



BARRIERS TO ACCESS AND UPTAKE OF PUBLIC SECTOR GENDER BASED VIOLENCE SERVICES BY WOMEN SURVIVORS IN PUNJAB



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A Policy Brief

Context

In Punjab, 32.4 percent of women/girls aged 15 to 49 experience some form of violence. The government, recognizing “that violence against women was rampant”,¹ has introduced significant legislative and institutional measures to tackle the persistent, pernicious and worldwide issue of violence against women (VAW).² Facilitative measures to support survivors of violence include the Dar ul Aman (DuA) shelter homes for women in all 36 districts; 12 advisory and referral crisis centres: Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Human Rights Centres (HRCs); and most recently, the multi-purpose Violence Against Women Centre (VAWC) in Multan pursuant to the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act, 2016 (PPWVA) and Punjab Women Protection Authority Act, 2017. With a comprehensive understanding of VAW,³ the laws aim to establish a protection system for effective service delivery to women survivors of violence through three vital interdependent components:

- ♀ Violence Against Women Protection Centres as a one-stop response mechanism bringing together services under the police, forensics, medico-legal, legal aid and prosecution as well as social welfare services.
- ♀ District Women Protection Committees for oversight and Women District Protection Officers for the recovery and rescue of at-risk women under the direction of the Punjab Women Protection Authority.
- ♀ A Shelter Home

New offences have been defined, penalties enhanced for some offences, and procedural changes introduced to facilitate access to justice for survivors of sexual abuse and gender-based violence (GBV).⁴ A GBV court piloted in Lahore in October 2017, led to the establishment of 126 GBV courts across the country. Measures to encourage reporting include Women’s Police Stations and Desks, District Legal Empowerment Committees, and Gender Crime Cells in the police, with uneven success.

Yet, less than half of violence survivors seek help (40.7%). Amongst these, less than 2 percent approach any formal institution – ranging from 0.6 percent who approach lawyers or civil society organizations (CSOs) to a high of 1.7 percent who approach the police.⁵ This underscores the vitality of adopting survivor-centric measures to optimize usage and overcome obstacles.

This policy brief presents key findings and recommendations of a study conducted by Shirkat Gah – Women’s Resource Centre in collaboration with the Punjab Social Welfare Department with support from UNFPA and FCDO-UK Aid. Adopting a survivor-centric approach, research pinpointed the nature of demand-side barriers survivors encounter in accessing particular services that prevent help-seeking behaviour, and supply-side challenges confronting survivors once they do seek help. Undertaken in collaboration with the Social Welfare Department, social sector services were the prime focus; health, police, legal and judicial services were reviewed as ancillary services.



Findings

Demand-side Barriers: Intersecting cultural, social and financial factors

The cultural framework presents three crucial barriers:

