**AWAZCDS-Pakistan’s contribution to end early age marriages & empowering destitute women & Young people through Legal Rights Education**

AWAZ Foundation Pakistan: Centre for Development Services-AWAZCDS is striving for the Socio-economic development and political empowerment of marginalized communities especially women and young people across Pakistan since 1995. AWAZ follows rights based approaches for sustainable development, poverty alleviation, achieving MDGs and Consultative status of UN-ECOSOC and is also certified from Pakistan Centre of Philanthropy.

AWAZ through its researches on various aspects of Violence against women including studies on Customs and Practices prevailing in South Punjab regarding Women’s rights of inheritance, AWAZCDS-Pakistan has established view that Violence is not only a women’s issue, or even a health issue, but an issue that influences the development process as a whole. Domestic violence costs development, obstructs participation in development processes and contradicts the goals of development. AWAZCDS highlighted and respond to the VAW issues on regular basis through media statements and provide free legal Aid to women victims through Human rights advocates’ panel in South Punjab. AWAZ believes in women’s active participation in every field of life & gender balance society, there are many programs in AWAZ that are working to highlight sensitive issues at grass root level & contributing in eradicating SGBV & VAW with help of CSO’s. Also Program’s related to young girl’s right to education & rural women socio-economic development. All programs ensure awareness raining of women’s protection bills to their beneficiaries.

The reviews of AWAZCDS different projects contribution are as follows:

**PARWAN Project’s contribution to highlight SRHR & SGBV issues in community**

Parwan project of AWAZ is focusing on youth and adolescent’s rights and promoting reproductive and sexual health rights and sexual gender based violence in Multan and its surrounding areas. Young women under 24 run the greatest risk of dying from an unsafe abortion. PARWAN is also working with 10 local CSO’s of Multan to strengthen their capacities & to sensitize different stakeholders on SRHR and to create enabling environment where Young people, women and marginalized groups can exercise their SRHR rights. CSO’s sensitized community members about human rights violation including early age marriages impacts on girl’s health & education through theater performances & dialogues. Moreover they make awareness of women’s passed bill’s including their penalties & punishment.

**WEE-CIIP’s contribution in mobilizing destitute & rural women towards socio-economic development**

Women are 52 % of total population of Pakistan. In which 60 % women live in rural areas. Women can play an important role in country’s development. However rural women are still living below poverty line as they are not being paid as per the labors standards of Pakistan. They do not have any awareness regarding their basic and civil rights. Considering the facts AWAZCDS initiated a project in four district of Southern Punjab for sustainable development of rural women. Women Economic Empowerment Community Infrastructure Improvement Project focuses on the socio-economic development of deprived rural women (widow, divorced, separated) who are considered to be a burden on community and are heading their families. WEE-CIIP is contributing in Millennium Development Goals 1. End Poverty and Hunger and 3. Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women. Under this project 1875 women have been capacitated through different trainings on health & hygiene, Human & Civil Rights, Basic business & entrepreneurship. These women are enough brave now & knows about protection laws & legislation procedures. About 4500 destitute rural women are being empowered towards their basic civil rights, impact of early age marriages & awareness about new bills for women.

The rural women performed role plays on early age marriages during their training sessions on basic human rights

EMPOWERING & EDUCATIONG GIRLS TRANFORMING COMMUNITIES

Educating Girls Transforming Communities (EGTC) Project is being implemented by AWAZ in district Muzaffargarh. The project is focused on all girls high, middle schools & 7% girls’ primary schools of district Muzaffargarh.

The ultimate goal of EGTC project is to increase the girls’ retention in schools of district Muzaffargarh. EGTC team is mobilizing communities to stop gender based violations & sensitized parents to send their young girls to schools,

AWAZ through its different programs raising awareness regarding legal laws & legislations to their beneficiaries, Marginalized women and community members are educating on basic civil & legal rights under social mobilization programs, about 200,000 beneficiaries of different program have been aware about their civil rights including death/birth/marriage/divorce & CNIC, early age marriages consultations .

**Advocacy work related to child marriage**

According to AWAZ research studies on Impact of Early-Age Marriages on Girls’ Right to Education, the following are reasons of girl’s drop out from schools:

***“When girls are married off before 18 years, they lose their childhood, dolls and******friends***

*\*Girls under 15 are five times more likely to die in childbirth than women in their 20s*

***\* 400 million women now aged 25-49 were married as children”***

* Early age marriage of girls is not only violation of their right to education but at the same time a girl is deprived of her right to childhood , health and choosing husband of their own choice.
* The world bank reports that the average Pakistani boy receives only five years of schooling ;the average girl just 2.5 years.
* Only two –thirds of Pakistani children aged 5-9 are ever enrolled in school and only one- third will complete the fifth grade.
* 7 out of 10 Girls are out of schools
* Every year 40,000 mothers died due to early age marriages,

Please visit AWAZCDS website to read this study [www.awazcds.org.pk](http://www.awazcds.org.pk)

**Survey Report “Disarming Domestic Violence Campaign 2009”**

AWAZ Foundation Pakistan’s Policy Research & Advocacy Unit conducted this study with “The International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA)”in 4 Districts of Southern Punjab i.e. Multan, Muzaffar Garh, Jampur & DG Khan.

