In working to establish associations with regional women commissions, UN Women's Pakistan Country Office facilitated an eight-member delegation from Nepal's National Women Commission (1-8 December 2013) on a peer learning visit to Islamabad, Pakistan, to support and promote knowledge sharing and learning about the legal provisions, status and functioning of Pakistan's National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) besides gaining knowledge on pro-women policies and programmes, tools and instruments contributing to gender equality and the empowerment of women, and functioning of national and provincial machineries for women. This visit was a key tool for enhancing the capacity and increasing understanding of Nepal's Commission and will work to support them to capitalize on the knowledge gained from Pakistan's NCSW, and will be used to develop Nepal's post-2014 National Women Commission strategy.

Speaking at a briefing hosted by Ms. Khawar Mumtaz (Chairperson, NCSW) on the role, functions, powers, strategies and legislation areas of the Commission, she said “the NCSW is a manifestation of resolve, perseverance and strength of Pakistani women... and it was due to their unflinching resolve and commitment to women's human rights that the Commission has emerged as an autonomous body”.

While thanking her Pakistani counterpart, Ms. Sheikh Chandtara (Chairperson, National Women Commission, Nepal) shared that Nepal's women's movement took momentum after 1990 and since then major changes in laws and policies have taken place. Mr. Saradraj Bista (Secretary), in talking about the salient features of Nepal's Commission, said the Commission arranges for the legal aid to victimized and underprivileged women in court of law and undertakes joint activities with government/non-government organizations on promoting women’s rights.

The delegation of Nepal 's Women Commission took keen interest in reporting mechanism, financial autonomy of Pakistan's NCSW, and the registration of Hindu Marriages Bill, Christian Marriages Bill, Domestic Violence and vowed to utilize the knowledge gained during the meeting for the benefit of Nepali women.

Ms. Sheikh Chandtara extended an invitation to Pakistani counterpart to visit Nepal in order to further boost the bilateral relations between the two countries.
UN Women in promoting women’s representation and participation in politics supports the Government of Pakistan in its efforts to politically empower the Pakistani woman through their participation as public electoral office holders, and as voters, and candidates.

Initiatives include working with the Election Commission of Pakistan to mainstream gender within its electoral processes and strategies.

2. The Election Commission approves its first Strategy for Gender Mainstreaming

On the eve of the International Human Rights Day, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) approved its first strategy for mainstreaming gender within political and electoral processes at all levels. The Honorable Justice Nasir ul Mulk, (Acting Chairperson, ECP) chaired the meeting on 9 December 2013 in Islamabad where the document was presented by the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy Committee, comprising of Officers from the ECP Secretariat (with technical assistance from UNDP), UN Women and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems. The Strategy is expected to be launched early next year.

A fundamental initiative taken by the ECP in recognition of the pivotal role of women in democracy has been the drafting and presentation of a gender responsive strategy to enhance women’s participation in political processes that would also facilitate Election Management Bodies as well as other stakeholders to ensure that mechanisms are in place for gendering all electoral and political processes.

Developed with the technical assistance of UN Women, the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy recognizes the importance of women’s participation in politics, as voters, candidates and temporary and permanent employees of the ECP. This Strategy was developed through a series of consultations, following the 2013 General Elections with civil society groups, parliamentarians and political parties as well as relevant government organizations. This Strategy will form the basis of gender mainstreaming within the overall strategic plan of the ECP being prepared for the period 2014-2018.

Salient features of the Strategy include:

**Under ‘Women as Voters’**

**Goal 1:** To ensure comprehensive voter registration and that electoral rolls are credible, accurate, fairly prepared and updated through annual revision

**Goal 2:** To ensure that electoral rolls are accessible to women of all segments; minorities, disabled and aged persons, youth, and women in slums and rural areas

**Goal 3:** To institutionalize effective measures for civic and voter education to create awareness among citizens regarding participation of women in politics

**Goal 4:** To institutionalize women friendly elections operations; pre- elections, on election day and post-elections
Under 'Women as Candidates'

Goal 1: Amend the legal framework to increase the effective participation of women in political processes.

Goal 2: Changing social behaviors of stakeholders such as media and political parties for enhancing the political participation of women by engaging the ECP, women development departments, social welfare departments and non-government organizations.

Goal 3: Enhancing women’s positions in political party membership.

Goal 4: Institutionalize capacity building mechanisms for women’s effective participation in political processes.

Goal 5: Institutionalize electoral school for creating effective participation of local women.

Goal 6: Providing conducive and secure environment to women candidates.