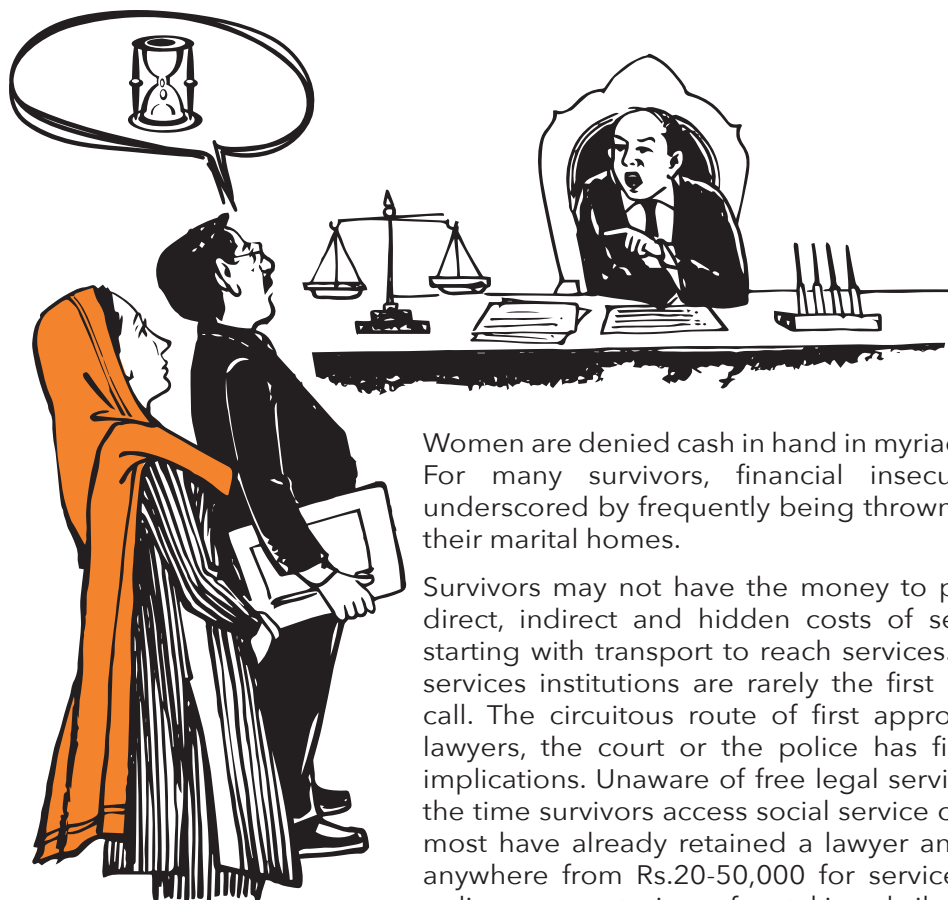
1. The imperative for girls/women to marry and maintain the marriage at all costs, regardless of the consequences.
2. The normalization of violence, in particular spousal violence: 35% of women and 36.6% of men in Punjab believe a husband is justified in beating his wife for various reasons.
3. The negative repercussions of reporting: more violence, victim-blaming, loss of reputation and reprisals.⁶

The preconditioning to accept significant levels of violence is a serious deterrent to help-seeking behaviour; approaching formal institutions commonly signals an end to the marriage. Two critical social deterrents are women's (1) poor knowledge base and (2) weak and fragile social capital.

Girls and women have no notion of being rights-holders, including the fundamental right to live free of violence and seek justice, and no information about social sector services. Most survivors who access social services have no previous knowledge about: where services are located, their timings, and how to access these. The better known DuAs still have a poor reputation in communities and are seen as a last resort.

Everyone is aware of the police, but approaching the police invites censure for being *'bad'* *'immoral'* women, the risk of victim-blaming and being dismissed. Helplines are largely unknown, except the Police 15 helpline, and few who had reached out were satisfied. Severely controlled mobility restricts interaction with the outside world, hampers access to information and limits social capital to kinship circles. This support base is fragile and can unravel quickly, trapping survivors into cycles of violence when the father or brother cannot – or will not – provide survivors shelter, especially if she has children: *'no one had my back'* and *'I have no one'* was a constant refrain amongst survivors. Financial considerations override concerns for the safety and well-being of the survivor.

Financial income does not guarantee a violence-free life. A weak financial base undermines agency for protection and self-care. When entering a marriage, during its subsistence, and in seeking to alleviate violence, women's negotiating power is diminished when they have no independent source of income and/or their natal family is financially disadvantaged. The lack of financial independence closes the exit routes for survivors who repeatedly expressed anxiety about how to secure a roof over their heads and support themselves and their children. Societal norms deny financial independence to women: they are deprived of their share of the inheritance – or barter this in exchange for hoped-for future support from brothers – and women's remunerated work outside the home is stigmatized.



Women are denied cash in hand in myriad ways. For many survivors, financial insecurity is underscored by frequently being thrown out of their marital homes.

Survivors may not have the money to pay the direct, indirect and hidden costs of services, starting with transport to reach services. Social services institutions are rarely the first port of call. The circuitous route of first approaching lawyers, the court or the police has financial implications. Unaware of free legal services, by the time survivors access social service centres, most have already retained a lawyer and paid anywhere from Rs.20-50,000 for services. The police are notorious for taking bribes, but survivors also complain about private lawyers, who tend to prolong hearings. Survivors reported both police and lawyers also take bribes from the opponent party, obstructing redress and justice.

Financial insecurity plagues survivors during marriage as well as post-marriage or separation. The difference between survivors accessing services and those who don't is that the former at least try to gain financial support and retrieve what is owed to them; the latter don't.



