



All citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law.

There shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex alone.

No citizen otherwise qualified for appointment in the service of Pakistan shall be discriminated against in respect of any such appointment on the ground only of ... sex ...

Steps shall be taken to ensure full participation of women in all spheres of national life.

The state shall protect the marriage, the family, the mother ...

The state shall ... [ensure] that ... women are not employed in vocations unsuited to their sex....

**Constitution of Pakistan**  
Articles 25, 27, 35, 37

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights ...

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind...

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law ...

Men and women of full age ... are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.

Marriage should be entered into with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.

Everyone has the right to equal access to public service in his country. Mother and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance.

**Universal Declaration of Human Rights**  
Article 1, 2, 7, 16, 21(2), 25(2)

The year 2015 offered little evidence of movement towards creating a more equitable and just environment for women in Pakistan. Various sections of society resisted upholding of women's rights. Economic development and access to justice remained the weakest elements in women's protection framework, increasing the incidence of their exploitation and abuse, and violence against them.

However, 2015 also turned out to be a year of many firsts for women in Pakistan: the first fire fighter; the first truck driver; the first female rickshaw driver; the first speakers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan assemblies; and the first UN Goodwill ambassador from Pakistan, among many others.

### **Economic and social rights (Opportunities and challenges)**

Gender justice in access to education, health, economic opportunities and political empowerment continued to elude women in 2015.

The Gender Gap Index 2015 ranked Pakistan second from the last among 145 countries in terms of the prevalence of gender-based disparities. Published annually by the Geneva-based World Economic Forum, the Index measures national gender gaps in economy, politics, education and health. Released on November 20, the Index ranked Pakistan 143rd in economic participation and opportunity, 135th in educational attainment, 125th in health and survival and 87th in political empowerment.



**Lack of equal-wage and anti-discrimination workplace laws restricted women's economic freedom**

A World Bank Report titled *Women, Business and the Law 2016 Getting to Equal* analysed women's economic opportunities across 30 countries. Released in September, the report identified 14 laws in Pakistan that limit women's economic opportunities against 22 laws in Afghanistan, five in India, seven in Sri Lanka, nine in Nepal and one in the Maldives. Several factors including lack of equal-wage and anti-discriminatory workplace laws were found to be restricting women's economic freedom in Pakistan. The report highlighted limited employment choices available for women as they were not normally hired in factories or in the mining industry. It observed that many women in Pakistan were denied their inheritance rights and that married women who wished to register a business in Pakistan could not do so without a witness and giving their husband's name, nationality, and address, an unnecessary and restrictive requirement.

The UN Women in Pakistan released a report titled *Progress of World's Women 2015-2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights* on July 29. This report addressed the gaps in laws and policies that restrict women's rights and called for the promotion of rights and needs of women in the post-15 development agenda and integration of gender equality in sustainable development. The report drew a comparison among 71 countries on gender equality of family laws over a 30-year time span (1975–2005). Pakistan was amongst the 38 countries that had not fully transitioned towards gender equal family laws by 2005 and continued to maintain highly discriminatory laws favouring men in marriages, and which provide men greater rights over property and limit women's options for divorce. According to the report rural women in the country do 4.9 hours of unpaid care and domestic work per day compared to 0.5 hours for rural men, 48% of women do not make final decision regarding their health and 47% women in rural areas and 17% in urban areas have difficulty accessing health services in Pakistan. It observed that placing women at the centre of water decisions led to improved access, more cost-effective delivery and less corruption in water financing as evident from the experiences of seven countries including Pakistan.

The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), an extensive research on gender in the news media coordinated by the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC), was released on November 23. In Pakistan, the report showed, the visibility of women in news increased from 27 per cent in 2010 to 36 per cent in 2015. The number of female reporters across media also increased from 11 per cent in 2010 to 16 per cent in 2015. However, despite an improvement in figures, the qualitative analysis of the news stories shows that women are

mostly portrayed as victims or as sex objects. There is an absence of stories addressing girl-child issues and women's economic participation and only 4 per cent of the news stories deal with gender equality.

