

WISE dedicates 8 March 2014 to women of Thar



To commemorate the International Women Day, Women in Struggle for Empowerment (WISE) in collaboration with Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) organized an open forum of community women on 8th March at Shahdhra, a suburb of Lahore. It was kind of interactive forum participated by about 300 women along with their children. They were in festive mood and frankly shared their views, perspectives and suggestions to resolve problems, being faced by the women folk. Some of them recited revolutionary poems and solidarity songs to encourage the audience.



Ms. Kaneez Fatima, a local activist, addressing the audience said women are highly neglected section of society and government claims for women empowerment were nothing but a lie. Talking about local problems she said there was massive load shedding of electricity and gas in their area.

Women were unable to cook food and send their kids school in time. The girl drop out ration after matriculation was very high because there is no higher secondary school or college for thousands of girls in the area. The open drainage and chocking gutters had become breeding grounds for diseases. There were no medicines in the local

Basic Health Unit. Our rulers are corrupt and they have no time to think about women problems, she condemned.

Bushra Khaliq, Executive Director WISE, also spoke on the occasion. She congratulated women and highlighted the importance of this day for all the women. She told them that women were most exploited section of our society but that does not mean that they are weak. They only need to know their social, legal, economic and political rights and explore their strengths.



She shared some of the basic rights; women have under various laws in Pakistan. She also explained them deep-rooted chronic reasons of suppression of women; that include patriarchy, feudal mind-set, and religious patterns, social and political structures. We have to educate our women and forge unity among our ranks to reclaim our rights, she added.



Ms. Shaista, and Ms. Nabeela, (Lady Health Visitors) shared the challenges being faced by the women health workers. They told that their wages were meager against the nature of their tough job. They have to cover long distances on foot for door-to-door



health check up in different areas. On the way they have to face sometimes sexual harassment also. "The health department clerks deduct our wages on different pretexts.

We have to work under constant fear of attack by fundamentalists, particularly by Taliban, during vaccination campaign." Said the two ladies. They also highlighted the importance of women health for their children and family. Sharing their knowledge regarding steps to avoid different diseases, they urged the women to make their homes and environment clean.



Mohammad Shafiq, local teacher speaking on this occasion said the purpose of the day is to recognize the role of women and give them the space they need to participate in all spheres of life. He mentioned the situation of violence against women, acts of terrorism and conflicts and their effects on women, children and other vulnerable groups.



A number of participants from the floor were of the view that ongoing challenges in society have added to the struggle for women rights with the passage of time. They shared the incidences of domestic violence and sexual harassment against women in the



area. They also highlighted the lack of job and economic opportunities for women in the area. The demanded of WISE to speak to government high ups on their behalf and communicate the women problems related to education, health and civic amenities.

However, forum participants re-affirmed their resolve to continue the struggle for their rights as equal citizens and for a peaceful, secular and just society. They urged the government to ensure the safety of people, equal participation of women in politics. They also urged effective steps to make sure that women are not deprived of their social, political and constitutional rights.



At the end of the Forum the participants resolved to dedicate the day to drought-hit women and children of Tharparkar.



Report by WISE