Supply-side Barriers: Hasty laws, inadequate follow-up & coordination

Legal lacuna too often, laws around gender-based violence are passed quickly, with greater attention paid to public approval ratings than a thorough review of how the law may apply in practice and how it may impact – or be impacted by – existing legal provisions. Rules for implementation too often remain missing. This produces conflicting or overlapping laws, lacuna in procedures or institutional arrangements essential for implementation. The result: confusion for implementers – courts and police alike – undermining effective redress for survivors seeking relief under the law. For instance, the *Anti-Rape Act 2021*, *Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Act* (PPWVA) and special GBV court initiative have improved the legal framework for survivors, but their effectiveness is undermined by the absence of required structures and facilities. The nature of cases to be tried in the GBV Courts lacks clarity. The rollout of GBV Courts started in 2019 but was disrupted by the *Anti-Rape Ordinance* in 2020; their status remained in various stages of limbo throughout 2020 and 2021 until the passage of the *Anti-Rape Act, 2021*.

The *PWPA* came into force in March 2017 but exclusively in Multan District where the VAWC and protection complex was established, because other districts did not have the envisaged structures and systems required for implementation.

Moreover, even after six years, rules have not been framed for either the PPWVA or Punjab Women Protection Authority Act, leading to ad hoc measures inconsistent with the provisions of the Acts. Consequently, the functions and wide range of services under these two laws have not been realized. Institutional issues: inadequate budgets, operational management, and human resources, combined with ad hoc coordination undercut effective survivor-centric services.

Social sector institutions operate without sanctioned staff, using contractual employees, and assigning additional charges. Inadequate/delayed budgets and a lack of expertise in budget preparation and process are perennial problems. Staff development is insufficiently robust: irregular, not subject/task-specific, and not inclusive of all staff. For example, the newly assigned VAWC Protection Officer has never been oriented to her duties. The lack of training in handling trauma cases and mediations is of concern as all three services handle trauma and mediate reconciliations.

DuAs are not an option for working women, students, or women with school-going children because residents are not allowed to leave the premises or have internet access. All residents are made court dependent though this is not mentioned in the DuA Guidelines, enhancing risks of violence on leaving the DUA once they receive ‘*azadi*’ (freedom) papers from court.



Services do not always match mandates, e.g. HRCs are not formally mandated (and thus have no budgets) to facilitate follow-up with survivors. Inadequate follow-up in the DuAs and HRCs impedes effective assessments that would help streamline and adjust services to survivors' needs. Feedback loops are weak; quantitative record-keeping provides insufficient insights.

Despite being formally stipulated in the law, the VAWC's coordination with the police, judiciary and health department is problematic. No mechanism or SOPs exist for coordination amongst institutions offering similar services. The jurisdiction of the VAWC police station remains unclear. The Additional Sessions Judge court only started being held on the premises fortnightly in 2021; the magistrate court still does not operate on premise. Absent any standing agreement with the Department of Health, required medical officers may not be assigned. Only 10.45% of medical officers in Punjab are qualified for medico-legal work,⁷ which is also stigmatized.

Few doctors complete the four-week course at Nishter Hospital; enrolment is often discouraged by seniors. Without a specialized cadre, medico-legal examinations are consigned to the youngest least experienced doctor at the facility. Medical officers lack clarity about their role in the criminal justice system, how to properly fill out a medico-legal certificate, and are not oriented on treating survivors who might be traumatized, fearful and confused. This results in highly insensitive behaviour and victim-blaming, including by female personnel. Rural Health Centres are ill-equipped with infrastructure and materials (e.g. swabs, plastic containers, sexual assault investigation kits) to gather forensic evidence.

With few exceptions, police are callous, uncooperative in registering cases, engage in victim-blaming, and lack awareness of required practices in a rape investigation.

Recommendations

To counter the demand-side cultural and informational barriers to access and uptake:

1. Develop and promote through all means possible a robust state narrative that:
 - ♀ Condemns all forms of violence against women and girls as a societal problem.
 - ♀ Promotes knowledge regarding women's rights in marriage, such as legal age and consent to marriage.
 - ♀ Removes the stigma of divorce and women's remunerative work.
 - ♀ Encourages reporting violence, including by placing the onus on the survivors' families and community.
2. Improve the public image of Dar ul Amans by widely advertising accurate information about services and promoting survivor testimonies to remove the stigma.
3. Integrate all Helplines into a single easily remembered number that is toll-free and internet-enabled, and
 - ♀ Train all helpline operators on existing legal remedies and the ability to provide appropriate and effective referrals.
4. Mobilize private sector entities to join awareness initiatives for social behaviour change, including by encouraging commercial entities to convey messages in their advertising.

