

## Press Release

5<sup>th</sup> September, 2023

National Organization for Working Communities – NOWCommunities organized a “Provincial Conference on Violence Against Women & Women’s Economic Empowerment” with the provincial partners Advocacy, Research, Training, and Services, Foundation – ARTS Foundation, and Awaz-e-Niswan (AAN), under the project Women’s Voice and Leadership – Pakistan (WVL-P), on September 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023, at Hotel Mehran Karachi. Ms. Mahtab Akbar Rashidi graced the event as the Chief Guest.

In the conference the attendants and speakers discussed the issues of working women and scarcity of economic opportunities for women. The issues of violence against women in Sindh especially and in Pakistan generally, were also discussed. The panelists who were the labor leaders, human rights activist, women’s rights activist, legislatures, trade unionists, representative of civil society organizations, journalists, young women leaders, members of trade unions and civil society organizations shared their concerns on the deteriorating economic situations, the challenges that women are facing and expected under the economic stress, and the concerns of violence against women in connection with economic empowerment.

The panel discussion on the issues of violence against women was led by Ms. Mahnaz Rahman (Veteran Journalist and Residential Director – Aurat Foundation). During the discussion Mr. Asad Iqbal Butt (Co Chairman – HRCF) shared the efforts of Human Rights Commission Pakistan’s effort in preventing violence against women. Ms. Nuzhat Shirin (Chairperson, Sindh Commission on the Status of Women – SCSW) shared their efforts towards preventing violence against women, Ms. Mahtab Akbar Rashidi concluded the session. The panelists discussed the issues of domestic violence, forced conversion, kidnapping, rape, and brutal murder, of young girls and women. The panelists jointly asked for the better and improved implementation of policies and laws for the control and prevention of violence against women, and timely justice for the victims of violence.

The panel on the Women’s Economic Empowerment was led by Mr. Karamat Ali (Senior Labor Leader and Executive Director of Pakistan Institute on Labor Education and Research). The panelists Ms. Farhat Parveen (Executive Director, NOWCommunities), Mr. Shahzad Malik (Executive Director, ARTS Foundation), Ms. Urooj Obaid, (WVL-P lead, Awaz-e-Niswan), Ms. Fatima Majeed (Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum), Ms. Shamim Mumtaz (Ex-MPA, PPP), Ms. Sabiha Shah (Executive Director, Women Development Foundation Pakistan), Ms. Bushra Arian (President, All Lady Health Workers’ Programme Union), emphasized on the economic participation for women and called for the policies that support women’s economic participation and social security for all.

During the conference the FEM-Consortia Sindh Chapter was also launched. The FEM-Consortia is a national network of 12 Women Rights Organization and young women leaders (GLPiers) which was launched in March 2023. In the conference FEM-Consortia Sindh Chapter was

launched symbolically by cutting a cake. On this occasion Ms. Sadia Baloch (A writer, poet, and human rights activist) shared her poetry wrote on the women and feminist issues.

Along with the panelists, Mr. Saeed Baloch (Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum) Ms. Shahnaz Ahad (Board Member, NOWCommunities), Mr. Mirza Maqsood (Senior trade unionist, Pakistan Steel Mill) , Mr. Habib-ud-Din Junaid (People's Labour Bureau), Mr. Nawaz (President, CBA SESSI), Advocate Shuaib Ashraf, Syed Kashif Raza (Journalist & Writer), Ms. Pushpa Kumari (Board Member, NOWCommunities) Ms. Malka Khan (Activist), Ms. Naghma Iqtidar (Board Member, NOWCommunities and an Activist), Ms. Kami Sidd (Executive Director, Subrang Society), Ms. Lubna Jarrar Naqvi (Senior Journalist), Ms. Fareeda Tahir (Sindh Human Rights Commission) the staff of NOWCommunities, ARTS Foundation, and AAN Karachi Chapter attended the conference.

Ms. Mahtab Akbar Rashidi shared her concluding remarks summarizing the issues of women regarding economic empowerment and violence against women. At the end, Ms. Farhat Parveen (Convener, FEM-Consortia and Executive Director, NOWCommunities) presented token of appreciation the Chief Guest Ms. Mahtab Akbar Rashidi.