integral part of our society and our commitment to their empowerment is reflected in this Policy for Empowerment of Women.***

***This policy aims at providing a framework with clearly defined strategies for empowering women in social, political, economic and legal arenas”***

***Mr. Chaudary Abdul Majee,  
Prime Minister, Azad Jammu and Kashmir,  
27 April 2012***

UN Women in advancing legislative reform in Pakistan, works with national machineries for women, the Ending Violence against Women and Girls Alliance (EVAWG - an alliance of women's organizations at national and provincial level), gender advocates and local NGOs to research the issues around violence against women, facilitate consultations among experts and civil society, and provides legal and policy advisory in the drafting and revisions of pro-women bills to ensure they are in line with international standards.

## 4. Pro-Women Laws: A Signal of Change

*For the first time in the history of Pakistan sexual harassment has been defined in the Law. The passing of the **Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2010**, recognizes sexual harassment as a criminal offense, and makes it compulsory for every organization to adopt a Code of Conduct into their HR policies and set up a Committee to address complaints.*

*The 2011 Amendment to the Pakistan Penal Code on the **Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention Bill 2010**, recommends 14-year to lifetime imprisonment sentences and levies fines up to Rs 1 million for perpetrators of its crime. The major focus of the bill is around controlling the import, production, sale and use of acid to prevent misuse and provide legal support to acid and burn victims. Only five years ago, acid crimes were not even recognized as a crime against women and as a matter of public interest and response.*

*The **Prevention of Anti-Women Practices Act 2011**, calls for fair treatment towards women and addressing issues, which were seen as cultural practices and un-touchable including: forcing a woman into marriage for settling a dispute to be a non-bailable offence; bartering a woman in such a way to be punishable by three to five years jail and a fine of Rs 0.5 million; depriving a woman of her inheritance can lead to imprisonment of between five and 10 years or a fine of Rs 1 million or both; forced marriages (other than those for settling disputes) to be punishable by between three and 10 years jail and a fine of Rs 0.5 million; and forcing a woman to "marry" the Holy Quran to result in a jail term of three to seven years and a fine of Rs 0.5 million.*

Women in Pakistan have faced numerous challenges in their efforts to achieve gender equality and address gender-based violence, with particular problems posed by elements among customary norms and practices.

Yet throughout the past few years, Pakistan has passed a significant number of pro-women legislation on crucial women's rights issues, highlighting the continuous efforts of both the Government and the advocacy and lobbying of groups working toward women's empowerment in the country, are taking effect.

Recent legislation passed includes:

- Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act (March 2010)
- Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention Bill (May 2010)
- Amendment to the Pakistan Penal Code on the Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention Bill (December 2011)
- Prevention of Anti Women Practices [Criminal Law Amendment] Act (December 2011)
- Women in Distress and Detention Fund [Amendment] Bill (December 2011)

The benefits of passing such legislation cannot be realized in the absence of implementation plans and mechanisms. Establishment of a National Commission on the Status of Women as an independent and autonomous body (with adoption of a Bill on the National Commission on the Status of Women in March 2012), will support the implementation process to ensure better scope to investigate and address women's rights violations.

## 5. Breaking the Silence to End Violence against Women and Girls

UN Women on 25 November 2011, commemorated 16 Days of Activism in collaboration with key partners and Alliances in Pakistan by launching an unprecedented **“One Million Signature Campaign” Million Names Million Voices - Break the Silence to End Violence against Women and Girls**. The campaign adds to the efforts undertaken by the Government of Pakistan, civil society organizations, UN partners and donors who are working to address violence against women and girls by giving voice to one million people to demand and say no to violence - and is being continued for the next 365 days.

Focusing on the three critical pillars of prevention, protection and provision of services, UN Women calls for urgent actions by leaders from all walks of life to mobilize political, social and economic will and investment to ensure that women can live a life without violence.

A unique music video titled *‘Socha Kabhi Naa’* (sung by Khawar Jawad and Nouman Javaid, and sponsored by the United Nations), was aired on 17 channels in Pakistan on 25 November as a means to reach out to thousands of people to take action for preventing violence against women and girls.

The video was part of the launch for the ‘One Million Signatures’ campaign organized by UN Women, Ministry of Human Rights, EAWWG Alliance, UN and donor partners with concrete commitments to take action to break the silence to end violence against women and girls.