A report titled "Inside the News: Challenges and Aspirations for Women Journalists in Asia and the Pacific" jointly produced by the International Federation of Journalists, UNESCO and UN-Women was released on March 8. It focused on working conditions of women journalists in Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Vanuatu, Malaysia, Nepal and Cambodia. The report revealed that men outnumbered women five to one (5:1) in Pakistan's media industry and Pakistan was one of the two countries with the highest wage gap between male and female journalists. It saw very few women in the media in decision making roles. The report, however, recognized that women in Pakistan's media industry were challenging this status quo on gender rights and sexual harassment and some media companies had adopted exemplary gender approaches and policies.

On the occasion of International Women's Day 2015, the Punjab government said 33 percent representation would be given to women in all decision making boards and committees, as per the Punjab Fair Representation of Women Act 2014 passed on the same day in 2014. One woman member will be mandatory for all recruitment committees in government institutions and 15 per cent quota in government and private jobs will be guaranteed to women. For the fiscal year that started on July 2015, the Punjab government allocated



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an amount of Rs. 32.16 billion for women welfare and development projects out of its development budget.

The Punjab government launched a campaign by the name of Women on Wheels (WoW) in collaboration with City Traffic Police Lahore, Women Development Department and UN Women The HeForShe campaign in November aimed at increasing women's mobility and presence in public spaces. Under this campaign women would be provided free lessons to learn riding motorbikes. More than 80 women had enrolled for the first session.

In April, KP government launched a Women Empowerment Policy, developed jointly by the Social Welfare Department and the Provincial Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW). The policy aims at ensuring social, economic, legal and political empowerment of women of the province especially those belonging to rural areas, minorities groups or facing vulnerable situations. The PCSW, which was previously operating under the Social Welfare Department, was also made autonomous and asked to monitor the implementation of the policy.

In December, the Sindh chief minister increased women's job quota in the government sector from 5 to 7 per cent. He also announced that the Women Development Department in the province would only be run by women. Also small loans were to be given to women artisans through the Sindh Bank from January 2016.

To increase the access of disaster affected women to opportunities for recovery and rehabilitation, National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) signed an agreement to strengthen gender ties in July. Under this agreement, NDMA and UN agreed to work jointly for the institutional strengthening of Gender and Child Cells working under NDMA; strengthening Pakistan's "multi-hazard approach" for the prevention of and in response to natural and manmade disasters from a gender perspective; ensuring interventions in accordance with local conditions; and establishing a database to understand the gender dynamics and impact in disaster-affected communities.

Lady Health Workers continued to be denied their salaries and service structure for which LHWs around the country staged protests in October. Government representatives told the LHWs that their demands would be met soon, but were yet to deliver on the promise by the end of the year.



**MMR is the lowest in Punjab with 227 and the highest in Balochistan with 785 deaths per 100,000 live births**

### ***Health***

Pakistan's Economic Survey 2014-2015 revealed that the life expectancy for females had improved from 66.9 year to 67.3 years in the fiscal year 2014-2015. Maternal mortality rate, however, remained on the higher end at 170/1000 deaths, far from the MDG 2 target of 140/1000 deaths. The government identified illiteracy, food insecurity, inadequate nutrition, low financial allocation, rising security expenditures and flaws in IDPs management as the factors that prevented it from reaching the targets under MDG 2. Official figures show MMR is the lowest in Punjab with 227 and the highest in Balochistan with 785 deaths per 100,000 live births.

Pakistan's global ranking in MMR dropped from 147<sup>th</sup> last year to 149, among a total of 178 countries, according to Save the Children's 16<sup>th</sup> State of the World's Mothers Report titled, "The Urban Disadvantage", released in May 2015. The report said the MMR was 2.5 times more among the poor as compared to the rich in urban areas of Pakistan.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government approved the first Provincial Population Policy 2015. This policy was developed to improve maternal health and child survival and comply with various international and national commitments made by Pakistan, especially Family Planning 2020 (FP2020) and Sustainable Development Goals 2015-30. The policy aimed at ensuring that family planning services reach out to the vulnerable and poorest through its infrastructure

and both men and women who required services for family planning receive it without any difficulty with respect for their choices and needs.

Breast cancer emerged as one of the most serious diseases affecting women in Pakistan. According to Pink Ribbon Pakistan, a nation-wide campaign working in the country to create awareness on the disease, Pakistan has the highest incidence of breast cancer in Asia with one out of nine diagnosed with this disease at some point in their life. "About 40,000 women die each year of breast cancer in Pakistan, largely because there are almost no facilities for diagnosis and treatment of the disease, particularly in rural areas," it said.

