

Open Dialogue/ Seminar on implementation of “Protection against harassment of women at work place—Act 2010” on 3rd March 2011

An open dialogue/experience sharing seminar on” Protection against Harassment of Women at work place---Act 2010”was held in the Planning Commission of Pakistan. Ms. Ghizala Kazi, Specialist on women Development and Gender Rights had organized and conducted the seminar.. It was a largely attended Seminar. Ms. Bushra Gauhar,Chairperson Standing Committee of National Assembly on Women Development was the Chief Guest, Dr. Fauzia Saeed and Ms. Maleeha Hussain from AASHA were on the panel of experts.

The Seminar was held in collaboration with AASHA, (Alliance against sexual harassment of women) and NCSW (National Commission on Status of Women).

The above mentioned Act is being implemented since 2010.Till now we were concentrating on creating awareness about the Act and its prerequisite. During implementation different organizations had different experiences both positive and negative. At this stage it was considered necessary that an open dialogue may be held with the other ministries and organizations to share the experiences and also to learn lessons from each other.

Main Objectives of the Seminar were as following:

- To obtain feed back from Ministries/Organizations regarding implementation of the Act--2010.
- To find out if any problems/issues were faced during implementation of the Act.
- To find out about the impact of work done on addressing Gender issues by Ministries/Organizations and also the nature of such issues.
- To produce a document based on recommendation/feed back received from Ministries/organizations, publish it, and share it with decision makers to take necessary action, if required and to all stakeholders.

Welcome address was given by Additional Secretary, Mr. Mahmood Akhter. The Chief Guest, Ms. Bushra Ghauhar in her speech clarified the role of Standing Committee of National Assembly on Women Development which shows the political commitment for women Development and also that she herself were receiving the complaints from different organization which showed that the Inquiry Committees of their organizations were not playing their She also showed some concerns on implementation of the Act 2010.

Dr. Fauzia Saeed Director AASHA, explained about the Protection against Harassment of women at work place Act-2010, its prerequisites, and how to implement it in the organizations.

After the main presentation given by Ms. Ghizala Kazi on implementation issues, discussion was held with the participating Ministries. The members and Chairpersons of Inquiry committees of the following the ministries actively participated in the Seminar,

- Finance Division.
- Cabinet Division, Defence.
- Foreign Affairs,
- Housing and Works,
- Industries and Production,
- Narcotics,
- Overseas Pakistani,
- Petroleum
- Women Development,
- Water and Power,
- Culture,
- Commerce,
- Establishment Division,
- Health,
- Ports and Shipping.

Apart from above Ministries following organizations also participated in the seminar,

- UN Pakistan,
- UNWOMEN,
- OXFAM,
- Allama Iqbal University
- Preston University,
- GTZ,
- SDPI.

Nearly all the senior officers of Planning Commission also participated in the discussion. The discussion revolved around implementation of the Act 2011 and its related issues.

Dr. Saba Gul Khattak, Member Social Sectors chaired the discussion session. It was highly appreciated that representatives of so many Ministries/Organizations attended the seminar. It showed their Commitment to the cause of women issues. She also emphasized asked the representatives of inquiry committees play an active role and give confidence to the women employees so that they could reach to them in case of any unpleasant situation.

In the end, Secretary Planning, Mr. Sohail Ahmed addressed the participants and advised them not to restrict themselves with complaints but keep a vigilant eye on the behavior of the employees so that a harassment free atmosphere could be created in every organization. He further explanations about the

implementation strategies. He also informed the participants about his work in FBR, while he was Chairman. He emphasized to the members of inquiry committees in different organizations to play a proactive role and give confidence to their women employees so that if they feel threatened they could contact them.

Ghizala Kazi

Specialist on women Empowerment
and Gender Rights
Planning Commission of Pakistan