



Australian Government



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality
and the Empowerment of Women

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Press Release

A Panel Discussion on Progress towards gender equality in Punjab Province

Earlier this year the Punjab Provincial Assembly passed the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act 2016, the first legislation of its kind in Pakistan, and the South Asia region, to have its own implementation structure - Violence Against Women Centres (VAWCs).

The Australian High Commission and UN Women brought together today a number of influential Pakistani citizens to discuss progress towards gender equality in Punjab Province, taking as their point of reference the landmark Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act 2016.

“Violence against women is a very serious problem affecting all societies and every country,” Ms Margaret Adamson, Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan, said in opening the discussion. “Gender equality is a core foreign policy priority for Australia, and I am reassured to be joined today by colleagues from all sectors of society who are committed to advancing the rights of women and promoting gender equality, not only in Pakistan, but globally, both as a human right, and out of sheer economic good sense.”

Mr. Jamshed Kazi, Country Representative, UN Women Pakistan, in his address said: “Over the past few months, there seems to have been a surge in country-wide reported cases of violence against women with some resulting in killings of a tragic nature taking a devastating toll on women, men, children, families, communities and all of Pakistan. Violence against women is one of the biggest threats for any society to fully function. Tackling the pandemic that reaches almost every woman once in her lifetime where 1 in 3 women experience violence, must be everyone’s top priority.” “The Government of Punjab is to be commended for taking a bold, progressive and much needed step to go ahead with their Protection of Women Against Violence Act, which if implemented in letter and spirit, will bring positive change for women in Punjab and set an example to provide remedies against violence for women and girls throughout Pakistan. We need to collectively support the State’s and the judiciary to uphold their responsibilities to deter such crimes in the first place, and ensure that people who commit them are swiftly brought to justice,” added Mr Kazi.

Mr. Salman Sufi, Senior Member, Chief Minister’s Special Monitoring Unit (Law and Order Wing) in presenting salient features and significance of Punjab’s comprehensive initiatives to protect women against violence shared: “The collective fight against ending violence against women requires a united front. Punjab Province has sent a message to the world

that we will never accept violence against women as a norm in society. The Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act 2016 speaks for itself as to this resolve.”

The panel discussion, on ‘progress towards gender equality in Punjab’ hosted by Australian High Commissioner Adamson included Fauzia Viqar (Chairperson of the Punjab Commission on the Status of Women), and Hina Jilani (Advocate of the Supreme Court of Pakistan).

The discussion focused on provincial responsibilities (post-devolution) to ensure comprehensive measures protecting women and justice to women survivors. It also addressed Punjab’s progress in other key areas towards gender equality: women’s economic empowerment, education for girls, and women’s voice in decision making.

The Chief Minister’s Special Monitoring Unit (Law and Order Wing) was lauded by panellists and participants for spearheading drafting and passage of key legislation on the directive of the Punjab Chief Minister to end violence against women in the province. The legislation will provide a helpful model for other provinces and countries.

The event is part of Australia’s tenure as co-chair of the Inter Agency Gender and Development Group (INGAD) in partnership with UN Women.

INGAD is a group of donors and multilateral agencies who have been working to promote gender equality in the development and humanitarian sectors and interagency coordination in Pakistan since 1985. INGAD is chaired by different donors and UN agencies on a biannual rotational basis. Australia is the current rotating co-chair of INGAD for the six months to August 2016 in partnership with UN Women (a permanent co-chair).

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