Women are three times more likely to die violently if there is a gun in the house. Usually the perpetrator is a spouse or partner, often with a prior record of domestic abuse.

Major finding of this study are:

* Physical abuse (domestic violence)
* Verbal or nonverbal abuse (psychological abuse, mental abuse, emotional abuse)
* Sexual abuse
* Stalking or cyberstalking
* Economic abuse or financial abuse
* Spiritual abuse
* Early age marriages

**Raising Awareness through Policy Research & Advocacy Campaigns**

* **Global Call to Action against Poverty & Beyond 2015 Post Development Agenda:**

AWAZ is leading people’s led process in Pakistan as a regional coordinator of GCAP in South Asia. AWAZ with its GCAP members conducted 55 Community Consultation meetings in all provinces of Pakistan with diverse stakeholders which were farmers, tenants, laborers, special persons, journalists, LHW, s/LHV, s, rickshaw drivers, unions/CBA, s, teachers, mothers, minorities, youth groups, farmers and others. AWAZ raised voice for inclusion of women empowerment & gender equality along with access towards sexual & reproductive health & rights for women & young people discourage early age marriages in Pakistan for Post 2015 Development framework agenda. Over 100 countries unanimously adopted a resolution on child, early and forced marriage at the Human Rights Council, calling for the elimination of child, early and forced marriage to be considered in the post-2015 development agenda. The resolution is the first to be passed on the issue at the Human Rights Council.

**Green Ribbon Campaign for responsible Fatherhood**

Pakistan is a patriarchal society where men are the primary authority and women are subordinate. This has serious implications on women’s health and social development as well as on men’s health, behavior, interpersonal relationship and violence. Men role rests in perception that they are responsible for family honor and they are considered accountable for women’s action in family. Man is associated to be bread earner and protector of the family. In a family unit, father plans future of his children and make major decisions of their education, profession and marriage.

In Pakistan, men as a caregiver are never given attention to ensure health promotion and gender equality. Keeping in view the AWAZCDS-PAKISTAN plans to further intervene into the thematic areas of domestic violence and early marriages and owing to the patriarchal system of the country, AWAZ in collaboration with Rutgers WPF has launched a yearlong fatherhood campaign to involve men as fathers in awareness raising process to bring long-term behavioral and environmental change in terms of targeted issues. Engaging fathers will be a good opportunity as an entry-point for working with (young) men in the communities, including young married couples to address issues of child marriages and domestic violence at community level. Fatherhood as such is a non-controversial issue, which will be acceptable for many men to work with. This campaign will effectively contribute to strengthen the advocacy efforts for required legislative reforms on domestic violence and child marriages.

Advocating our beneficiaries through legal rights education

***AWAZ through its different programs raising awareness regarding legal laws & legislations to their beneficiaries, Marginalized women and community members are educating on basic civil & legal rights under social mobilization programs, about 5000 beneficiaries of different program have been aware about their civil rights including death/birth/marriage/divorce, elimination of early child age marriages in society through drama play or theatrical performances.***

***Advocacy Campaigns through media***

***PARWAN YOUTH RADIO SHOW where we talk about youth!!!***

PARWAN Project has successfully launched “PARWAN NAUJAWAN” Radio Campaign from FM 101 & Radio Pakistan on 29th July, 2013.

The radio campaign focused on the problems of growing age children, highlighting the roles of parents, teachers, doctor’s also religious scholars, & overall impact of PARWAN project in addressing early child age marriages in context of SRHR & SGBV issues.

The major programs in campaign focused on Live Radio Program with scholars“Impact of Early age marriages on Girl’s right to Education and Importance”

**Engage Media to create awareness at grass root level communities**

AWAZ highlighted and respond to the VAW issues on regular basis through media statements and provide free legal Aid to women victims through Human rights advocates’ panel in South Punjab. In mid of April 2013, AWAZCDS has organized book launching ceremony of “Daughter of the Eve in Southern Punjab” written by famous woman journalist of Pakistan Imrana Komal. The book highlighted all issues related to violence against women specifically early age marriages in south Punjab since 2001 to 2013. The purpose of book launching ceremony was to highlight the situation of VAW in Southern Punjab, discourage early age marriage & carrying out the role of media and other stakeholders to sort out the issues in identifying the problems related to suffering condition of victims of violence & ensure practical implementation of bills among masses.

