

### **The First Issue**

We are delighted to share the first issue of The Developmentalist, which is an initiative of "The Advocacy Channel" of ACT International. It is expected to serve as one of the communication tools for advocacy, while reaching the policy-makers, academicians, donors, and political and development actors. It will disseminate research reports, field learning in development and human rights initiatives, advocacy agendas of networks and alliances, and evidence on the impacts and outcomes of various interventions.

As we know that advocacy is essentially about influencing policies and ensuring policies and legal frameworks are implemented to benefit the deprived. Thus, ACT International is working with the right holders and relevant stakeholders in order to create an environment to initiate joint advocacy initiatives, to create synergies among the efforts and to maximize the effects of our advocacy campaigns. This is how, ACT is envisioning to act as a thought leader in bringing all actors together and being seen as a committed and credible organization in the country and the region.

Our joint influencing approach encourages a people led rights advocacy, engaging multiple stakeholders including civil society, public and private sector.

Thus, with our stepping in, we've chosen the theme of "Women Empowerment" for this issue. The International Day of Women is celebrated every year on March 8. The earliest Women's Day observance was held in 1909, in New York. In 1911, the day was marked for the first time, by over a million people in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland. The day kept being celebrated, however, the UN marked the year 1975 as the year of women and it was first officially observed in 1977 after the UN General Assembly proclaimed it as International Day of Women.

In Pakistan working women in formal and informal sectors celebrate International Women's Day every year to commemorate their ongoing struggle to access their rights and ending violence against them. Though, its celebration has provided an opportunity to engage a number of stakeholders on the issue of women empowerment around the world, we can still determine an expanded need for more efforts.

While Pakistan has been able to pass some needed pro-women laws and policies, but these are not being implemented in true spirit. This requires concrete efforts through empowering the right holders to engage with the duty bearers and law enforcement agencies, so that the women can demand their legal and constitutional rights. This issue will provide a comprehensive analysis of the analysis of the issues and success stories of the empowered women leaders and advocacy campaigns on women rights.

### **MESSAGE FROM THE PATRON**

While there has been a healthy growth in the civil society organizations in Pakistan in the last decade, there has also been an ample opportunity to work for development in the country at the same time. It was the very reason that ACT International was formed in 2012 while anticipating the never ending challenges to the country. And since, empowering the citizens through effective social mobilization approaches is the prime strategy to overcome barriers to development and access to human rights in Pakistan. Through organized and empowered communities, we are making efforts for creating bonds across the country among cultures, ethnicities and faiths while working for vulnerable sections of society, especially women and children.

As there is a greater need for advocating for our rights, there are urgent needs for advocacy on women empowerment, education; gender based violence, MNCH, as well as environment. Thus, our work has greatly been related to advocacy efforts, which includes advocacy for GBV in parts of KPK, for youth in six districts across the country under the Youth Advocacy Forums.

It has led us to understand that there is a dire need of a forum of development sector organizations which can contribute towards common efforts with a shared goal to achieve for the needs of the society. It has, thus, made us create an independent unit within the organization, The Advocacy Channel, which can help multiple stakeholders ranging from national organizations to small community based organizations and donors or even the government. The purpose of this unit is to exclusively focus on advocacy related activities, utilizing tools and strategies already in place and the newer approaches, to deal with the overall developmental challenges.

Overall, TAC shall ensure effective advocacy strategies which aim to affect change at various levels- including increasing community awareness of the issue, influencing law and policies and improving the government response to violence against women. It shall, within itself, contain some of the sub-units or focused activities, to assist the organization in managing the overall advocacy related activities.

### **MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR**

Pakistan has several challenges, and the pen and the paper is the tool to deal with the challenges of tomorrow. I feel that all efforts which are taking place in the country for development and improving human rights situation are encouraging, and I hope this effort will also be one in this ocean. It is a matter of great pleasure for me to write these words for the first ever issue of The Developmentalist, and I feel that I'm quite excited to see our vision transforming into reality, where we can bridge gaps, replicate models, share learning and discuss challenges in this publication.