Under 'Women as Employees of ECP'

Section A - Women as temporary employees of ECP

Goal 1: Increase number of women as temporary employees of ECP (Returning Officers, Presiding Officers, Assistant Presiding Officers and polling staff).

Goal 2: Enhance capacity of temporary employees to mainstream gender in all elements of electoral processes.

Goal 3: Mechanisms for developing civic and citizen responsibility.

Goal 4: Measures for providing a gender sensitized environment.

Goal 5: Measures for secure and safe working environment.

Section B - Women as permanent employees of ECP

Goal 1: Enhance capacity of ECP secretariat, provincial and field staff for effective gender responsive performance.

Goal 2: Increase number of women employees in all cadres of ECP to achieve minimum 10% quota of women recruitment.

Goal 3: To institutionalize measures for gender sensitive work environment to facilitate women employment.

Goal 4: Gendering curriculum of government training institutions to build understanding of women’s political empowerment.
UN Women in supporting efforts to prevent violence against women and girls in collaboration with key partners and Alliances commemorates 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence to show international solidarity in the fight to end violence against women.

In mobilizing people from all walks of life and in spreading key information and messages on women’s rights and how to deal with a situation that infringes on these rights, initiatives include linking ‘artwork’ with advocacy efforts.

3. 16 Days of Activism: Art for Social Change, Peace and Empowerment

"Woman is the creator, the thread that gives us life through the umbilical cord and the privilege of taking our first breath allowing the flow of life in all its colours to encompass our very being. She challenges all stereo types in her responses to her environment, the socio-religious, intolerant mindsets, lack of education, and the economic struggles while fighting for her rightful place as an equal member of society".

Nageen Hyat, Director, Nomad Centre and Art Gallery

UN Women in collaborating with the Nomad Centre and Art Gallery commemorated 16 Days of Activism 2013 with a campaign titled “Art for Social Change, Peace and Empowerment” focusing on awareness raising and communicating a strong message that ‘violence is unacceptable’ through paintings and installations.

Inaugurated on 25 November 2013 by Ms. Khawar Mumtaz, Chairperson of the National Commission on the Status of Women, the artworks are a result of workshops, discussions, conceptual ideas and responses to the volatile situations of violence faced by women and girls within all segments of society. The marginalization of women, the demand to repeal discriminatory laws, the retrogressive mindset, crimes of rape and all forms of violation against women and girls, these visuals are sending a strong message to inculcate peace and tolerance.

This Campaign draws on the inherent strength of women and girls, their capacity to adjust and finally to protest, demand and challenge the discrimination and violence and resolve to emerge triumphant.
Protect Minority Rights
Respect all Religions
tolerate
Say what is right
Speak the Truth
Self respect
Respect everyone
bring change
The only constant
acclimation
think out loud

Women Trafficking

to be independent
to be ourselves
to be proud

to be ourselves
contribute
be passionate
be loving!
Party Hard.

Access to Justice

to bring feelings
to care each other

remind us that we are
Have equality
be considerate
be free spirited

Americans

Grilled Sandwiches
drope

Brave New World

Americans
UN Women in working to increase economic empowerment of women, especially of those who are most excluded, works with local partners (provincial governments and civil society groups) to improve access of home based workers and specifically of informal women home based workers to economic security, protection and livelihood opportunities.

In enhancing gender responsive mechanisms UN Women works to improve the existing income of home based women workers through access to microfinance and income generating opportunities.

**4. Emerging Entrepreneurs - Transforming Communities**

According to statistics, in the Province of Sindh alone there are 2.6 million women home based workers. With a goal to economically empower home based workers and particularly home based women 'Artisan' workers from the indigenous, rural and marginalized communities of Tharparkar District, Sindh province, UN Women initiated a project in 2013 with a local organization (Thardeep Rural Development Program, TRDP) to:

1. Increase income and improve working terms and conditions of women artisans
2. Raise awareness on women's empowerment and discrimination around home based work
3. Advocate for adoption of Sindh's policy on home based workers which would provide women artisans with legal rights and access to social security benefits

In identifying emerging entrepreneurs and transforming communities, a survey was carried out in 36 villages and 1,120 households to assess the skills set of home based women artisan workers and gather information on existing relationships with traders.

