



Strengthening Social Sector Services for Women Survivors of Violence in Punjab

A Policy Brief



Social Welfare Department & Women Protection Authority



Background:

Violence against women affects one out of every three women in the world. In Pakistan, official statistics indicate that domestic violence occurs in every third household and 34 percent of women and girls aged 15-49 years have experienced physical or sexual violence.¹

Pakistan is committed to promoting gender equality and eradicating structural, socio-economic and cultural disadvantages that marginalize women and endanger their lives.² A host of initiatives, legal and policy measures to encourage reporting by violence survivors and improve state responses to VAW concretise commitments to Sustainable Development Goal 5 (gender equality) and its Target 5.2 to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls.

This policy brief, based on multi-stakeholder empirical research and textual analysis, focuses exclusively on social sector services. Challenges to effective response services relating to other sectors: the police, health and justice sector, are provided in separate briefs.

¹Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (2017-2018). Available at <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR354/FR354.pdf>

²"Pilot Programme to Reduce Violence against Women Established in Punjab," Pakistan Today, 2015, <https://archive.pakistantoday.com.pk/2015/09/14/pilowdigitt-programme-to-reduce-violence-against-women-established-in-punjab/>

Government's Social Sector Measures to Facilitate Violence Survivors

Social Welfare Departments provide women survivors the most extensively used services. The Punjab Social Welfare and Bait-ul-Maal Department (SWD) has continuously introduced measures to align services with international best practices through revised guidelines, minimum standards, and complaint mechanisms.

The Dar ul Amans (DuAs), government-run shelter homes for women in all 36 districts provide psychosocial counseling, shelter, legal counseling and representation in court, and vocational training. Efforts to improve services encompass the 2015 Guidelines, minimum standards, complaint mechanisms, and initiatives to re-orient the attitudes of service providers towards women survivors.³ More than 11,500 women used these shelters in 2018 and 2019, dropping slightly in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Twelve Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Human Rights Centres (HRCs), still commonly referred to as Crisis Centres,⁴ are drop-in centres that provided legal assistance, psychosocial counseling and other advice to 9,201 women in 2021⁵.

Recognizing 'that violence against women was rampant in Punjab'⁶, in 2016 the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act (PPWVA) was enacted to institute an effective system and service delivery system to women survivors of violence through:

- ♀ Violence Against Women Protection Centres as a one-stop mechanism bringing together services under the police, forensics/ medico-legal, legal aid and prosecution as well as social welfare services – currently only operative in Multan.
- ♀ District Women Protection Committees for oversight and District Women Protection Officers to recovery and rescue at-risk women.
- ♀ A shelter home.

³Guidelines for the Dar ul Amans in Punjab

⁴In Lahore, Rawalpindi, Faisalabad, Khushab, Sialkot, Vehari, Sahiwal, Multan, Muzaffargarh, Bahawalpur, D.G. Khan and Narowal

⁵Draft report Gender Parity Report 2021, PSCW

⁶"Pilot Programme to Reduce Violence against Women Established in Punjab." Pakistan Today, 2015,



Optimal results of these positive steps are obstructed by demand and supply side issues.

On the demand side, deeply embedded cultural factors keep women trapped in cycles of violence. This includes the cultural imperative to marry off girls at the earliest and for girls/women to then maintain the marriage at all costs; the normalisation of violence, especially spousal violence; and the backlash of violent reprisals and character assassination ignited by reporting violence and approaching formal institutions. Additionally, a poor knowledge base means virtually no women are aware about social sector services, while insufficient and fragile social capital deprives survivors of social assistance to access services that is also impeded by the lack of financial resources.

On the supply side, challenges to providing survivor-centric social sector services include insufficient human resources with task-appropriate skill-sets, discrepancy in formal mandates and actual services; DuAs and HRCs having no mandate or budget to follow-up facilitated survivors; no formal mechanism to coordinate the diverse social sector services; and no standing agreements/Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) with the police, judiciary and health departments, even where formally stipulated for the VAWC.