### **Legal and political arena**

In terms of electoral participation, according to voter registration data released by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) the gap between male and female voters widened from 10.97 million in May 2013 to 11.65m in September 2015. The overall percentage of female voters stood at 43.74 per cent against 56.26 per cent male voters. In Punjab, the ratio of female voters was 43.93 per cent against 56.07 per cent male voters, in Sindh the female voters constituted 44.68 pc of the total registered voters, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 42.97 per cent women and 57.03 per cent men and the ratio of female voters in Balochistan stood at 42.58 per cent against 57.42 per cent male voters.

For the first time in the country's history, Balochistan and KP assemblies elected women as their speakers. In December, Raheela Hameed Khan Durrani was elected unopposed as the first woman speaker of the Balochistan Assembly and Dr Meher Taj Roghani was elected as the first woman deputy speaker of the KP Assembly.

An International Crisis Centre report titled Women, Violence and Conflict in Pakistan stressed the need for enhancing women's role in national decision making. Released in April, the report recognized the prime minister's pledge to make legislative and administrative changes to improve the condition of women in the country. However, it observed that 'discriminatory legislation and dysfunctional legislative system' had been very damaging for women's rights, especially in the conflict zones of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA. It recommended ending impunity which aggravated violence against women and improve women's access to justice. It laid emphasis on the meaningful participation of women in national decision making, especially in matters of peace-building for sustainable reforms in the country.

## **Access to justice and legislative changes**

A range of legislative steps were taken at the provincial level to strengthen rights of women. On May 15, Sindh Commission on the Status of Women Act 2015 was approved allowing the formation of a watchdog body to work on the promotion of social, economic, political and legal rights of women. The act was to take immediate effect in the province. The provincial government was required to constitute the commission comprising of 21 members within 90 days of the passage of the act. But the government failed to do so and in November the Sindh High Court directed the chief secretary to form the commission within three months. However, the commission's formation remained pending by the yearend.

In Punjab, five laws were approved to improve legal procedures for the facilitation of women litigants, namely, the Punjab Land Revenue (Amendment) Act 2015, the Punjab Partition of Immovable Property Act 2015, the Punjab Muslim Family Laws (Amendment) Act 2015, the Family Courts (Amendment) Act 2015 (AA of 2015) and Punjab Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Act 2015. The first two laws were passed in order to ensure that litigation in property cases was conducted without delay and gender discrimination. The Revenue officer is now legally required to decide a property partition issue herself or himself based on the Inheritance Mutation (Intiqal), instead of requiring a party to file civil suit. This will curb the practice of women being made to give up their land ownership in favour of the male heirs. The new law allows the inclusion of electronic means and



**A range of legislative changes took place at the provincial level to strengthen rights of women**



devices as valid modes of serving summons. The Punjab Muslim Family Laws (Amendment) Act 2015 makes it mandatory that all the entries of the nikahnama are properly filled. Otherwise, a fine of 25,000 rupees and one month imprisonment will be imposed on the transgressor. A person who solemnizes a marriage in place of the Nikah Registrar, but fails to report to the Nikah Registrar, will be fined Rs 100,000 and three months imprisonment under the amended law.

A person who marries a second time without informing the Arbitration Council will be fined Rs 500,000. The amendment also allows the mother or the grandmother of a child to approach the Union Council of her area directly without having to acquire the services of a lawyer, to ensure that due maintenance is given to children by the father. The Family Courts (Amendment) Act 2015 (AA of 2015) allows women to keep up to 50% of the dower in the case of Khula. Previously she had to renounce her dower completely. It also aims to speed up litigation by reducing the time a defendant has to file a reply.

In the same year, however, three important bills lapsed at the federal level because a National Assembly session was not convened within the prescribed time for their approval after being passed by the Senate. These were Anti-Rape Laws (Criminal Laws Amendment) Bill 2015, the Anti-Honour Killing Laws (Criminal Laws Amendment) Bill 2015, and the Torture, Custodial Death and Custodial Rape (Prevention and Punishment) Bill 2015. These bills proposed to amend the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC), Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) and the Qanoon-i-Shahadat to improve the rate of prosecution, make DNA tests mandatory within 24 hours of receipt of rape report, resolution of rape cases within six months, protection of rape victim's identity and impose penalties for publically revealing personal details of rape victims. These bills were moved by Sughra Imam and Farhatullah Babar as private member bills and had been approved by the Senate after their passage through standing committees.