Express News Forum (SIYAH-SAFEED)

During mid November 2012, Ms. Muneezy Jahangir conducted show on theme “Who is primarily responsible for repression of women: state or society” she coded AWAZ VAW Data base statistics & findings during the discussion with law makers, students & politicians. Please click on the link to review the program

[http://www.khudipakistan.com/ep-8-khudi-debate-siyah-sufaid/](http://khudipakistan.us4.list-manage.com/track/click?u=e48834f9b4709ca088f237ccd&id=963101c291&e=bb681dc6c1)

TV Program on early age marriages

Chief Executive AWAZCDS-Pakistan Mr. Mohammad Zia-UR-Rehman’ participated & discussed issues regarding “Early Age marriages” in BOCHAN (DUPATA) Program at WASEEB TV.

**AWARENESS RAISING THROUGH SIGNING E-PETITIONS**:

AWAZ circulated e-petitions to stop VAW & early age marriages around globe & inform diverse stake holders about VAW situation in Pakistan.

**Celebration of International Days**

**AWAZ VAW Database:**

AWAZ has its database unit which keeps the record of Human Rights violation data specifically Violence against Women issues. It maintains the record of all kinds of Sexual and Gender based violence information occurring in South Punjab of Pakistan.

Here we are sharing brief Overview and Analysis report “**Appeal for Justice**” from Jan-Oct 2013, This report based on media monitoring and Data collection from 15 districts and 53 tehsils of South Punjab’s PARC Networks, AWAZ Field offices and CSO’s, which showed that 15 districts of the country are worst areas with the highest reported incidents of crime against women in  end of the year too. The report also highlighted the efforts of AWAZ programs to raise awareness & educate community through legal rights education.

Please click on the below link to review & share your feedback with us….

[**http://www.awazcds.org.pk/appeal-for-justice.htm**](http://www.awazcds.org.pk/appeal-for-justice.htm)

**Religious Consultation on age of marriages in different religions:**

To celebrate World Sexual Health day PARWAN Project of AWAZCDS conducted Religious Consultation on “Age of marriages & access towards sexual & reproductive health rights” with diverse religious stakeholders at Daily Pakistan Office Multan, Mulana Mufti Abdul Qawi, Alama Ramzan Faizi, Alama Inayat ullah Rehmani, Mulana Abdul Haq Mujahid Alama Mujahid Abbas Gardaizi, Dr. Kishwar Murad, Pandat Raj Kapoor, Pandat Deep Kumar, Father Elezer Sadiq, Hyacinth Peter, Sardar Muhinder Singh, Sardar Karpar Singh, Resident editor Daily Pakistan Mr. Shaukat Ashfaq, Chief Executive AWAZCDS Mr. Mohammad Zia ur Rehman participated in the consultation,

The main discussion point of Consultations was:

* Age of marriages in different religions
* Impact of early age marriages on girls/boys education
* How we will be able to reduce child marriages from our society?
* Importance of LSBE to protect our youth from risky behavior

Diverse religious stakeholders initiated discussions on early age marriages and everyone concluded that age of marriage should be related to psychological or mental maturity. Most of girls look physical mature but their mental growth is rear before the age of 18. One Muslim scholar was of the view that we should follow the life of Holy Prophet to seek the guidance, if we look at his life he got married at the age of 25 and his wife was 40 then so it clarifies the myths related early age marriages. One scholar gave the example of Hazrat Ali, who got married at the age of 21 and his wife Hazrat Fatima was then 19. So as Muslim we should follow Holy Prophet Muhammad’s Teachings what he did for himself and for his dearest daughter. Hindu scholars also told about their rites about marriage and they were as early as three months but with the changing time these things are starting to happen very rarely. Christian and Sikh scholars also condemned early age marriages.

All the scholars also discussed about the impact of early age marriages on the education, health and well being of young people. An early age marriages fail to acknowledge all human rights and SRH rights to the victims which puts horrendous effects on young people both boys and girls. Muslim scholar gave the example of Hadith of Holy Prophet in which Prophet (PBUH) said he who brought up his or her daughter in a good faith, educated her and got her married will be blessed with paradise.

Christian, Sikh, Hindu and Muslim scholars said there should be law passed for minimum age of marriage should be 18, without National Identification Card marriages should not be allowed and there should be strict laws for the one who breach the laws.

Every religion gives the right to the education and Islam encourages the Female education. Every scholar shared that as a parent, teacher, religious teacher, elder brother and as a responsible citizen it is our moral responsibility to give right information to the young people and support the organizations which are working for young people’s health and wellbeing and education. Religious scholars said there should be translation of all religious books in Urdu and local language so that young people can read through and understand the chapters which explain about their growing up and to stay away from risky behaviors. All we need is to get united and work for the betterment of young people and community and we should also create an enabling environment for young people and women.

