

One-Day Seminar
“Gender Justice Through Musalihat Anjuman Project- Balochistan”
“Justice for All”

4 November, 2006 (0945 – 1400 hours)

**Organized by: Ombudsperson Office Balochistan; Federal & Balochistan Provincial
Project Management Units**

Address for:
Mr. Haoliang Xu
Country Director
UNDP

Honourable Chief Justice of Pakistan - Mr. Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, Chairman Supreme Court Committee on ADR - Justice Tasaduq Hussain Jilani, Chief Justice Sindh High Court - Mr. Justice Sabihuddin Ahmed, Chief Justice Balochistan High Court - Mr. Justice Amanullah Khan Yasenzai, Judges, Provincial Ministers, National Project Director - Mr. Riaz Akhtar, Capt. (Retd.) Yunus Durrani, Secretary LG&RD/Chairperson GJTMAP Provincial Steering Committee, National Project Manager - Mr. Hamid Afridi, District Nazim's, Provincial Project Directors; Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

It is my honour to address this one day seminar on “Justice for all” of the “Gender Justice through Musalihat Anjuman Project Balochistan” organized by the Local Government and Rural Development Department, Balochistan and the Ombudsman - Balochistan.

UNDP firmly believes that enduring solution to society's most challenging social, economic and political problems can not be found without the full participation and empowerment of women.

This principle has also been enshrined in the agenda of “achieving gender equality” as one of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) endorsed by every member state of the United Nations. Empowering women and addressing their specific needs, is not just a goal in itself but a critical means towards achieving all the other seven goals as well.

Pakistan has made some meaningful achievements over the last few years in empowering women, however the increased incidence of violence and abuse against women indicates that we still need to trek a long way in order to change the attitudes, beliefs and archaic traditions which are hampering development. It is note worthy that there has been greater acceptability by the Government of this issue and is reflected by the summon-motto action taken in a number of such cases by the Honourable President, Prime Minister and Chief Justice of Supreme Court. However, continuity in the political will is required to change these age- old attitudes and challenge the status quo.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is said that ‘justice delayed is justice denied’. Many victims of violence do not get a right to hearing and are forced to silence or withdraw their cases. Many a times, these poor victims are unaware of their rightful entitlements and whom to approach for help. In civilized societies, such incidences cannot be accepted as regular norms. Government, law enforcing agencies, Judiciary, Human rights and Civil Society Organizations and most importantly the citizen’s need to join hands against such injustices.

Gender Justice through Musalihat Anjuman Project aims at assisting women and other vulnerable sections of society in improving their conditions through safeguarding and promoting their rights and lawful entitlements.

As envisioned in the Local Government Ordinance 2001, this project seeks to constitute and mobilize Musalihat Anjumans, build their capacity to dispense gender justice, cultivate linkages with the police and judiciary, and undertake community advocacy for ending gender violence.

Distinguished guests,

UNDP worldwide is providing support to informal justice systems. The experience that UNDP has had in East Timor, India, Afghanistan, Brazil and Chad shows that one of the primary goals in working with informal institutions should not be formalization of the same since this has proven rather disastrous in the past. What can be done is to ensure to assist these informal bodies to closely adhere to international human rights principles.

Another important lesson that has been learnt is the significance of developing links/relationships with local community/religious leaders to promote the effectiveness of these systems and ensuring that awareness campaigns respond to realities on the ground; such as high levels of literacy, a lack of formal education and low culture of human rights understanding.

UNDP Pakistan, in partnership with the Royal Norwegian Embassy, stands committed to supporting the Government of Pakistan with establishing and strengthening of informal / alternate dispute resolution mechanism as per LGO 2001, as a means to resolving disputes in line with the laws of the land and in the efforts to reduce gender violence.

This projects falls under our larger programme known as the Gender Support Programme which is working in the arena of political participation, socio economic opportunities and institutional strengthening. In a recent mid term evaluation (MTE) of this programme, it was declared to be the largest and the most diversified network of gender projects.

In order to achieve the goals of poverty reduction, an enabling environment for providing women equal opportunities for development, participation, access to economic decision-making and equal treatment under the law, is essential.

Dear Colleagues:

I would like to acknowledge here the leadership, interest and guidance of the Supreme Court of Justice and the Local Government & Rural Development Department, and am sure with the judiciary and the Government of Balochistan continued support the objectives of this project would be realized.

At the end, I would like to congratulate the organizers of this workshop for organizing this launch and wish them all the best in future. Thank you.