In Sindh, rules for recently passed Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2013, and "Early Child Marriage Restraint Act 2013" remained pending. The Women Development Department said that rules of business had been prepared and were awaiting the approval of the law department.

Women prisoners' conditions fell below the minimum standards prescribed in local and international laws. In October 2014, the Supreme Court of Pakistan took suo motu notice of the deteriorating conditions of women prisoners all over the country. It directed all four provincial governments to submit details of facilities being provided

to women in jails. One judge on the bench expressed serious concerns about women prisoners being taken to and from courts for trial with male prisoners in the same van and their being made to stay the night in the city before or after their hearing without proper arrangements. Another similar issue highlighted in Balochistan was women prisoners being housed in the same facility as male inmates.

Lifting of the moratorium on death penalty brought 47 women prisoners in line for executions and most of them had no legal assistance. Kanizan Bibi, who had spent 26 years in prison, could be the first woman to be executed in Pakistan as she was the only female on the death row. Her appeals against the execution were dismissed by both the Supreme Court and the President of Pakistan. However, her mental condition was declared unstable and not fit for execution. Medical boards had diagnosed her with paranoid schizophrenia. The federal government announced the revival of Women Distress and Detention Fund to support imprisoned women in December. The fund, now having an amount of around Rs 46.6 million, was initially established in 1996, was not functional due to the changing status of the human rights wing, which had created it.

Women's participation as law enforcement agents is very poor in Pakistan. This issue was highlighted in a research report of Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) titled 'Rough Road to Equality: Women Police in South Asia' released in August. According to the report women make 0.94 per cent of the total police force in Pakistan as compared to 7.4 per cent in the Maldives, 6.11 per cent in India and 4.63 per cent in Bangladesh. Among the total police force of 425,978 in Pakistan, the number of women was 4,020. The percentage was highest in Gilgit-Baltistan with 3.1 per cent followed by Islamabad and Punjab with 1.55 and 1.2 per cent respectively.

The lowest number is in Balochistan where women make only 0.31 per cent of the total force. The Federal Intelligence Agency (FIA) topped the list with 10 per cent of the force being women. The report considered the overarching patriarchal mindset of society, lack of political will and workplace harassment as some major reasons for low enrolment of women in police. The report recommended that the infrastructural facilities be improved to encourage women to join the police force such as pick-and-drop facilities, basic facilities for women's police stations, day-care centres, and women's toilets. It also proposed that the National Police Bureau (NPB) framed policies on recruitment standards, childcare, maternity leave, duty hours, flexible working and transport. It also stressed creation of more posts for

Nature of Violence	Cases	Victims
Sexual Violence( gang rape, rape, harassment, sodomy, stripping)		939
Domestic Violence (acid attack, amputation, beating, edged tool attack, murder bids, set on fire, shaving, shot etc.)	254	279
Burning (Acid attacks, set on fire)		143
Kidnapping	753	833
Suicide + Suicide Bids		777

women to mainstream them in the police department.

On the upside, the first batch of 35 women commandos graduated from Nowshera Elite Force Training School in KP and Erum Awan, a female police superintendent, was appointed as the first spokesperson for the Sindh police.

## Violence against women

Violence against women remained rampant as the most pervasive violation of their rights in the country. Different initiatives taken at the public and private level to address the issue lacked consistency and thus did not yield any meaningful impact.

The following figures on violence against women were gathered in HRCP's database in 2015:

146 FIRs were filed in domestic violence cases. No FIRs were filed in 146 cases. 747 FIRs were filed in sexual violence cases, and no complaint was filed in 44 cases. 88 of the victims were filmed while being sexually abused and were used by the perpetrators to further harass the victim. In kidnapping cases, 209 women were recovered, 53 were not found. No information on the status of the victim was available in 490 cases. With regard to burning cases, FIRs were



Many employed women continued to face workplace harassment

registered in 76 cases, and no complaint was registered in seven cases. Most of the suicides by women that occurred in 2015 were the result of family quarrels, carried out mostly by using drugs.