- A total of 977 women home based artisans were identified
- Out of which, 513 women had market experience through sale of their products
- 464 women artisans had skills, but no market experience
- A large percentage of the selected women were found to be from the Nomad community who were also dependent on livestock rearing and agriculture

UN Women with TRDP are engaged in enhancing capacities of 500 home based women artisans through skill enhancements, value addition and linkages with the market. Also stakeholders are being sensitized on legal rights, linkage and negotiation skills around fair wages and other related issues.
5. Knowing Your Market

A market analysis undertaken in Karachi, the provincial capital of Sindh to identify 'marketable products' and 'product trends' in the target market will support home based women artisans and emerging entrepreneurs in developing and linking their products with local market places. The findings include:

1. Apparel, home textiles, fashion accessories and traditional items were identified as the current most sellable products in the market place

2. Guidance on the range of selling prices of the various products across the different markets (high-end shopping malls and popular local markets)

3. Type of raw materials being used and product finishing

The most popular 'sellable' products were identified as:

**Embroidered Ladies Kurtas (shirts)**

- Selling price: Rs 300 to 2,500 and over Rs 5,000 in branded shops
- Monthly product demand per outlet is 300 to 600 pieces
- Kurtas were machine made and purchased from local wholesale markets or they are specially made for production houses and outlets

**Hand-made Bed Sheets**

- Selling price: Rs 700 to 5,000 with monthly product demand per outlet at 50 to 60 pieces
- Bed sheets are mostly purchased from rural markets through middlemen; Artisans from Tharparkar are renowned for producing and selling embroidered bed sheets

**Cushion Covers and Table Cloths**

- Selling price: Rs 50 to 200 with monthly product demand per outlet at 100 to 150 pieces
- Cushion covers and table cloths are purchased from rural vendors

**Ladies Wallets and Purses**

- Selling price: Rs 700 to 5,000 with monthly product demand per outlet at 50 to 60 pieces
- Artisans from Tharparkar are famous for these products and some receive orders directly from shopkeepers
UN Women in working with the Provincial Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in providing women victims/survivors of violence with protective temporary spaces as they rebuild their lives has set-up mechanisms and structures with local partners to facilitate and rehabilitate women enabling them to stand on their own feet.

Re-building efforts, led by grass-root women, addresses practical problems faced by women and girls including issues of shelter, access to basic services, livelihoods and mechanisms of protection and prevention against violence.

6. “Halfway House”

Names/images have been changed to protect the identity of the women victims/survivors

Women shelter homes such as Women Friendly Spaces (WFSs) and Women Facilitation Centers (WFCs) have continued to be one of UN Women’s successfully piloted emergency interventions for women and girls at the grass root level since 2010. The concept behind such shelter homes or “Halfway Houses” was to alleviate the sufferings of women due to inherent social and cultural adversities through the provision of protection and support to survivors (and co-survivors) of violence, abuse, neglect, discrimination and exploitation.

By the end of 2013, over 3,670 women and children had benefited from the protected environment within the WFSs in which they participated in organized activities whilst learning vocational skills, socializing, and expressing themselves as they tried to rebuild their lives. The WFCs with the support of referral partners have registered around 800 cases out of which nearly 80% were forwarded to referral partners for the provision of different services whilst the remaining cases were either resolved by the WFCs through their own resources or are in progress.

Under Phase-I of UN Women Pakistan’s ‘Women and Peace Programme’ (2009-2013) 3 WFCs were established in the Districts of Peshawar, Mardan and Swabi by the Social Welfare and Women’s Development Department in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Within these Centres, social and emotional rehabilitation was provided to women and children as they rebuilt their lives. 18 WFSs piloted under this programme as model services to respond to Gender Based Violence, with provision of access to justice through community level initiatives, have been handed over to the Provincial Disaster Management Authority of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with an approval to include sustainability of the 3 WFCs within the Provincial Annual Development Plan.

The Provincial Commission on the Status of Women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in their 2012 assessment of women shelter homes and crisis centres (commissioned by UN Women) highlighted the upsurge of violence against women and girls and suggests due to the little evidence and analysis of the phenomenon that the majority of women facing violence belong to low-middle income groups who require and often seek shelter in government and private shelter homes. This is not to say that women from higher income groups do not experience crimes of violence but have options that poor and marginalized women do not have.
Shabana's Story

Shabana, a victim of gender based violence was referred to the local Women Facilitation Centre by the Peshawar Press Club. On arrival to the Centre, Shabana was observed to be emotionally disturbed and mentally unstable. During the journey to the Women Facilitation Centre, known as 'Halfway House', Shabana resisted officials and tried to jump out of the vehicle.

Shabana's first marriage ended in divorce due to differences between both husband and wife. She re-married and this marriage too did not work out resulting in her separation from where she has a daughter aged 8 years.

In the 'Halfway House', Shabana's visible distress and troublesomeness was of concern to the staff. Shabana when seen by a Psychologist was taken to a local hospital for treatment. On discharge Shabana returned to the 'Halfway House' where she remained under full-time observation and care.