Issues identified and measures suggested below to make services more effective from a survivor-centric perspective are based on empirical studies carried out in 2021-2022 that encompassed textual analyses of laws, judgments, rules, regulations and official documents such as SOPs⁷. Using the UN's Essential Service Package as a guiding framework, two studies were carried out in collaboration with the Punjab Social Welfare Department with support from UNFPA and FCDO in three districts⁸:

1. Barriers to Access & Uptake of Public Sector GBV Services by Women Survivors of Violence.
2. Comparative Analysis of Three VAW Service Delivery Models in Punjab.

Additional insights derive from research conducted in six districts in March 2022 for the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Promoting Survivor Centered Initiatives to Protect, Rehabilitate and Economically Empower GVB Survivors in Punjab⁹.

⁷Data collected from 146 survivors, 67 key informants of state services/response mechanisms, 41 civil society organization representatives and 27 individual community male facilitators of survivors.

⁸Multan, Lahore and Vehari.

⁹Multan, Lahore, Vehari, Faisalabad, Khushab, D.G. Khan



Improving Knowledge & image of SWD Services

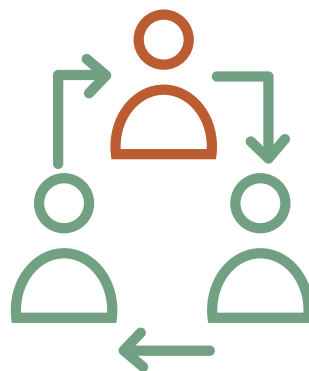
Issues

- ♀ Women lack knowledge about existing free-of-cost services.
- ♀ Social services institutions are rarely the first port of call; most survivors have already spent money on a lawyer by the time they access social sector services.
- ♀ Dar ul Amans have greatly improved services, but still suffer from a poor image.

Recommended Actions

1. Develop a Communication Strategy to improve knowledge and DuA image:
 - a. Prepare & widely disseminate information materials on services, detailing available services, especially free legal aid and psychosocial counselling, timings, locations, contact numbers and public transport routes.
 - b. Dispel misconceptions about requirements for benefiting from these.
2. Develop and roll out a campaign to promote a positive image and remove the stigma of approaching Dar ul Amans, including by promoting survivor testimonies.

Coordination amongst SWD services & better oversight



Issues

- Q Absence of formalized agreements and protocols to coordinate services of the DuAs, HRCs and Multan VAWC providing similar and interconnected services, including in Multan where the DUA and HRC are located in the same VAWC complex.
 - Q Minimum informal interaction of DUAs and HRCs with Darul Falahs for housing women survivors needing to gain livelihood skills.
 - Q No mechanism to link survivors with the SWD Baitul-Mal and zakat funds.
 - Q Little to no interaction of DUAs with Sanatzars despite the DUA Guidelines.
 - Q Uneven performance and underutilization of institutional oversight Advisory Committees.
2. Formalise streamlined coordination with SOPs amongst institutions working under the Social Welfare Department (DUAs and HRCs) and Women Protection Authority (VAWC).
 3. Review and strengthen functioning and membership of auxiliary monitoring bodies such as advisory bodies and the District Complaint Management Committee in Multan:
 - a. Review and revise TORs of committees.
 - b. Replace political appointees with people from business, including where possible, the Chamber of Commerce.
 - c. Consider establishing a revolving fund administered by Committees for women exiting DUAs and those using/exiting HRC and VAWC services.

Recommended Actions

1. Institute a coordination body bringing together all social sector VAW response services with other services provided by the SWD.



Staffing

Issues

- ♀ Unfilled sanctioned staff positions and Deputisation to other branches/ offices reduces staff availability, thereby impeding services in all services:
 - a. 1-2 additional charges to meet staff shortage is problematic as one person cannot do justice to 2 - let alone 3 - tasks simultaneously.
- ♀ All HRC staff and several DuA officers (e.g. psychologists) still on contract.
- ♀ There are disparities in positions for similar/same work across institutions.
- ♀ Staff is not always oriented to duties assigned.
- ♀ Survivor responsiveness requires additional posts to be created.