According to official figures released by the Ministry of Human Rights, 8,648 incidents of human rights violation were reported in the country between January 2012 and September 15, 2015. These included 90 incidents of acid burning, 72 of burning, 481 of domestic violence, 860 honour killings, 344 rape/gang rapes, 268 sexual assault/harassment, and 535 cases of violence against women.

Aurat Foundation found 287 cases of violence against women from KP in the first nine months of the year, with the highest number of cases taking place in Peshawar (102). The top three crimes against women were found to be kidnapping/abduction, rape and murder. Another similar report, released by War Against Rape in July 2015, stated that four women were raped every day in Pakistan in 2014, a 49 percent increase in the number of cases as compared to 2013.

Incidents of sexual violence against women continued to take place in 2015 with the same ferocity as in the previous years. The year was marred with horrific incidents of rape and murder of young women, only some of which found their way to newspapers and other media forums. Many culprits in the cases were law enforcement agents themselves. The year started with gang rape of a nomad girl by three policemen in Nasirabad. A departmental inquiry was initiated against the culprits after a large-scale protest by the locals. On February 28, a mother and daughter were sexually assaulted and then set on fire by three men in Daharki, Sukkur, which resulted in their death. In March, a woman in Faisalabad was kidnapped by a rickshaw driver and raped for three weeks. In April, a woman was gang raped during a dacoity in Arifwala. Another girl was gang raped in Chakwal.

A matric student from Burewala was raped by two people, one of whom was a constable, and a 16-year-old girl was raped in Lahore. In August, a girl as young as seven years was raped and killed in Karachi. September witnessed a number of gruesome cases. Safia Bibi, a Christian deaf and dumb woman, from a village Ganda Singh Wala near Kasur was gang raped at gun point by three men in her house. The suspected culprits were released on bail. In the same month a woman from Faisalabad was abducted and raped by her ex-husband and his three friends and then later dumped in a sugarcane field. Another young woman was gang-raped in Kotli Sattian by three friends who also made a video of her and used that to blackmail her. In

the same month, a woman in Lahore lodged a complaint against six policemen who she said kidnapped, raped and tortured her for seven days.

Two more incidents of rape were reported from Pakpattan in September. In October, a woman from Faisalabad was abducted and raped by two neighbours and three rape cases were reported from Malakand where a 20-year-old girl, a 13-year-old girl and a 4-year-old girl were raped in separate incidents. In the same month, a 20-year-old gang-rape victim committed suicide in front of Muzaffargarh city police station after the police refused to register her complaint. In November, a 22-year-old girl was thrown off a three-storey building after being raped in Rawalpindi. The year ended with yet another case of gang-rape of a minor girl who was a resident of Kasur. The 15-year-old girl was kidnapped, drugged and gang-raped by 10 men and left unconscious in a hotel room. Eight culprits were arrested immediately under Sections 376 (ii) and 506 of Pakistan Penal Code and for abduction. The main suspect, with certain alleged political connections, was accused of pressuring the victim's family to have his name excluded from the case. The medical legal report of the victim established that she had been gang raped. The accused men were under physical remand by the yearend.

Despite the high volume of cases, the rate of prosecution remained fairly low. A few good precedents, however, were set by the courts. A district and sessions court in December 2015 sentenced a man to 10 years imprisonment and Rs 25,000 fine after being found guilty of sexually assaulting a 14-year-old girl who lived in his neighbourhood in Karachi. The incident was reported on September 12, 2013. Two months earlier, the same judge had found a man guilty of raping his 17-year-old daughter in their house in Gulistan-e-Jauhar - an incident reported three years ago. The judge sentenced him to 12-year imprisonment with a Rs 50,000 fine and also ordered that on failure to pay the fine, his jail time would be increased by 6 months. Muhammad Ali Hajiano and Umair Khan were sentenced to 45 years over rape charges by an additional district and sessions court Karachi in August 2015.

Both were arrested in 2009 and charged with around 35 cases of rape, attempt to murder and robbery. Earlier in the month another sessions court in Karachi sentenced a man Furqan Ali to collective 28 years in prison for kidnapping and raping a minor girl. The court found him guilty of sexually assaulting a seven-year-old girl after abducting her in Korangi Industrial Area in May, 2009.