The quarterly newsletter is the brainchild of ACT International's team, and the idea stands on the vision where it can provide an exclusive space for advocacy as a major tool, and provide the development sector with space where they can share and learn.

What we expect in The Developmentalist, is information on versatile subjects and it will include development updates, news of the sector, interviews, success stories, research findings and technical articles. It will serve as the major tool for advocacy, while reaching the policy-makers, academicians, donors and social and development actors. It will contribute in form of, and shall include but not remain limited to, research reports, field learning, advocacy agendas of networks and alliances, various interventions and findings of the results of various interventions.

The Developmentalist will also serve as a key resource for the overall development sector to share the learning, challenges and activities of various interventions to keep a track record, as well as to avoid duplication of efforts, adding accountability to the programmes and activities of the civil society. It will also serve as an intellectual resource for activists, practitioners and professionals across the field. We hope that it will engage all our partners, friends and supporters for a sustainable change in our lives.



## EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN: THE CONCEPT FOR DEVELOPMENT *Professor Farkhanda*

Empowerment of women may be a new dimension of modern day concepts of development but since times of antiquity, the subject has been on the agenda of all social systems. Though, the field of empowerment may differ from the present day concept. Anthropological evidences provide an account of how women were the rulers of the world, then in existence. The excavated sites of Mehrgarh reveal the societal patterns of the place which are a rich source of evaluating and analyzing the norms used for governance in that specific period of time. Mehrgarh was a matrilineal society with women as heads of households as well as the state, and men subservient to their words of rule.

Besides, there is a long list of queens that ruled the world of their times, let us not forget Queen Saba who sat on a throne ruling her country independently, though later converted by King Solomon, the Prophet. Following this, we have a whole list of queens, for instance Queen Boudicca, Dido Queen of Carthage, Jhansi Ki Rani, Razia Sultana, Queen Mitilda, Elizabeth the first, Queen Victoria, Cleopatra the Queen of Egypt and most powerful of all, the queen of Angola, Zingha, ruling between 1582 to 1664 who resisted the Portuguese colonial role in Angola and succeeded in protecting her people from slavery through her firm behavior and negotiating skills.

Similarly, there is a long list of freedom fighter women soldiers in leadership role almost all over the world, and most of all, the empowered business women of the early seventh century. One such case consists of Hazrat Khadeeja, (RA), the wife of the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon Him) whose wealth and support strengthened the cause of Islam and encouraged the Prophet (PBUH) to face the adversaries inflicted by the Quresh of Mecca and to continue to spread the Message of God to the population of the Arabian Peninsula with determination and conviction.

Another strong and empowered woman of that era, though controversial in history, is the wife of Abu Sufyaan, Hinda, whose resolute and determined mindset within that conservative social system where women were deprived of right to life, her survival as a strong woman can be attributed to her personal merit and her resolute determination, later displayed in Ghazwa-e-Khandak.

Even in the present world of 21st century there are six modern societies where women are the rulers due to the matrilineal form of governance. Mosou lies on the border of Tibet in the Yunnan and Sichuan, their households being large as they live with extended families. At the head is a matriarch, handling business decisions, lineage traced through female side, property passing through female lineage and children take their mother's name.

The Minangkabau of West Sumatra, Indonesia are the largest known matrilineal society today, where legally property is owned by women and passes on from mother to daughter and mother is considered as the most important pillar of household and society. The Akan are the majority and thus the ruling class of Ghana where one's identity, inheritance, wealth and politics are all handled by women. The Bribri are living in Talamanca canton in the Limon province of Costa Rica where the clan is determined through the mother, only women can inherit land. Garo, living in the neighborhood of Indian state of Meghalaya in the north east are a Tibeto-Burman speaking race who passes property and political succession from mother to daughter. The Nagovisi live in south Bougainville an island west of New Guinea where women are involved in leadership and take most pride in working on the land entitled to them.

An analysis of all these social systems reveals that resource and opportunity are the two major sources of empowerment, where

empowerment thus emerges as just not a term for development. It signifies a process of awareness and capacity building, leading to greater participation, greater decision making power and control and to transformative action. This enables women to get on with presenting the range of activities through which women come together to act for the common good.