Through coordinated efforts, the campaign reached out to the grassroots. Across Pakistan, government officials, media persons, medico-legal officers, service providers, and youth from universities signed ‘take action’ cards, pledging to support legislative reform, awareness raising through social networking, and changing their own behaviour. Women were engaged in empowerment-related tasks to encourage leadership among marginalized women, and to campaign on improving the response of the criminal justice system on gender-based violence. Charters of Demand to ‘take action’ have been received from 57 districts and have been presented to parliamentarians.

A demographic analysis of the ‘take action’ signature cards and a Declaration will be presented to the President and Prime Minister of Pakistan in mid-2012.



To register with the “One Million Signature Campaign” log on to:

<http://saynotoviolence.org/join-say-no/million-names-million-voices-break-silence-end-violence-against-women-girls>

UN Women's support to the Government of Pakistan in enhancing economic empowerment opportunities for women, works towards adoption and implementation of laws and policies that address their recognition and empowerment as well as social protection mechanisms.

UN Women's advocacy and lobbying in close collaboration with partners has resulted in the Home Based Workers Policy being approved by the Home Based Workers Provincial Council in Punjab and was announced by the Provincial Chief Minister on 08 March 2012 as part of a Women's Empowerment Package for the women of Punjab. The Home Based Workers Policy is currently with the Provincial Cabinet for adoption.

## 6. Punjab's Women Empowerment Package

On International Women's Day the Government of Punjab announced a package for women's empowerment addressing women's social and economic rights through legislative responses and expanding opportunities to make a change in the lives of women in the province. Salient features of the package include:

### Legislative Reforms

- ◆ **Amendment in Inheritance Laws** to safeguard property rights of female heirs, in particular rural women/girls
- ◆ **Property Rights Schemes** to provide joint property title to husband and wife (50% share each) in rural areas, katchi abadis and state land in village abadis
- ◆ **Home Based Workers Policy** formulated to protect and promote the rights and benefits of women HBWs
- ◆ **Equal Wages for Work of Equal Value** to enact amendments to relevant laws enforcing the right of equal remuneration/wages to men and women for equal work of equal value
- ◆ **Enactment of Women Protection Laws** to provide assistance to victims/survivors of gender based violence
- ◆ **Implementation of the Sexual Harassment at Work Place Act** through appointment of an Ombudsperson and establishment of a Provincial Committee to oversee implementation, and adoption of a Code of Conduct in public offices
- ◆ **Offence of Acid Throwing** to discourage acid throwing and establish a Provincial Board for Acid Burns Survivors and a Fund for medical and psychological care

- ◆ **Establishment of Women Crises and Rehabilitation Desks** to provide legal, psychological and basic health referral services at district level and support from a 24/7 toll free helpline

### Public Sector Employment and Economic Empowerment

- ◆ **Encourage Women into Public Services** with a 15% quota set for women that includes recruitment of women through Punjab Public Service Commission, and 25% of general seats reserved for women as Members of the PPSC
- ◆ **Increase Women's Representation** in recruitment committees and administrative leadership positions, with at least 33% female representation in public sector companies
- ◆ **Women Entrepreneurship Financing Scheme** by the Bank of Punjab to offer loans to women for commercial ventures, and will include an advisory service, project feasibility study, business plan preparation
- ◆ **Other measures** to support women include career development facilities, maternity leave and daycare centers

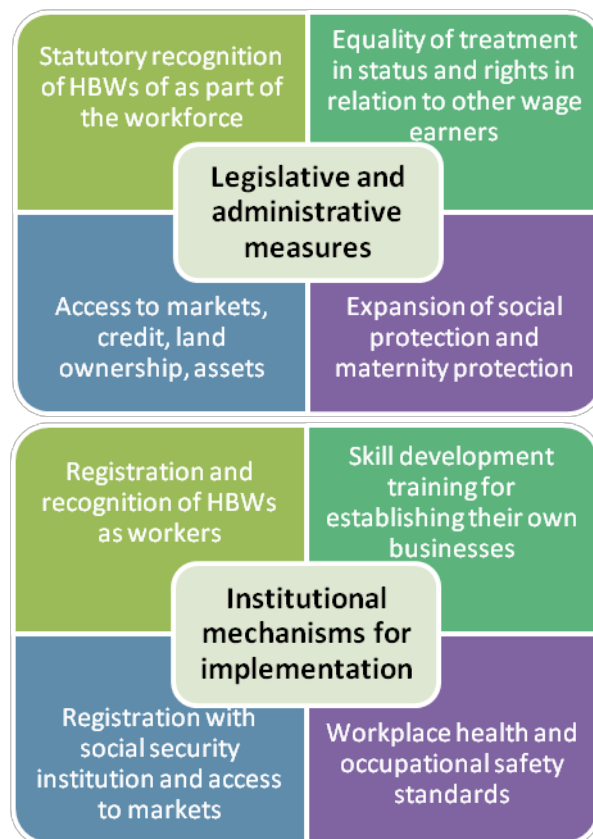
## 7. What does the Punjab HBW Policy entail?

