

Story of Change-Appropriate legislation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

At Network and Advocacy Level

While sharing about **Success at Network and advocacy level**, with support of funding partner 'AmplifyChange', Awaz Foundation Pakistan and its 48 partners across the country always remained in close contact with Parliamentarians, Media, Local authorities/ department to do needful legislation around Sexual and Reproductive Health. We have witnessed that during last 4-5 years since the inception of Ujala, there is a great understanding on subject and a lot of different segments of society have taken interest in the needful and meaningful legislation especially for women, young people, PLWDs and Transgender community. Unfortunately, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan were the provinces who were lagging behind in pro-women and children legislation. But Ujala has its credit to improve the sensitization level among communities and other key decision makers. And this struggle is still continued as we need to go far more in it.

Ujala was raising voices for the legislation of **Domestic Violence Against Women Bill** which was pending since long. Luckily, through vigorous efforts of Ujala and other Civil Society actors, we have made it in January 2021 at the start of year). **The new law is a landmark Domestic Violence against Women (Prevention and Protection) Act 2021 is a comprehensive piece of legislation that is expected to play a pivotal role in protecting women, and equipping the duty bearers to dispense justice more effectively and efficiently.**

The law has devised effective reporting, gender-sensitive, survivor-centric, quality services and preventive strategies for transformative change in society. The enactment of this act negates the belief that domestic violence is a private matter of any household; it has now become the state's responsibility to protect women from violence.

In the backdrop of the increased cases of domestic violence, this Act will ensure timely efforts are put in place to strengthen prevention and protection measures for the survivors. The Act has enabled a standard legal definition of 'child' at the provincial level which was not clear in the previous laws and the addition would be helpful in discouraging child marriages. this Act substantiates the state's commitment to the establishment of women shelters in every district, thus responding to the need for protection of survivors of domestic violence in a timely manner.

The Act provides for the setting up of 12-member district protection committees that would include members from different government departments as well as civil society, with 33pc of the quorum consisting of female members. The committee would be responsible for raising awareness among women at the community level about their rights under the law in addition to keeping a record of

complaints, petitions and court orders. The secretary of the district protection committee will be the chairperson of the district committee on the status of women.

Now this important piece of legislation has been passed, its effective implementation is vital. Further challenges are foreseen in terms of enforcement to make it trickle down and benefit the survivors of violence as the response mechanisms still require strengthening.

This is our responsibility as Ujala to do further follow up and advocacy to draft and approve the rules of business which are essential for implementation, and the notification of district committees on the status of women will also be required, as stipulated in the Act. It is now significant to raise voices and also request the government of KP to efficiently plan, budget and take practical steps for all essential services and response mechanisms for effective implementation of this significant legislation so we can see a real change in our province and we could empower our women in our society in a better manner.