***Ensure girls education & set the legal minimum age of marriage at 18 in Pakistan on this International Day of Girl Child***

This is an issue of particular importance for Pakistan because 24 per cent of girls married under the age of 18 worldwide last year were from rural Pakistan, whereas 18 per cent were from the country’s urban areas. The issue of child marriage raises several health concerns for young girls, some of which include pregnancy complications, health risks for babies born to young mothers and the risk of death.

According to AWAZ research study on “Impact of Early-Age Marriages on Girls’ Right to Education”

* Only two –thirds of Pakistani children aged 5-9 are ever enrolled in school and only one- third will complete the fifth grade.
* 7 out of 10 Girls are out of schools in Pakistan
* Every year 40,000 mothers die as a result of early age marriages, anaemia, low weight births & lack of medical facilities.

It is important to reflect on the barriers to girls’ education and innovative solutions to addressing them. Given the strong correlations between rates of child marriage and progress on education for girls, Over 5 million primary school-aged children are out of school in Pakistan, and over 60% of them are girls. While the Pakistan government has legislated for education for all, education remains drastically under-funded and at the current rate of funding and progress there is no way Pakistan will achieve its commitment to education for all.

Girls’ education is a fundamental and inalienable right. Attacks on girls’ education, burning of schools, threatening girl students and teachers should be condemned and effectively countered by the Pakistan Federal and Provincial Governments, We believe that Malala Yousafzai is symbol for Girl’s education is Pakistan,

"Even if they come to kill me, I will tell them what they are trying to do is wrong, that education is our basic right." Malala Yousafzai

We urge you to consider addressing child marriage and supporting married girls as integral to your mandate to improve education for girls in Pakistan, below are the recommendations:

* **Ensure girls’ access to quality primary and secondary education, as well as informal educational opportunities.**
* **Ensure that education provision addresses factors threatening the confidence or ability of families to keep their children in school, such as safety concerns about travelling to school, safety at school, sanitation facilities and gender based violence.**
* **Ensure that married girls are not practically or legally excluded from receiving a quality education.**
* **Address financial barriers to girls continuing their education, for example by providing livelihood skills and opportunities for girls and their families or incentives to girls and their families to encourage them to keep girls in school.**
* **Support comprehensive sexuality education programs in schools and communities, which help to challenge and transform gender inequalities, norms and stereotypes and enable girls to understand their bodies and rights.**
* **To put in place an education that overcomes all forms of discrimination in education, in particular gender discrimination**
* **To prioritise higher allocation to girls’ education in budgetary provisions and make visible efforts to achieve gender parity in education: education planning at any level must be gender-sensitive to ensure enhanced access, safety and enabling environment for girls to attend schools.**
* **To give priority to providing missing facilities in girls’ schools, and take such other steps that enhances security and safety of girl students and teachers.**
* **To meet the national commitment of increasing the allocation to education to 4% of the GDP and progressively raise it to 7% by 2015 as promised in National Education Policy 2009**
* **To launch an extensive programme for providing high quality teacher and management training to women teachers and managers, and appoint them on the basis of merit in girls’ and boys’ schools, maintaining an appropriate student-teacher ratio.**
* **Child marriage should be prohibited and the legal age of marriage should be raised from 18. Pakistan is signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Children which defines child marriage below the age of 18; yet, the country allows marriages at age 16. We demand 18 as age of marriage in Pakistan.**
* **Inclusion of Life skills based education curriculum in schools at provincial level**
* **Develop advocacy strategy to influence at policy level ( LSBE Implementation , Implementation of Early age marriages laws at federal level)**
* **Urge State to pass all child abuse related bills from National Assembly**
* **Translate Women passed laws in local languages to develop clear understanding (Women bills passed e.g DVB, Women Anti practices bill, harassment bill)**
* **Role of different stakeholders (Media, CSOs, Progressive Religious Leaders, and Lawyers) in raising awareness towards SRHR enabling environment & role of responsible fatherhood etc.**
* **Ensure opportunities of education, employment & social protection for women & young girls**
* **Ensure women representation at local government level in decision making.**
* **Public education campaigns need to transmit the idea of social responsibility in issues of domestic violence. Greater social response (in particular of those who know but choose not to tell) would help break the climate of social tolerance, thus increasing the costs for perpetrators, and acting as a deterrent.**
* **Domestic violence policies should target the reduction of the gap between prevalence estimates and reported cases. These policies would benefit from a greater research focus on societal attitudes towards intimate partner violence issues (reporting, victim blaming, tolerance, inhibition, silence).**
* **Policies should promote training and education to raise awareness, and to improve identification skills and appropriate responses to the disclosure of intimate partner violence in health settings.**
* **As policies that are directed to progressively melt the iceberg of domestic violence become more successful, more resources need to be allocated at different levels (health settings, law enforcement, community services, support programmes for the victims).**
* **There is need to create strong awareness among masses at grass root level about Women protection’s laws & bills.**