Recommended Actions

1. Fill all sanctioned posts in all institutions and regularise contract staff.
2. Ensure all staff of these services is oriented to their duties.
3. Institute additional positions:
 - a. Psychologist for all 12 HRCs (as in DuA).
 - b. Law Officer in all DUAs and the VAWC (as in HRC).
 - c. Assistant Warden in DUAs to ensure wardens are not on duty 24/7 and to ensure the safety of women residents.
4. Devise clear pathways for promotion.
5. Reinforce feedback mechanisms and means for staff appreciation.
6. Increase the number of women in senior SWD posts at the district level.



Human Resource Development

Issues

- ♀ Training is irregular, not always task-specific, too often outsourced, does not include all staff down to guards on e.g. gender sensitivity and handling trauma cases.
- ♀ Staff carries out tasks for which it has no formal training, in particular mediation, reconciliation and handling trauma cases appropriately.

Recommended Actions

1. Develop and roll out annual Training Plans through the SWD Training Institute that encompass:
 - a. Regular general and job-specific trainings with certification for service providers (core competencies-skills/knowledge/attitudes e.g. gender, VAW, institution-specific protocols and SOPs, survivor supportive mediation, case management).
 - b. Develop SWD master trainers to run these training.
 - c. Ensure trainings are held at the institutions so the entire staff can benefit.
2. Link trainings to performance appraisals and promotional pathways.
3. Orient senior staff DUAs, HRCs, Darul Falahs etc. on budget making and processes.
4. Organise opportunities for mutual learning by bringing together staff from diverse districts, and opportunities for engaging with senior SWD and WPA.



Quality of Legal Aid Services

Issues

- ♀ Panels of government-appointed lawyers are not always notified on time; appointments are insufficiently vetted and the remuneration offered does not cover court costs which are then passed on to women survivors.
- ♀ Neither services nor remunerations are standardized across institutions.
- ♀ Limiting legal aid to one legal case per woman is problematic as survivors typically need 2-3 cases (e.g. maintenance and execution of court ruling; divorce, child custody, child support and execution of orders for child custody and support).
- ♀ The lack of oversight of cases handled by privately hired lawyers by women residing in DUAs and the VAWC leaves survivors vulnerable to exploitation.

Recommended Actions

1. Notify the panels of lawyers in a timely manner across the 3 institutions, with appointments made contingent on prerequisite of gender sensitivity and awareness of VAW issues and having expertise in both family and criminal law:
 - a. As far as possible the panel should consist of at least 50% women.
2. Introduce a law officer in all services to: (1) monitor the performance of panel lawyers for quality and sensitivity of service and progress of court cases, (2) provide legal advice to service users and accompany survivors to police station or court when deemed necessary. For this:
 - a. Develop a list of pro-bono lawyers from CSOs and bar councils and liaise with these as back-up.
 - b. Institute mandatory training for panel lawyers missing competencies.
3. Increase and standardise budget allocations for lawyer's fees including fees for high court cases and provide appropriate budgets to cover associated costs:
 - a. Do away with restriction of one claim/suit per woman to enable survivors to file multiple suits for resolution of legal issues.



Survivor-centric mediated reconciliations

Issues

- ♀ All three institutions focus heavily on mediating reconciliations but only the VAWC has a Mediation Officer and no staff is trained in mediation (including the VAWC Mediation Officer).
- ♀ There is a strong tendency of staff in all three institutions to promote reconciliations but whether/the extent to which this is the survivor's preferred option is unclear.
- ♀ All psychologists are engaged in reconciliation which conflicts with their therapy and counselling tasks.
- ♀ 20-25% of women using services return for help as mediated agreements (*razinama*) written on stamp paper and signed do not always have the desired result of ending violence. Only the VAWC is mandated to follow up reconciliations, has the required budgets and is able to mobilise rescues with the police by the Woman District Protection Officer under the law. The fate and outcome of reconciliation when survivors do not return is unknown.