5. Create a referral network. Map local CSOs working in the area and include women outreach workers of the Departments of Health and Population Welfare trained to recognize signs of violence and how to engage with survivors.

To further improve the Social Sector Services - (See also Policy Brief comparing social sector service delivery models).



Policy Frameworks

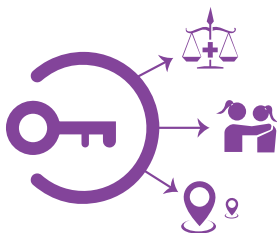
6. Institutionalize streamlined coordination between institutions working under the Social Welfare Department and Women Protection Authority.
7. Formalize and ensure appropriate mechanisms for effective coordination with other sectors responding to VAW survivors, in particular, the judiciary, police and health, especially in the VAWC where the law ordains such coordination:
 - ♀ Concerning the VAWC, review job descriptions of personnel from the prosecution, police and health sectors and ensure these do not conflict with their functions under their parent department's laws.

8. Adopt measures to overturn the practice of making all DuA survivors court-dependent:

- ♀ Engage with the judiciary to promote understanding of and greater adherence to the DuA Guidelines.
- ♀ Revise the policy of police escorts when attending court hearings or for medical treatment.

9. Extend the mandate of all social sector services to follow up on facilitated survivors and ensure necessary budgets for this.

10. Identify possible gaps in services by surveying survivors' experiences.



Increasing access

11. Develop and widely disseminate information materials on social sector services, bearing in mind that survivors hear of institutions either through word of mouth or broadcast media, that *inter alia*:

- ♀ Provide details of services provided, especially free legal aid and psychosocial counselling, timings, locations, contact numbers and public transport routes.
- ♀ Dispel misconceptions about requirements for benefiting from these.

12. Establish intermediary referral facilities in easily accessible city locations to enhance uptake of institutions situated outside city centres, e.g. the SWD Complex in Multan.



Staffing & Human Resource Development

13. Fill all sanctioned posts, regularize contract staff, and orient all staff to their duties.

14. Sanction a psychologist post in all HRCs and law officer in DuAs and VAWC.

15. Reinforce feedback mechanisms and ways of appreciating staff performances.

16. Conduct regular training of all service staff around gender, GBV, protocols, Guidelines and SOPs for each institution, including guards:

- ♀ Subject-specific training with certification for service providers on dealing with trauma, appropriate handling of VAW cases, and survivor-supportive mediation, particularly for psychosocial officers and Social Welfare Officers.

17. Provide opportunities for mutual learning by bringing together staff from diverse districts, and opportunities for engaging with senior SWD and WPA officials.



Legal aid services

18. Ensure timely notification of panel of lawyers for all institutions, ensure expertise in both family and criminal law, and gender sensitivity; where possible, panels should have at least 50 percent women.
19. Increase budget allocation and standardize lawyers' fees across all institutions and do away with the restriction of one claim/suit per woman. Typically, women have to file multiple lawsuits to resolve legal issues.



Service Gaps

20. Plan how best to provide shelter to survivors who cannot use the DuAs because they need to continue work/study or for other reasons.
21. Consider establishing 'midway' homes to meet survivors' dire need of financial solvency for reintegration into society, providing longer-term residency so women can acquire requisite marketable skills. Explore strengthening Dar ul Falahs as midway homes.

To improve implementation of the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act 2016 & Protection of Women Authority Act 2017

22. Formulate Rules under both laws and ensure these:
 - ♀ Elaborate the operative framework of the protection system envisaged in PPWVA and the provision of services from different departments like health, police and prosecution, and provide a coordination mechanism.
23. Immediately circulate a copy of Para 17 of the judgment in Yasir vs. The State & another (Crl.Misc.No.43708-B/2021) to all provincial police officers to ensure implementation of the Anti-Rape Ordinance and judicial prescriptions laid down by the Supreme Court.
24. Undertake a systematic and detailed review of VAWC's six years of operation to extract key lessons and, in the light of this:
 - ♀ Adopt all necessary measures to overcome impediments to effective survivor-centric services.
 - ♀ Extend to all districts in a phased manner after conducting districts' specific needs and feasibility surveys on the most easily accessible areas for women and girls, considering safety and accessibility of transport.