After being provided with twenty-three days of regular medication and counseling sessions, Shabana’s condition stabilized and she was able to provide the Centre staff with a contact number of a relative.

A few days after Shabana had been discharged from the Women Facilitation Centre, she contacted the Centre seeking financial support to rebuild her life. Shabana is hoping to send her daughter to school and re-establish her beauty parlor business which she was running before her separation from her second husband.
UN Women in raising awareness through advocacy and lobbying for implementation of gender equality commitments supports system-wide coordination across the UN in Pakistan, and works with UN agencies, programmes and funds through multiple and flexible strategies to reflect gender equality and women’s empowerment as a key element within joint planning and frameworks that respond to national and international priorities on gender equality.

7. UN Pakistan supports Awareness on Breast Cancer

With October being the ‘Breast Cancer Awareness’ month, the focus should be on supporting and saving women, not just protecting their bodies from invasive treatment but saving their lives.

This was the message of a multi-stakeholders' consultation titled 'Early Detection Saves Lives' organized by UN Women, UNESCO and the UN Resident Coordinators Office on 30 October 2013, an initiative which was inspired by a meeting on the issue between the UN’s Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon with Dr. Fahmida Mirza, former Speaker of the National Assembly, during Mr. Ban Ki-moon’s two-day visit to Pakistan in August 2013.

Speakers at the occasion expressed concern for Pakistani women who are at a formidable high risk of getting breast cancer at some point in their lives, which leads to over 40,000 deaths every year. They said the major reasons behind the large number of annual fatalities is the lack of awareness regarding early diagnosis and proper treatment. Experts stressed the need for breast cancer patients and survivors to be given the right to health coverage on a priority basis under a strong safety net.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Fehmida Mirza, Chief Guest and a breast cancer survivor, said in a country like Pakistan, talking about breast cancer is considered a taboo topic. However, it is a fact that the disease is one of the most common cancers among women in Pakistan, with about one in every ten women in the

One in nine women in Pakistan will face breast cancer during their life, with the country itself having the highest rate of the disease across Asia

-- according to the breast cancer awareness group Pink Ribbon, oncologists and other aid groups

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country feared to be developing the disease during their lifetime. But unfortunately in Pakistan, women, especially those living in rural areas, usually try to hide the disease from family members as it is a ‘sensitive’ topic, she said. Dr. Fehmida hoped that the deliberations of the sessions would pave the way for a National Working Group on Breast Cancer in Pakistan, and call for the development of a national framework to comprehensively scope the prevalence and impediments to early detection and quality treatment of breast cancer in the country.

Experts agreed that awareness regarding the disease had a direct link with literacy, education and right to access information. While breast cancer itself could be treated if detected early, what was equally life threatening was ignorance and negligence about the disease.

Sangeeta Thapa, Deputy Country Representative, UN Women, shared that breast cancer prevalence and prevention must also be analyzed in the context of women’s lack of empowerment, marginalization and gender inequalities.

A large number of participants including expert panelists from health, education, population, human rights and social activists, UN Representatives, international and national non-government organizations, community based organizations, academia and medical students along with media participated in this advocacy event.
Twenty years ago, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action emphasized that the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights by women and girls is a priority for Governments and the United Nations. Important principles were reinforced, including the universality of human rights and the duty of States to uphold them.

10 December is significant for leaders to recognize the rights of human beings, as declared by the United Nations in the Universal Human Rights Convention (1948). This day gives us the opportunity to reflect on how far we have come in the pursuit of human rights protection and promotion, but also invites us to contemplate how far we have yet to go.

In her message, the UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, shared that “10 December also marks the final day of ‘16 Days of Activism to End Violence against Women’, where we are reminded that one in three women worldwide is still subjected to violence; this is nothing short of a global pandemic and a massive human rights violation. Yet discrimination against women continues in law and in practice, and women throughout the world remain among the poorest and most marginalized”.

In translating words with action, the Ministry of Law, Justice and Human Rights along with key partners including UN Women pledged their commitment ‘to play our role for a peaceful Pakistan’.

Legal standards and recommendations on women’s human rights have been developed, and progress has been made to adopt national laws and policies in promoting gender equality and women’s human rights in Pakistan. However, the challenges to ensure human rights for all remains.

Through this commitment the Government of Pakistan, UN Women and key stakeholders assured their role and responsibilities towards ‘Peace - Protection - Prosperity’ for all by addressing issues of violence, social and political unrest, terrorism, and concerns in health and education.