The proposed Punjab Home Based Workers Policy addresses protection and promotion of rights and benefits of HBWs and is based upon the guidelines and salient features of the draft National Policy on HBWs.

The Policy has been approved by the HBW Provincial Council and was announced by the Provincial Chief Minister on 08 March 2012 as part of the Women's Empowerment Package for the women of Punjab.

The Policy is currently with the Provincial Cabinet for adoption and lays down:

1. Legislative and administrative measures necessary to ensure the fulfillment of rights and benefits to HBWs
2. Institutional mechanisms for the implementation of measures to be undertaken for the welfare of HBWs and roles and assignments through formulation of Action Plans



## 8. Women Entrepreneurship Initiatives

UN Women's support to women's entrepreneurship initiatives has resulted in a strong recommendation from the grass-root women themselves in that **'enhancement of their access to entrepreneurship initiatives directly leads to their improved condition and position within the household and community'**.

UN Women, through pilot projects with ILO, has been instrumental in integrating support to rural informal home based women workers in three districts of Punjab (Sialkot, Faisalabad and Kasur) and two districts of Sindh (Hyderabad and Umerkot), through promotion of decent work opportunities and their long-term sustainability of the initiative.

The following extract is a case study from a home based quilt-maker from Faisalabad:

***"My name is Imrana, 40 years of age, my husband died and since I have had to live with my married brother. I have completed my education up to F.A. - I have no children - we are 11 family members.***

***Initially, I was being supported by my brother. In view the present economic scenario, I thought not to be a burden on my brother - I started quilt making at home.***

***I did not get any training from anywhere and would stitch the quilts by joining pieces of cloth together. I used to make about Rs. 1,800 per month".***

***After attending a meeting on HBW initiatives, Imrana says;***

***"I opted for training of stitching and fashion designing for enhancing my income.... I am now earning around Rs. 6,000 per month.***

***I am planning to start my own fashion designing school and teach other ladies".***

UN Women, in enhancing the leadership role of women in disaster risk reduction and disaster risk management, supports the Government of Pakistan towards adoption and implementation of gender responsive policies and plans to respond to the needs of women and girls, and increase their representation in policy discourse around preparedness, prevention, response, recovery and mitigation.

UN Women's technical support and lobbying with the provincial government of Balochistan and the Secretariat of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas has resulted in adoption of a number of model protection structures and mechanisms to support vulnerable women and girls.

## 9. Shelter Services for Vulnerable Women, Balochistan

On 08 February 2012, the Government of Balochistan's Social Welfare Department adopted **Standard Operating Procedures for Dar-ul-Aman (Shelter Homes)** in Quetta with immediate effect.

UN Women has been supporting the Dar-ul-Aman, an improved shelter service for the vulnerable women in the province, under the Disaster Risk Management Programme of the One UN. UN Women's interventions focused around development of the SOPs for the Dar-ul-Aman; its refurbishment and renovation; and training of its staff on psycho-social counseling.

This Dar-ul-Aman is the only government owned facility in the entire province. The Dar-ul-Aman previously without any rules of business or SOPs had over the years turned into a remand room for women where they were transferred to and from the courts - they were treated as prisoners and were not allowed to leave the 'home' until a court verdict was given thus causing many Dar-ul-Aman residents to escape.

The 'Order' laying down the SOPs for the Dar-ul-Aman includes;