In the present context, there are significant challenges, constraints and difficulties in the access to resources. There are significant gender inequalities in all our societies but most of all in the developing world where awareness has not so far led to significant change. Women's empowerment needs to be an integral part of policies and planning process of a state. Further, multipronged strategies in formal and informal sector can improve the situation, it cannot be assumed to be an automatic outcome of awareness and international instruments urging development of women and gender equality. Focus needs to be laid on legislation and government policies as these impact the women's situation making them more visible, facilitating them in access to resource and opportunities as well as to mobilize them to raise voices against norms, traditions, policies and practices harmful for women, obstructing their development at all levels.

Gender based oppression and patriarchal patterns of society grounded in conceptual acceptance of male domination constitute a major fault line running through all human experiences, constraining all human and social development, excluding women from all decision making positions and power structures. The UN reports that women make up less than 5% of world's head of states, head of major corporations and top positions in International organizations. Women are just not behind in political and management equity, they are a long way behind. It's a fact that their presence is marked as a workforce but they are found in

## REFLECTIONS



The women of Pakistan constitute 50% of the population but still continue to remain vulnerable and extremely marginalized. Women confront manifold violations of their human rights - when they cannot participate in the decisions that affect their lives or claim fair political representation, when they face discrimination in employment, when they are denied entitlement to land and property, or when they suffer violence within their own home. Other obstacles to rights arise when women and girls are prevented from going to school or attaining health care, or are subject to harmful traditional practices.

This quarter saw many national and local level commemorations of International Women's Day, with new commitments and pledges being made to support women's issues and their protection. This is a day that Pakistan has embraced with great enthusiasm; an enthusiasm that gives great hope for the future of this country and especially for the important role reserved for women within the process towards gender equality.

To quote Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, UN Under-Secretary-General and UN Women's Executive Directors on the occasion of International Women's Day 2015, "Women need change and humanity needs change. This we can do together; women and girls, men and boys, young and old, rich and poor."

**Mr. Jamshed Kazi (Country Representative, UN Women Pakistan)**

THE  
*Developmentalist*

A project of The Advocacy Channel

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**Special Thanks to Professor Farkhanda, Jamshed Qazi, Faisal Rehman, Urooj Sayyami and Tahir Khan**

Aiming Change for Tomorrow (ACT) International is a registered not-for-profit rights based national organization focusing on women, youth, children and marginalized segments of society.

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When we see around us in media, we find a number of women who have been making a difference in the lives of millions of people across the country. These women, often stronger than men, play a major role in the development of our country and raising issues of marginalized sections of our society, especially of women and children.

I believe that the reality lies far behind that where women in Pakistan need to be brought in to the main section of our lives, where they can engage in decision making and leadership, and play a key role in the advancement of our society. I think that occasions such as, "International Day of Women" provide one such opportunity to all stakeholders to ponder over the issue.

**Faisal Rehman (Journalist, Activist, Anchorperson PTV World)**



When we talk of freedom of women, I find that we need to take a number of steps in different directions which can pave way towards better lives for our daughters. While we see a number of tall claims, laws, rules and rhetoric around the issue, the ground



large numbers in lower level positions of public administration, political parties, trade unions and business profile, this also applies to UN and multilateral agencies, diplomatic missions, especially the peace keeping missions and most development NGOs including those with gender fair policies. The international and national indicators point towards a grave situation where women are twice as likely as men to be illiterate and poor. It is also a recognized fact that they are subject to male violence on a large scale, while disparities between women and men are also large scale and instead of narrowing down, the gap is widening to a great extent. Whatever the degree of social exclusion, gender inequalities or disparity gap, mechanisms need to be in place, no matter how gradual to shape up the balanced patterns of governance and society.