25. Ensure the required structures and facilities are in place in the current VAWC in Multan and put into place before extending this to other districts.
26. Operationalize District Protection Committees and Officers.

To ensure more robust Health Sector Services



27. Fill sanctioned posts in RHCs and THQs (Medical officers, LHVs, dispensers), specifically encourage women officers.
28. Ensure adequate infrastructural arrangements for examinations at RHCs.
29. Ensure doctors receive standardized hardship allowances for serving in rural areas and/or residences with RHCs.
30. Ensure provision of Sexual Assault Evidence Collection Kit (aka Rape kit), including swabs, pregnancy tests, medicines and other equipment needed for examinations.

To strengthen Medico-Legal Procedures



31. Revise and update guidelines and SOPs as per the Lahore High Court directions⁸ and requirements of the Criminal Law (amendment) Act 2021 and Anti Rape (Investigation & Trial) Act, 2021:

- ♀ Circulate updated Guidelines and SOPs to all tiers of medico-legal officers.
- ♀ Train medico-legal officers in forensics matters.
- ♀ Ensure no officer is assigned medico-legal responsibility without completing a four-week mandatory course for medico-legal officers.

32. Remove the condition of a judicial order for medico-legal examination of a female victim and only retain conditions mentioned in CrPC section 164-A.
33. Support medical universities to develop uniform and easy to comprehend medico-legal forms for GBV cases.
34. Adopt legal measures to ensure medico-legal experts are summoned in criminal trials only in exceptional cases, subject to very defined circumstances.
35. Consider establishing a specialized cadre of Medico-Legal Officers with its own service structure, training, and mandate with sufficient women officers.
36. Impart gender sensitization training to health professionals in general and medico-legal officers in particular.
37. Establish more forensics labs to reduce the burden of the lab in Lahore, which cannot meet the needs of the entire province and also handles cases from other provinces.
38. Make available mobile forensics units of PFSA at every district headquarter to collect evidence from the crime scene.

For the more robust implementation of laws

Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act, 2016 & Punjab Protection of Women Authority Act, 2017

39. Formulate Rules under both laws:

♀ Ensure Rules under PPWVA elaborate the operative framework of the protection system envisaged & manner of providing services from different departments like health, police and prosecution, and provide a coordination mechanism.

40. Prior to extending the PPWVA to other districts, ensure the Multan VAWC has all the required structures, facilities and governance framework in place.

41. Undertake a systematic and detailed review of VAWC's six years of operation to extract key lessons - especially in view of plans to replicate in new districts - to, among other things, assess:

♀ Police investigation methods at the VAWC to identify gaps and weaknesses to understand better failure in obtaining a conviction for cases, including coordination with and role of the Assistant Public Prosecutor VAWC.

♀ Effectiveness and limitations of DuA as a shelter for the VAWC according to the PPWVA Act.

♀ In the light of the review, adopt measures to overcome impediments to effective survivor-centric services.

42. Extend the application of PPWVA to all districts in a phased manner after conducting district-specific needs and feasibility assessments that include surveys on the most easily accessible location for women and girls, considering safety and accessibility of transport.

Anti-Rape (Investigation & Trial) Act, 2021



43. Immediately establish the mandatory structures, cells & bodies required for implementation inter alia, including:

♀ Anti-Rape Crisis Cells in designated hospitals to facilitate the registration of cases, timely medico-legal examinations and other necessary measures as required in the case, mechanisms for legal assistance to victims, victim and witness protection system.

44. Formulate Rules. In particular, clarify jurisdiction of special investigation units and trial courts as both schedules of offences under this law identify some offences as cognizable and trial-able by special courts only if committed along with some other offences.

45. Review the Act and correct anomalies in the list of offences in Schedule I, e.g. remove "contradiction" in s.16(3) and (4) by, e.g. the President exercising power under section 31 of this law.

