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Statement submitted by Bunyad Literacy Community Council, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.



Statement

Status of women in Pakistan

Pakistan is a poor country that is still fighting for the economic stability, security, education and health of its people. There are countless examples of corruption and injustice in almost every area of life. Unfortunately, Pakistan is ranked seventh in the world in terms of corruption. Women are one of the most vulnerable groups. A multitude of factors cause low self-esteem among women in Pakistan.

The biggest factor is education. In two of our provinces, the literacy rate is only 2 or 3 per cent. Overall, it is 40 per cent for women. In the health sector, women have no access to free medical information and guidance. Women are less likely than men to go to hospital in emergencies. As housewives, they have no source of income. They have no say in taking significant family decisions and usually suffer from violence, torture, discrimination and brutality at the hands of male members of their family. A total of 80,539 women were victims of violence in 2011. Such violence includes murder, rape, suicide, torture and honour killings. Some 13 per cent of victims were under 15 years of age.

There are many things that fuel low self-esteem, such as the following:

(a) Women do not have equal status at birth; baby boys are always preferred to baby girls by the average family;

(b) Women are thought of as weak and less beneficial to parents, given that they are supposed only to reside at home and take care of the family;

(c) Women are told that they will find their real home when they get married; the paternal home is only a place in which they are brought up. They have to obey the rules of their in-laws' house, where they will remain for the rest of their lives, sometimes under severe and brutal conditions. Women are not supposed to ask for property rights. In most families, their property is forcefully confiscated;

(d) Women of any age are not allowed to go out for purposes of enjoyment and leisure;

(e) The honour of parents mostly relies on the character of their daughters (girls are not allowed to have a boyfriend, under any circumstances, irrespective of their age);

(f) Boys are usually called upon over girls to decide on family matters;

(g) Girls are not thought of as productive and assertive human beings who can earn a respectable living and live according to their own choice;

(h) In educating girls, parents prefer subjects such as home economics, arts, history and education in order to shape them into so-called "perfect housewives";

(i) Domestic chores are mostly considered to be the prime responsibility of girls. Sometimes, younger girls look after their older brothers and older girls rely on their younger brothers for protection and security when they leave the house;

(j) Working women are supposed to fulfil all duties at home and in the workplace;

- (k) Most girls are well prepared for marriage;
- (l) Divorcees and widows are not respected in society, unless they hail from affluent families;
- (m) Women are mostly legitimized through the status of their fathers, brothers, husbands and children;
- (n) After marriage, women face significant pressure from their in-laws never to display objection or anger under any circumstances;
- (o) Women face gender discrimination in almost all walks of life;
- (p) Women are not supported by society if they call for justice and care;
- (q) Courts, when hearing cases brought under laws on the safety and integrity of women, usually favour men owing to pressure and bribery.

There are many things to consider. Essentially, women themselves need to understand what role they deserve. They need to take charge of their lives and fight for their independence in all areas of life. They must find gradual and consistent ways to improve their status in society. They need to have tireless motivation and commitment to their goals and to create an impartial environment for themselves where their talents, aptitudes and creativity can thrive and flourish.