Besides other grand scale interventions, the situation and status of women can be improved and women rights can be promoted and expanded through improving access to health services, education, decent housing, affordable childcare, employment, cultural activities and exposure to regional and international forums to participate in discussions related to issues of women all over the world. It broadens the vistas of thought to judge their own and their country's situation in a context of relativity. Since all issues are women's issues, there is no area of development or life which does not relate to them or remains unaffected by inequitable gender relations, therefore diversity of focus can be a fruitful means of intervention to improve the situation in favor of women. Moreover, empowering process of women can also be accelerated by encouraging their participation in socio-political and economic activity across all sectors of life thus paving way essentially to build stronger economies to achieve internationally agreed goals for women empowerment and development. In the present situation, there is little room for influencing macro policies, and interventions at the micro level, to begin with, can be an effective strategy,

which include funding for micro finance programs in order to promote gender policies and it can prove an effective tool. However there are differences in access to these programs.

Experiments in the Far East, for example, Malaysia have shown highly fruitful results of micro finance programs in changing the development scene. It contributes to socio political empowerment and gender relations. If women are able to turn opportunities offered by micro finance to their advantage, it can transform into a genuine gender strategy. Women's empowerment needs to be understood as more than just a marginal increase in access to income or consultation in limited areas of household decision making. It needs to be conceived as a multidimensional process, across different and interlinked levels based on an analysis of power relations. If empowerment strategies are to address the ingrained inequalities in power and resource, they inevitably have to counter the disempowering elements through various means and methods, instrumental and strong enough to impact.

Gender mainstreaming is another successful strategy in vogue throughout the world for development and empowerment of women and better and improved gender relations in all social systems. This evolves equality of women's access to services and mechanisms to ensure translation of this access into real empowerment. Mere quotas and grant of other human rights do not essentially benefit women because they do not, in fact, lead to real empowerment in the absence of clear policy guidelines and relevant structural changes in the governance patterns and budgetary allocation priorities of the state.

Legislation is another strong tool to empower women. It casts a positive impact on the lives of women as witnessed by the promulgation of the family laws in the 1960s which provided women strength and confidence within the family life sphere. When these family laws were brought

under one suit in 2002 through a positive legislation, it facilitated the process of family litigation in favor of women. Legislation has always proved to be a source of protection and strength for women as the 2004 legislation declaring and classifying honor killing as a crime amounting to murder, proved. This murder crime initially was compoundable providing leverage to men who would claim the murder of women as an Act of Defence of 'honour.' Later this was converted into a non compoundable offence strengthening the cause of women. By the year 2014, 24 pro-women laws had been promulgated emphasizing the importance of legislation within the women development agenda in the arena of empowerment. Discussing legislation, emphasis should be laid on secondary legislation instead of only primary legislation as through secondary legislation rules are developed for the implementation mechanism of the promulgated laws.

Mere legislation also does not empower much as has been seen after the enactment of the recent pro-women laws covering a large variety of protective measures in favor of women. In spite of their presence, heinous crimes against women continue to be on the rise which point towards the dire need of implementation of all these laws. Additionally, institutional mechanisms at state level can also bear fruitful results. We can thus conclude that empowerment of women cannot be materialized in any isolated compartment of development programs. It has to be an integrated inter-sectoral component of essential state policies and development plans, only then can any fruitful results be achieved in the field of women empowerment.

*Professor Farkhanda is a renowned activist and development sector professional who has been engaged in fighting for women rights for around two decades in Pakistan.*

realities are often appalling.

We see that the policies are usually unfavorable for women in our country, and then the more urgent is that of our mindset. The mindset exists which considers women as subservient to men in all fields, where sexism is found all around and boys are given priority over girls. Thus, I feel that we need to generate a stronger, forceful debate on the issue.

**Urooj Sayyami (Journalist, Anchor)**



Government of AJK affirms its political commitment towards women rights by endorsing a policy framework on women empowerment and it is in continuity to this policy framework that institutional arrangements are established in the State. Women Parliamentarian Caucus (WPC) is one of such institution along with State commission on the status of women (SCSW), women development Directorate (WDD)

Being chairperson of the caucus we have many success stories but worth mentioning is the Domestic violence bill and harassment at work place bill enacted in the state after following a consultative process that will help women of the state to enjoy a life free from Violence at all levels. I have also moved a resolution in the AJK legislative assembly regarding increase in the women seats in the parliament and this

resolution was strongly supported by all the political parties in the assembly

We have recently organized a women parliamentarian Peace conference in AJK where more than 40 MNAs and Senators came to AJK and chaired by Speaker national Assembly and chairman Senate. The aim of the conference was to discourse on the challenges and issues faced by women because of Kashmir conflict.