More effective and Gender-sensitive Police



46. Increase budgets for investigation & ensure police station level allocations.
47. Ensure IOs have adequate & appropriate infrastructural facilities, vehicles & equipment.
48. Undertake training for IOs to investigate cases of sexual offences as required under section 9 of Anti Rape Act 2021 before their induction into the SSOIUs, including:
 - ♀ Training on requirements specific to sexual assault investigations (e.g. new definition of crimes) and gender sensitivity & trauma-informed attendance to survivors.
49. Revise & issue SOPs for police investigation of offences keeping in view requirements of the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2021 and Anti-Rape (Investigation & Trial) Act, 2021.
50. Improve liaison and collaboration between the police investigation and public prosecutors through strict compliance with section 9 of Punjab Public Prosecution Service Act (PPPSA) 2006 and SOPs for effective police-prosecution cooperation dated 14-12-2011.
51. Increase the number of women in the police force.
52. Impart gender sensitization training to all police personnel.

POSTSCRIPT DECEMBER 2022

On 18 November 2022, the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act, 2016 was extended to all of Punjab and on 21 December 2022, the measures became publicly available. This extension has been done without a thorough review of existing bottlenecks and issues. Therefore, new provisions are likely to create further problems and compound existing ones. The extension of the law:

- a. Notified all twelve Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Human Rights Centres (HRC) (previously the federally-run Crisis Centres commonly still referred to as such) as protection centres under this law, and where these do not exist the Darul Amans have been declared to be protection centres.⁹
- b. Declared all DuAs in the 36 districts as Shelter Homes under this law.
- c. Notified as District Women Protection Officers the Managers of the twelve HRCs and, where these do not exist, the Superintendents of the Darul Amans; and psychologists in the DuA and HRC as Women Protection Officers.¹⁰
- d. The extension law omitted the limitation of 120 days for the formulation of the Rules of business.

Additionally, on 14 December 2022, the Lahore High Court issued a notification designating trial judges for cases under the Act in District headquarters and Tehsils.

Some functions that were previously the remit of the provincial government have been given to the Punjab Women Protection Authority (WPA), such as appointing and removing non-official members of the District Protection Committee. However, the SWD Secretary retains the power to delegate any of the functions of the Protection Committee to the District Coordination Officer. Additionally, the Annual report on the protection system in the province is to be prepared by the Women Protection Authority and submitted to the SWD for placement before the provincial assembly.

Issues:

The extension of the PPWVA to all of Punjab without due consideration of implications for implementation, raises a number of critical concerns.

- All DuAs have been notified as Shelter Homes under the law. However, as there are no rules and the clause pertaining to making these rules within a stipulated timeframe has been deleted, there is nothing to ensure that the functioning of the Darul Amans is aligned with the Shelter Homes as envisaged in the PPWVA.
- To make the protection system under this law effective, it is imperative to review the recommendations relating to the current operation of DuAs and HRCs as well. For this, please also see the Policy Brief on the GBV Social Sector Services as well as the two research reports and briefs.

- Notifying HRC Managers as District Women Protection Officers (DWPO) raises the question of whether HRCs will be able to continue to function when the Managers assume the duties of DWPO and HRCs become Protection centres. It is essential that the HRCs now converted to Protection Centres continue to serve the demographic which DuAs cannot, due to restrictions on leaving the premises for purposes other than attending court or a medical emergency. Specifically, this includes working women, students and women with school-going children, but also applies to other women. Additionally, HRCS provide financial referrals and advice on other matters, including sexual harassment. Where there are no HRCs and DuAs have been declared as Protection Centres, it is unclear how vital services would be provided to women violence-survivors who cannot or opt not to avail of shelters.
- Serving HRC Managers and DuA Superintendents have been notified as DWPOs without evaluating whether these officers have the requisite skills to carry out their new tasks. Nor is there any indication they will be trained for this. Additionally, some HRCs operate without adequate institutional facilities.¹¹ The appointment of the psychologists in the DuAs and HRCs as Women Protection Officers is highly problematic.

The management tasks assigned to, or assumed by, DuA psychologists already detract from their primary function which must be to provide women survivors with psychosocial support and therapy for reintegration.