Recommended Actions

1. Conduct staff training on mediation skills for all those engaged in mediation or reconciliations.
 2. Ensure mediation and reconciliation services are offered only if this is the woman's preferred mode of action.
 3. Develop clear criteria for assessing risks to survivor safety during and after reconciliation and mediation services.
 4. Mandate all institutions and ensure they have the necessary budgets and protocols to follow up high risk reconciliations with phone calls and/or in person visits for up to one year at least, and that such follow up is a mandatory clause in all *razinamas*:
 - a. Provide legal authority and follow up systems for breaches of agreements including, wherever possible, rescue services in coordination with the District Women Protection Committee and DWPO once the PPWVA 2016 is extended to all districts and the Protection Committees are functional.
- ♀ Ensure that psychologists are not involved in mediation and reconciliation.

Psychosocial Counselling & Therapy

Issues

- ♀ Psychosocial counselling is carried out by psychologists in the DUAs and VAWC but by Social Welfare Officers in the HRCs except Lahore.
- ♀ Psychologists lack formal training in dealing with trauma cases.
- ♀ Psychologists are involved with mediation and management work that presents a conflict of interest with the psychologist's role.



Recommended Actions

1. Organise orientation sessions on psychosocial wellbeing and mediation principles for key SWD officials, In-Charges of DUAs & HRCs.
2. Prepare & roll out trainings as given below¹⁰

Subject	DUA Staff	HRC Staff	VAWC Staff
Understanding the difference in psychosocial counselling & mediation	Superintendents /In-charges, Psychologists	Managers, Social Welfare Officers	Manager, Psychologist, Mediation Officer
Orientation to Trauma Handling basics principles, including immediate steps to provide help-seekers a sense of safety & calm	All staff, including in particular, guards, watchmen, wardens	All staff, in particular, guards	All staff, including guards & watchmen, VAWC police station staff, Medical Officers
Technical trauma handling training including first steps of providing the help-seeker a sense of safety and calm	Psychologists	Psychologist, Social Welfare Officers, Law Officer	Psychologist, Front desk officers, Mediation officer, VAWC police station staff, Medical Officers
Mediation skills	All staff engaged in reconciliation efforts	All staff engaged in reconciliation efforts	All staff engaged in reconciliation efforts

¹⁰JICA is piloting work with SWD in this area for DuAs and HRCs in 3 districts.

3. Introduce quarterly or six monthly consultative events for all psychologists, Social Welfare Officers of DuAs and HRCs, as well as the VAWC Mediation Officer to share & document best practices and challenges, starting as soon as possible to prepare a baseline for developing standardized testing and protocols.
4. Research, develop and roll out a compendium of tests to assist psychosocial counseling, to be made available to all psychologists and, for the time being, HRC SWOs. This should include tests for: depression, anxiety, intelligence, neurological measurement, stress, life satisfaction and attitude.
 - a. Review standard/common psychological tests for applicability and adapt these to the socio-cultural environment and specific needs of women help-seekers.
 - b. Arrange consultations with the psychologists and SWOs to assess baseline needs and hire experts to work in close consultation with psychologists and SWOs.



Data Management & Monitoring

Issues

- Q Enormous amounts of data are kept by DUAs and HRCs going back decades. SWD has started digital recordkeeping but only from 2019 onwards.
- Q Data collected and collated is mostly quantitative (number of women served, duration of stay, nature of issue etc.) and does not shed light on the nature of psychological issues survivors face or their experience of services.
- Q Women formerly served by HRCs often return asking for information or documents requiring inordinate effort to extract from manual records.
- Q It is unclear how data enters a feedback loop for planning and learning.