In an effort to curb the high incidence of violence against women in Sindh, the high court directed the deputy commissioners of Larkana, Sukkur and Nawabshah in November 2015 to establish Safe Houses in their districts at Taluka level within two months. The court directed the SSPs of the three divisions to setup Rescue Centers at Taluka level under the charge of women police officers to handle women's complaints and ensure their easy access to safe houses. The court ordered these centres established within two months in interior Sindh and within three months at other places.

In Punjab, the Special Monitoring Unit (SMU) of the Chief Minister's Office announced that it was in the process of setting up Violence against Women Centres (VAWC) for provision of justice to women subjected to violence. These women-run centres would operate round the clock and provide police, prosecution, medical and forensic facilities under one roof. The VAWCs would be integrated with shelter homes and would assist in a victim's resettlement back into the society. The cases received at these centres would be streamlined with real-time data integration between all justice delivery departments. VAWCs will also serve as mediation centres for non-cognizable offences.

The Punjab government also approved the inclusion of a chapter on protection of women from violence in matric and intermediate Urdu textbooks of the Punjab Board. Drafted by the SMU, the chapter would include information on the causes of violence against women, ways to address social challenges without resorting to violence and details of women shelters and other resources available to victims to access justice.

Many employed women continued to confront workplace harassment. On Working Women's Day 2015, the Senate unanimously passed a resolution urging the government to undertake initiatives to provide a safe, secure, healthy, and harassment free environment for working women. Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were yet to appoint ombudspersons to receive and decide on complaints against harassment as prescribed under the Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2010. The Federal Ministry of Law and Justice claims that between January 2012 and January 2015, there have been no reports of cases of harassment against women. The Sindh Women Development Department, on the other hand, said in December that they had registered 1,007 cases of sexual harassment under the Harassment Act and had managed to resolve at least 887 of them. Different incidents of harassment at workplace were reported

from both public and private sector offices during the year.

In March, an inquiry committee comprising senior teachers of Karachi University found a fellow teacher guilty of sexual harassment of his students. However, the students had little hope that the teacher would be punished because in a similar case in 2014, a teacher was first found guilty but later on absolved of all charges. In June, a nurse in Hayatabad Medical Complex in Peshawar accused the hospital's deputy medical superintendent of sexual harassment. In September, a woman employee of the Bhakkar Population Welfare Department lodged a complaint with the provincial ombudsperson that the Bhakkar district population officer was creating hurdles for her for refusing his sexual advances.

Pakistan remained on Tier 2 Watch List in US State Department's Trafficking in Persons report 2015 for the second year in a row. Tier 2 includes countries that do not fully comply with the Trafficking Victims Protection Act's (TVPA) minimum standards. Countries in Tier 2 in which the numbers of victims are very significant or drastically increasing, and that have failed to make an effort to combat trafficking are placed on Tier 2 Watch List. In the report, Pakistan was categorized as a destination country for women and children who were subjected to forced labour and sex trafficking. Most of the victims hailing from Afghanistan were women and girls and were subjected to trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation, including forced marriages.

### ***Honour crimes and acid attacks***

HRCR database recorded 987 cases of honour crimes in 2015 with 1096 female victims and 88 male victims out of which at least 170 were minors. In nearly 470 cases, ages of the victims were not known or reported. The predominant causes of these killings in 2015 were domestic disputes, alleged illicit relations and exercising the right of choice in marriage. Firearms were the most commonly used weapons to carry out the killing. Current and former spouses of the victims were the perpetrators in most cases and housewives were the most common victims.

Reports of several incidents found their way to newspapers and other media forums. In February 2015, an 18-year-old girl, was allegedly killed by her brother on suspicion of illicit relationship with someone in village Qaimuddin Odho. In May 2015, a woman was strangled to death and cut up by her brothers in Sahianwala area after an argument over her having an affair with a neighbour. In September, a man



**Violence against women remained rampant as the most pervasive violation of their rights in the country**

gunned down his two sisters on suspicion of having 'bad character' in Sargodha. Two sisters were shot dead after one of them married a man outside their clan. Two women were killed in the name of honour in separate incidents in Mirpurkhas and Shikarpur districts. Three teenage girls were shot dead by their male cousin in the name of honour in Pakka Sadhar village in Pakpattan. In October, a man shot dead his wife and his nephew in a village of Chota Lahor tehsil. A couple was killed in Kotha village.