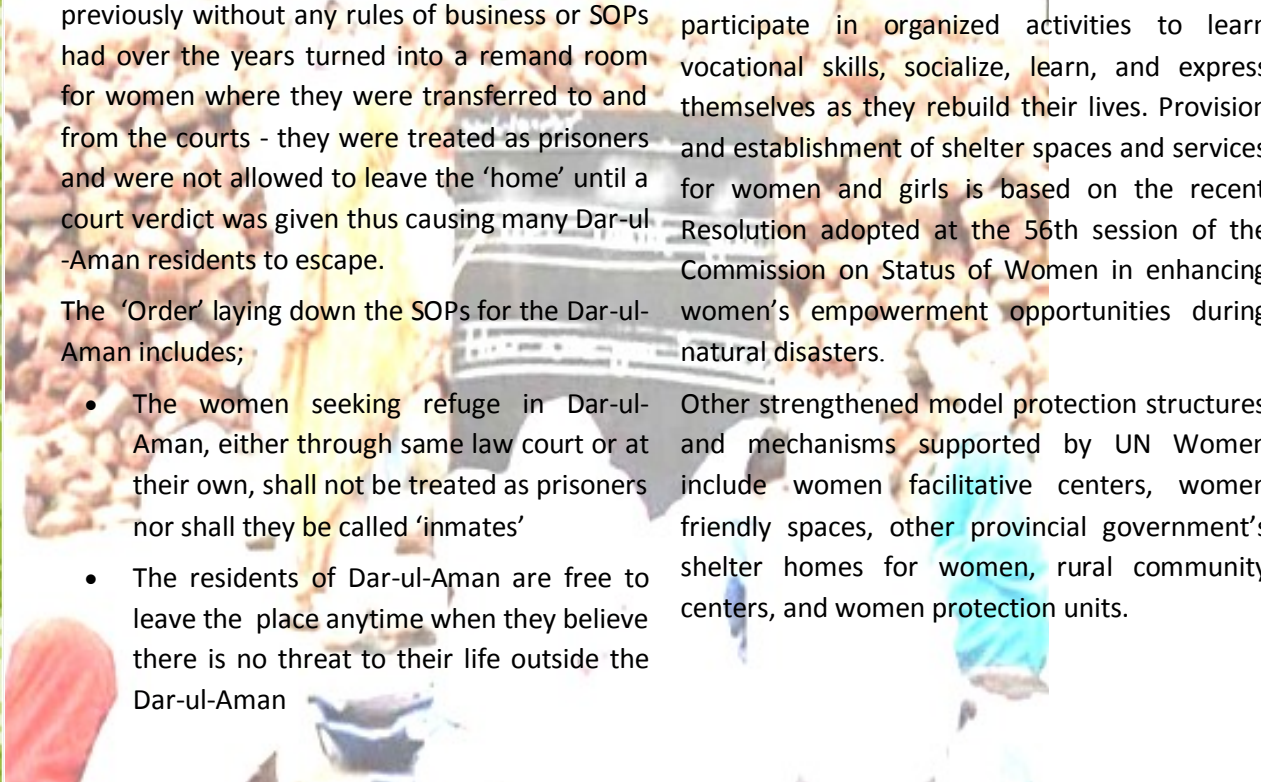
- The women seeking refuge in Dar-ul-Aman, either through same law court or at their own, shall not be treated as prisoners nor shall they be called 'inmates'
- The residents of Dar-ul-Aman are free to leave the place anytime when they believe there is no threat to their life outside the Dar-ul-Aman

- The in-charge of the Dar-ul-Aman is the competent authority to discharge residents, following the adopted discharge procedure, as mentioned in the 'Order'
- The role of the court and the police has been removed from all the procedures related to the Dar-ul-Aman

This is a very positive development as now women in distress can avail the facilities at will in the Dar-ul-Aman.

Such shelter homes and services for vulnerable women and girls provides them firstly, with a protective environment and secondly, with an empowering environment where they can also participate in organized activities to learn vocational skills, socialize, learn, and express themselves as they rebuild their lives. Provision and establishment of shelter spaces and services for women and girls is based on the recent Resolution adopted at the 56th session of the Commission on Status of Women in enhancing women's empowerment opportunities during natural disasters.

Other strengthened model protection structures and mechanisms supported by UN Women include women facilitative centers, women friendly spaces, other provincial government's shelter homes for women, rural community centers, and women protection units.





The following extract is a case study from a woman who benefitted from a Women Friendly Space in FATA

**Durdana bibi is a 28 years old widow living in District Tank, FATA. She is taking care of a two year old son and is a single sister of four brothers and is the eldest sibling at her father's home. Durdana was not able to go to school and her father was too poor and physically challenged to support his children's education.**

**Durdana has paid dearly for exercising her basic right to marry according to her own will. Durdana's nikah forcefully took place at an early age with a relative but she was not happy with her marriage. Over the course of time, she broke marital relations with her first husband and married another man belonging to a different sect from hers. Her second husband was killed after 11 months of her marriage and during that period, she was pregnant with her son. Durdana's ordeal did not end here, following her husband's death; she was abandoned by her in-laws and sent back to her father's home. She and her son are now an additional burden on the scarce resources of her father's income.**

**As an after math of the 2010 floods, her father's family lost all their resources. Durdana shared "I was completely disappointed when the floods struck as we were already struggling with meager resources", and the floods further aggravated the problem. She constantly worries about her son's future and how to survive.**