- The failure to pass Rules of Business and SOPs under the original law has already proved to be a major source of implementation problems. Omitting a timeframe for passing rules under this law will further multiply problems as Rules are to cover many of the issues identified in this Report, including in particular, the regulation of affairs of the Protection Centres and Shelter Homes. Rules would also determine sanctioned posts and facilitate SOPs for smooth coordination amongst the various institutions involved in the protection system services: the SWD, Women Protection Authority, the Police, Department of Health, prosecution and judiciary.
- There is no indication regarding how the input of the police and health departments are to be ensured in either the HRCs or DuAs converted to Protection Centres. The absence of these inputs defeats the purpose of the VAWCs as a 1-stop service centre for violence survivors.

- The relationship between the WPA and SWD in running the newly designated VAWCs and protection system lacks clarity and can create further difficulties. The law envisages the WPA as the body responsible for running and supervising the protection system including Shelters Homes, but the staff is that of the SWD, with the department authorised to make all appointments. Issues will inevitably arise regarding appointments, transfers and promotions of staff serving the system. It is also unclear whether the HRC staff – all of whom was on contract and governed by their current service structure – has been regularised.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To reinforce Punjab's Women Protection System, the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act (PPWVA), 2016 and the Punjab Women Protection Authority Act, 2017 (PWAA) the following actions are recommended:

- Immediately formulate Rules under PPWAV, 2016 and PWAA, 2017, including the regulation of affairs of the protection centres and shelter homes specified in Section 29 of the PPWAV, and adjust SOPs after these are passed. Rules should:
 - ♀ Elaborate a clear framework for the full functioning of the protection system envisaged in this law based on a thorough review of experiences to date at the Multan VAWC at the earliest.
 - ♀ Spell out the manner in which coordination is to be achieved with services provided by different departments such as, in particular, health, police, prosecution and the judiciary.
 - ♀ Ensure job descriptions of personnel from prosecution, police and health at the protection centres do not conflict with functions under their parent department's laws.
- Fill all vacant sanctioned posts at the Multan VAWC and end the practice of additional charges.
- Ensure officials designated as DWPO and WPOs have no additional charge.
- Recall the notification making psychologists Women Protection Officers and recruit new personnel for this task.
- Elaborate specific job descriptions and operational modalities for the DWPO and WPOs; evaluate the skill-set of those notified as DWPOs to fulfil this role at the earliest and institute trainings to ensure necessary skill-sets and outlook.

- Ensure that all Protection Centres have the requisite personnel, structures, facilities and budgets in place in all districts at the earliest.
- Ensure that the services provided by HRCs continue to be available.
- Ensure the WPA has the requisite budget, authority and full-time dedicated personnel to run the protection system.

¹ "Pilot Programme to Reduce Violence against Women Established in Punjab."

² One out of every three women will experience at least one act in their lifetime "that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life." The World Health Organization, "SE Asia Region Fact Sheet" (2018).

³ The Act defines violence as "any offence committed against the human body of the aggrieved person including abetment of an offence, domestic violence, sexual violence, psychological abuse, economic abuse, stalking or a cybercrime". It explains "economic abuse" as encompassing the denial of food, clothing and shelter, or taking away the income of the aggrieved person without her consent; "psychological violence" as including psychological deterioration of the aggrieved person which may result in anorexia, suicide attempt or clinically proven depression, or limiting freedom of movement of the aggrieved person under Article 2-1(r). However, the mental condition needs to be certified by a panel of psychologists appointed by the District Women Protection Committee.

⁴ Federal criminal law applies across the country.

⁵ "Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (2017-2018)," fig. 16.16.

⁶ "Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2017-18."

⁷ WP 17716/2021 Muhammad Nasir v Justice of Peace, etc. [Lahore High Court], decision on 04.01.21.

⁸ Sadaf Aziz etc V. Federation of Pakistan etc WP No.13537.

⁹ Sub-sections 6 and 7 added to section 13 of the law.

¹⁰ This has been done after amending section 14 to enable the SWD Secretary to appoint any SWD officer to perform the duties of the District Women Protection Officer and Women Protection Officer. However, as the posts that are eligible are not specified, this can be problematic.

¹¹ See Research Reports & related Policy Briefs: (1) Barriers to Access & Uptake of Public Sector GBV Services by Women Survivors of Violence and (2) Comparative Analysis of Three VAW Service Delivery Models in Punjab, as well as the GBV Social Sector Services Brief.