The Acid Survivors Foundation conducted a study titled 'Situational Analysis on Acid Violence, 2015', in collaboration with the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW). The situational analysis revealed that from 2007 to June 2015, there were 1231 victims of acid violence in the country and 1004 acid attacks were reported. About 31% of the victims were men and the rest were women falling in the age bracket of 17-30 years. From January to June 2015, 60 cases of acid violence were reported. The highest number of cases occurred in south Punjab with 643 cases of acid violence reported in the past eight years, followed by central Punjab with 202 cases, Sindh 40, Balochistan 34, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 27, Azad Jammu and Kashmir 3 while the location of the remaining 282 cases was not known. Within a span of two months, June and July, four women from Karachi became victims of acid violence for rejecting marriage proposals. In June 2015, a police constable in Karachi threw acid on his 19-year-old ex-fiancée for breaking off the engagement which also fell on her brother and seven-month-old nephew.

The girl suffered 80% burns and underwent four surgeries and also lost one eye. The constable was held on remand for three days after



which no information was available on the case. The other three victims included a young, single mother from Baldia, an air-hostess from Malir District, and a ninth grade student who was targeted at her home, in Mouj Goth. In a consultation organized by HRCP in October 2015, it was revealed that 98 percent of acid attack cases were not decided due to ambiguities in the existing law.

Punishments were announced in only a handful of cases of acid attack. A man, who had killed a woman and her daughter in an acid attack, was awarded death sentence on three counts besides other punishments by Anti-Terrorism Court-I Multan in May. In the same month, Anti-Terrorism Court-II of Multan also handed down 117-year rigorous imprisonment along with Rs 1 million fine to a man for throwing acid on his former wife and her husband. An ATC at Shikarpur awarded death sentence to a man who had thrown acid on a woman over a personal grudge in 2009 that resulted in her death.

### ***Forced conversion and marriages***

In November, members of the Senate's Functional Committee on Human Rights endorsed a move to criminalise forced religious conversions and to prevent misuse of the blasphemy law. The Committee chairperson, Senator Nasreen Jalil, said forced conversions to Islam, especially of Hindu girls and in Sindh, were becoming very common in the country. In July, Pakistan Hindu Seva (PHS) Welfare Trust and the Sindhi Hindu Youth Wing in a press conference said that out of the 15 cases of discriminatory attacks against the Hindu community in Sindh in 2015, five were cases of kidnapping and forced conversion.

Two bills related to Hindu marriages, The Hindu Marriage Bill 2014, a private member bill jointly moved in 2014 by Ramesh Lal of PPP and Dr Darshan of Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N) and The Hindu Marriage Bill 2015, a government bill moved by Minister for Law in March, remained pending till the end of the year. In January 2015, the Supreme Court had ordered the federal government to ensure that the draft of the proposed Hindu Marriage Bill was laid before the cabinet for final approval in two weeks. Both these bills aim to establish rules and regulation for registration of marriage and divorce for Hindu Pakistanis. Hindus in the country do not have any legal document as evidence of marriage.

### **Recommendations**

- Economic opportunities for women must be increased

through large-scale programmes with a widespread outreach. All commitments made on women development must be followed through.

- The maternal mortality rate must be controlled through improved medical facilities for expectant mothers. Reproductive rights of women must be respected and family planning services be made available to both men and women.
- The ratio of women included in the national decision making processes must be increased and all women should be able to fully exercise their voting rights.
- Women's role in media must be enhanced with equal pay policies, inclusion in decision making processes and ending objectification of women on media. Law enforcement agencies must adopt non-discriminatory recruitment policies that provide equal opportunities to both men and women to join the force.
- All pending laws on women protection must be passed on a priority. All mechanisms required for the implementation of the laws should be put in place for the laws to fully take effect and fulfil the purpose.
- Prosecution rate for violence against women must be increased to create a safer environment for women. Sale of acid needs to be strictly controlled to reduce this form of violence against women.