**Durdana heard about the 'women friendly space' in her district from her neighbors and joined the space. Here she learnt to cope with the trauma she was going through and improved her stitching skills further. Durdana says "I want to improve my stitching skills further to contribute to the family income and have a better future for my son", and is thankful to the women friendly apace for providing her with support and this opportunity.**

## 10. Women Desks within the FATA Disaster Management Authority

On 19 March 2012, the Disaster Management Authority of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) shared a notification on the **establishment of a 'Women Desk'** within the FDMA, with assistance and support from UN Women. The women desk works within FDMA's mandate and gender equality framework to further strengthen FDMA's capacity for gender mainstreaming around planning and programming. The women desk is involved in the development of SOPs and a monitoring framework to address gender in relief, recovery and disaster risk reduction, ensuring equal relief to men and women. Although the word 'desk' is used, the concept is more like a functioning unit, a process to deal with women's issues.

Adoption of Gender SOPs will support:

- Gender sensitization of planning and development FDMA officials
- Developing capacity for gender analysis, planning, monitoring, and evaluation
- Establishing gender disaggregated databases
- Establishing knowledge based networking systems

- Developing institutional mechanisms and procedures for gender mainstreaming and accountability in government.

The representation of women within disaster management institutions is minimal, particularly at decision-making levels in the government. The establishment of provincial and regional women desks highlights the government's commitment for gender integration in its disaster-management strategy. Thus offering a unique opportunity to ensure that gender issues are taken into account and that vulnerable groups, including women, play a role in all phases of disaster management, particularly in the development of effective policies and plans.

The Women Desk in FDMA, follows the inauguration of the Women's Empowerment Wing within the Social Welfare and Women Development Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on 30 November 2011, where the Wing supports the Implementation of CEDAW, and other relevant International Conventions and protocols ratified by Pakistan has ratified or signed. The Wing is supported by a Women's Protection Unit and Women Facilitation Centers

## 11. One UN Gender Audit

In 2011, the United Nations Inter-Agency Group on Gender Equality partnered with an independent consultant in implementing a rapid Gender Audit within the framework of the UN's work in Pakistan with focus on looking at UN internal and external mechanisms.

### The Focus of the Audit:

Essentially a social assessment, has been on the level of internalization of substantive gender equality concerns, the existence and actual use of institutional mechanisms towards gender equality, as well as the organizational culture within the UN System (agencies, programmes and funds) in Pakistan.

A Management Response (currently being finalized) linked with the audit outcomes, will provide the framework to enhance the UN system's collective institutional capacity to critically examine itself from a gender perspective, build on its strengths and lessons learned, as well as to build ownership towards delivering on its Gender Equality commitments.

The Gender Audit is a result of a consultative and participatory process between July to October 2011.

### Purpose of the Audit:

"To enhance the UN's collective capacity to examine itself from a gender perspective, identifying its strengths and weaknesses, as well as to build ownership towards achieving Gender Equality"

### Findings of the Audit:

The Audit findings present a 'mixed picture for analysis' - some progress is visible through increased mention of women and girls, men and boys, in most UN documents, however there still exists room for improvement both qualitative and attitudinal.

**Recommendations** of the Audit include (but are not limited to):

1

Feminization of poverty (a 3:1 female/male ratio) needs to be urgently acknowledged and addressed if the UN is to meet its own Gender Equality goals and assist the Government towards achieving the MDGs, meet its Constitutional obligations and adhere to the States binding international commitments

2

The UN must continue to demand a stronger and sharper focus on women and girls issues in Pakistan, and the UN must also acknowledge and reflect its recognition of engaging men and boys as partners, promoters and agents of change

3

The UN Country Team needs to demonstrate its ownership of and commitment to the UN System's own stated policies, commitments and goals for Gender Equality

4

The role and mandate of the RC, with respect to Gender Equality advocacy and policy dialogue requires to be strengthened with increased cooperation and support from the UN Country Team

5

Institutional recognition of the UN's IAGonGE and Gender Focal Points, and their strengthening and capacity building both in Gender Equality concepts and respective thematic technical expertise

6

Leverage on opportunities and entry points to advance the Gender Equality agenda offered in Pakistan's next CCA/UNDAF cycle (2013-2017), including, including gendering of both the Government and UN's documents, at both policy and programme level

7

Continue to assist and build capacities of the Government and civil society in gender responsive humanitarian and socio-economic development assistance

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[www.twitter.com/unwomen](https://www.twitter.com/unwomen)  
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