APPENDIX I - PROFILES OF SURVIVORS

District	No. of Survivors	Average Age	Average no. of children	Marital Status (%age)				Education (%age)				
				Married	Divorced	Widowed	Unmarried	No formal education	Primary	Middle	Matric	FA/FSC & above
Vehari	80	34	3	37	17.5	5	2.5	49	11	10	15	9
Multan	37	30	3	72.5	17.5	2.5	2.5	25	5	2.5	35	12.5
Lahore	29	34	2	83	14	3	-	31	10	17	31	7

APPENDIX II – LISTING OF SERVICE PROVIDERS

	Provincial	Director (Planning & Evaluation)
Social Welfare & Bait-ul-Maal	Vehari	Deputy Director
	Multan	Divisional Director (Multan)
	Lahore	Divisional Director
Dar ul Aman	Vehari	Superintendent
		Warden
		Psycho-social Support Officer
		Vocational Teacher
		Advisory Committee Member
	Multan	Superintendent
		Psycho-social Support Officer
		Vocational Teacher
		Advisory Committee Member
	Lahore	Superintendent
		Warden
		Psycho-social Officer
		Advisory Committee Member
SBB HRC	Vehari	Manager
		Law Officer
		Advisory Committee Member
	Multan	Manager
	Lahore	Manager
		Psychologist

	Provincial	Director (Planning & Evaluation)
VAWC	Multan	Manager
		Mediation/Counseling Officer
		Front Desk Officer
		Advisory Committee Member
		Dist. Women Protection Officer
		Senior Psychologist
		Prosecutor
		Former Manager
Police	Vehari	2 SHOs
		Women's Police Desk Officer
	Multan	1 SHO (VAWC)
		1 SP (VAWC)
		2 SHOs
	Lahore	2 GBV Investigation Cell In-charges
		1 Mohrar at GBV Cell, PS Shahdara/City Division
		1 DSP Investigation (Former AIG Gender, Punjab)
Health & Medico-legal	Vehari	DHQ Vehari
		2 Medical officers at DHQ
		1 Official on Duty at Khidmat Centre, DHQ Vehari
		THQ (Burewala)
		1 Medical Superintendent
		2 MOs
		RHC (Burewala)
		2 MOs
	Multan	Senior MO (RHC Ayyazabad Marral)
		2 male MOs (RHC Ayyazabad Marral, Rashidabad)
		2 female MOs (RHC Ayyazabad Marral, Rashidabad)
		Paramedic/focal person for Medico-Legal Cases (RHC Rashidabad)

	Provincial	Director (Planning & Evaluation)
Judicial & Legal	Vehari	Judicial/Area Magistrate
		Deputy Public Prosecutor
	Multan	1 GBV Court Judge
		1 General Prosecutor
		1 Assistant Attorney General
	Lahore	1 Prosecutor GBV Court
		1 Former Public Prosecutor GBV Court (currently Prosecution Inspection Team)
Civil Society Organisations	Lahore	AGHS
		Dastak
	Multan	Roshni Organisation
Facilitators	Vehari	Lawyer/Advocate High Court
		President, Sudhar Development Organisation
	Multan	Coordinator, Awaz Agahi Centre
		Programme Manager, Roohi Developmental Organisation
	Lahore	Former Councilor
Community Male Helpers	Vehari	10 FDG participants
	Multan	7 FDG participants
	Lahore	10 FDG participants

Key findings and recommendations of a 2021-22 study conducted by Shirkat Gah-Women's Resource Centre in collaboration with the Punjab Social Welfare Department with support from UNFPA and FCDO-UK Aid.

Conducted in Lahore, Multan and Vehari districts, the study had a primary focus on social sector services; health, police, legal and judicial services were reviewed as ancillary services. Research engaged 146 survivors, 67 key officials, 41 CSO representatives, and 27 community male helpers of survivors. Survivors included women who opted not to approach formal institutions, those who accessed any government facility, and those currently or formerly facilitated by the Dar ul Amans, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Human Rights Centres and the Violence Against Women Centre in Multan. Officials were interviewed from the Social Welfare Department, including institutional advisors, the Department of Health, the police, prosecutors and judges. Field data was complemented by an extensive literature review and a textual analysis of laws and judgments, rules and regulations, and including official documents such as SOPs, reporting formats, etc.

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