**Shaheen Kausar Dar, Deputy Speaker, Legislative Assembly AJK**



Pakistan is not very high on any of the development indicators which is also reflective of the regional demography of South Asia. We've seen low development in Pakistan and its neighboring countries, which severely affects the women. More importantly, the society is unaware of the challenge it faces for development. Therefore, we need to understand that it isn't possible for any community to advance without a significant role of women, and create that role through structural reforms.

**Tahir Khan, Editor, News Network International**



## Chairperson BISP, Marvi Memon, visits Thatta



The chairperson of BISP Ms. Marvi Memon visited SM-CCT project Waseela-e-Taleem at district Thatta from 18 to 20 April 2015. She visited four tehsils of district Thatta and met with women leaders and members of BISP beneficiary committees. She also met with project staff at office of Aurat Foundation and ACT International Thatta. Ms. Marvi Memon said that the present government under the leadership of Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif was striving to serve the masses without any discrimination, especially women and would continue to support them in earning livelihood.

## Pakistan's youth calls for unity among nation and a debate on national issues at the National Youth Summit 2014

National Youth Summit 2014 was inaugurated in Islamabad taking place from 11th to 14th December 2014. The 2014 summit is the 2nd youth summit in row as part of ACT International's mission to involve youth, build their capacity and provide them an opportunity to understand local, regional, national and global issues and their complexities. Commoner partnered in the event for the cause of young people under CSR to promote the role of arts, peace and culture in the advancement of society. The participants formally agreed to the resolution calling the government and other stakeholders in the words, "There is a dire need to unite the people under one umbrella in Pakistan, and thus there should be one platform for sports, arts and entertainment for every Pakistani. There should be social, cultural and educational programmes across the country, which should also be able to define our moral and ethical values. We also demand a debate on national issues on every aspect of our society."



## ACT celebrated 16 days of Activism

The 16 Days of Activism for No Violence international awareness-raising 25 November (International Day for the to 10 December (International Human awareness about gender-based violence national, regional and international level. ACT International celebrated the global to promote action against Gender Based different segment of communities to to address the issues pertaining to Gender 16 days of activism campaign was districts i.e Mardan, Sawabi and engaged in GBV project "GBV and Advocacy."



A set of activities were executed to create awareness and instigate the debate at different level of communities to address the need to challenge the aggression and assailment of women rights and enabling communities to take mitigating actions to end violence against women. It included seminars, speeches, theatre performances, IEC material dissemination, pledge signing and a free wall.

against Women and Children is an campaign. It takes place every year from Elimination of Violence against Women) Rights Day). The campaign aims to raise as a human rights issue at the local,

event by conducting awareness activities Violence. The organization engaged generate advocacy and highlight the need Based Violence.

launched in three union councils of three Noshehra where currently ACT is Prevention through Social Mobilization

## HAP welcomed Aiming Change for Tomorrow (ACT) International as its latest member



ACT International became a full member of Humanitarian Accountability Partnership. The Humanitarian Accountability Partnership has pioneered accountability in the humanitarian sector since its inception in 2003. Today, with a global membership whose work spans more than 140 countries, HAP has become a leader in accountability-related certification, training and research. With a mission to make humanitarian action accountable, HAP defines accountability as 'the responsible use of power'. The ultimate goal of the organization is to uphold the rights and the dignity of crisis-affected populations across the world.

## Panel Discussion on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Organized

National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) and the National forum of Women with Disabilities (NFWWD) in collaboration with Sightsavers, the Hum Ahung Forum, VSO and the Special Talent Exchange Program (STEP) organized a "Panel Discussion on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities". The panel discussion was arranged in Islamabad on 4 March 2015.