Recommended Actions

1. Standardise data collection tools across three models (using both qualitative and quantitative indicators).
2. Digitize data collection and record keeping. For this:
 - a. Increase staff capacity and ensure upgradation of equipment in the institutions.
 - b. Hire temporary persons to bring data up to date.
3. Collect long-term impact indicators on the efficacy of service, e.g. number of cases resolved in favour of women, time taken for resolution, number of cases of 'relapse' after mediation and reasons for this.
4. Devise clear feedback loops for data to be used for planning and improving systems.
5. Introduce appropriate mechanisms for obtaining information on survivor satisfaction e.g. third-party evaluations, survivor exit interviews etc. in all three institutions.

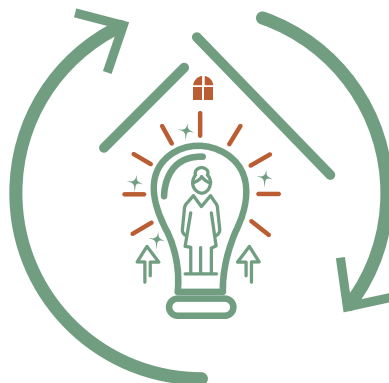
Reintegration: residency & skill acquisition post/during services

Issues

- Q Most survivors of violence need financial solvency to be able to reintegrate effectively into society. This implies having a means of livelihood. DuAs are meant to liaise with Sanatzars but do not as DUA residents are not allowed to leave premises except to attend court or for a medical emergency, nor are they allowed internet access for on-line courses.
- Q The unsettled mind of survivors in DUAs impedes uptake of DUA vocational training.
- Q DUA vocational training is not market oriented, lacks funds and often machinery.

Recommended Actions

1. Establish strong referral links with private and public sector vocational training institutes and referrals for job placement opportunities for those exiting services.
2. Revise DUA vocational training on the basis of quick market surveys to identify skills/items for which there is a demand and design tailor-made short term programmes for DuA residents in collaboration with Sanatzars and district Technical and Vocational Training Authorities (TEVTA):



- a. Increase budgets for purchasing vocational training materials and encourage the Advisory Committee to assist in this.
3. Develop a directory of welfare and microcredit schemes and circulate to all DUAs, HRCs and the VAWC, including but not limited to Akhuwat, Kashf, NRSP, Sohon Bank, Khushali Bank etc. The directory should:
 - a. Specify eligibility criteria, categories of loans and their purpose, mark-ups and repayments with functioning contact numbers.
4. Explore options for longer-term residency to enable women to acquire marketable skills:
 - a. Assess Darul Falahs as possible 'midway' homes and upgrade as necessary.
 - b. Improve referral systems and increase post-service links with other institutions e.g. Working Women's Hostels.

Dar ul Amans

Issues

- ♀ DuAs are not an option for women survivors who work, study, or have children above 1st-2nd grade.
- ♀ Best practice Guidelines developed in 2014 are not always followed and need updating.
- ♀ In contradiction to the Guidelines, all residents are made court dependent which increases the risk of violence when women visit the courts and/or get their release orders – “azadi papers”.
- ♀ Residents are constrained by insufficient facilities such as having to obtain medicines or personal goods from external shops with added expenses of those fetching the items and over-night delays for medicines.
- ♀ Staff lacks opportunities for sharing/learning across different circumstances of DuAs.

Recommended Actions

1. Ensure DUA admission procedures are according to the notified guidelines and uniform across all shelter homes.
2. Update Guidelines to streamline all new changes in existing rules to eliminate confusion and address overlaps. Standard setting should be in line with key staff positions and guidelines should list staff needed for implementation.
3. Adopt measures to avoid making all DUA survivors court-dependent. For this:
 - a. Engage with the judiciary to promote understanding of and greater adherence to the DUA Guidelines.
 - b. Review the policy of police-escorts when attending court hearings or for medical treatment & avoid taking survivors to court in police vans with criminals.
4. Increase budget allocations for food for residents including special dietary allocation for children as well as pregnant and lactating residents.
5. Provide books/other reading materials and open spaces for exercise.
6. Introduce a basic medical and utility store/canteen on the premises.
7. Ensure after-hour access to medical care in case of emergencies through coordination with the District Department of Health and ensure the presence of warden/assistant warden on the premises at all times to ensure timely response.
8. Pilot exchanges of DUA staff from one district providing sessions in other districts.



Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Human Rights Centres (Crisis Centres)

Issues

- Q HRCs provide vital services to women survivors who cannot use DUAs because they are working or studying, or have children needing education beyond the first few grades. They provide guidance for financial solvency as well as some matters unrelated to VAW.
- Q HRCs are not as well integrated into the SWD system as DUAs:
 - a. They still operate on decades-old guidelines formulated when they operated as federally-run Crisis Centres.
 - b. Some operate in difficult conditions without adequate infrastructure - and sometimes security arrangements.
 - c. They have no mandate or resources to follow up high risk survivors asking for help.
 - d. All staff continues to be on contract.



Recommended Actions

1. Ensure adequate budget allocations for repair and upgradation of infrastructure of HRC offices as well as office equipment (e.g. computers, printers official telephone lines) and operational expenditures.

Provide a clear legal framework so that budgetary allocation and disbursement is secure.
3. Review, revise and notify SOPs.

The VAWC Multan



Issues

- Q The VAWC - located in the purpose built Social Protection Centre in Multan at a considerable distance from the city where the Multan DuA and HRC have also been relocated - is difficult to access.
 - Q The 1-stop centre aspect is impeded by a lack of clear protocols and coordination mechanisms with the health department, police and judiciary.
 - Q New VAWCs are in the pipeline for which a number of issues in the Multan centre should be resolved.
- 2. Establish intermediary referral facilities in easily accessible city locations where services are situated outside cities (e.g. Multan Social Welfare Complex):
 - a. Create more bus routes/stops near the VAWC in Multan and any future VAWC services located outside the city.
 - 3. Undertake a systematic and detailed review of VAWC's six years of operation to extract key lessons prior to expanding application to other districts, including conducting districts specific needs and feasibility and surveys on the most easily accessible areas for women and girls, with consideration of safety and accessibility of transport.

Recommended Actions

- 1. Formalise appropriate mechanisms for effective coordination with other services responding to survivors, especially the judiciary, police and department of health, as specifically stipulated in the Multan VAWC. For this:
 - a. 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.
- 4. Ensure Rules are notified under the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act 2016 and Protection of women Authority 2017 that clearly elaborate the operative framework of the protection system envisaged in PPWVA, and manner of provision of services from different departments like health, police and prosecution, and provide a mechanism of coordination between them.

General recommendations

1. Identify possible gaps in services by conducting a survey on survivors' experiences.
2. Help to develop and promote through all means possible a robust state narrative that:
 - a. Condemns all forms of violence against women and girls as a societal problem.
 - b. Promotes knowledge regarding women's rights in marriage, such as legal age and consent to marriage.
 - c. Removes the stigma of divorce and women's remunerative work.
 - d. Encourages reporting violence, including by placing the onus on the survivors' families and community.
3. Create district-specific referral pathways and networks. For this, map existing private as well as public sector initiatives services.
4. Take steps to ensure that all Helplines in Punjab are integrated under a single easily remembered number that is toll-free and internet enabled, and have Operators knowledgeable about the SWD and other services and have a basic understanding of the law.

Update November-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 were notified. 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) or Crisis Centres, as protection centres under this law, and where these do not exist the Darul Amans have been declared to be protection centres.¹¹
- 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.¹²
- 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.

¹¹Sub-sections 6 and 7 added to section 13 of the law.

¹²This 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.

Issues:

The extension of the PPWVA Act 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 (WDPO) raises the question of whether HRCs will be able to continue to function when the Managers assume the duties of WDPO 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 WDPOs 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.¹³ 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.

¹³See 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.

- ♀ 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 Brief, 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.

Please see Policy Brief on VAWC for further recommendations.

This policy brief reviews the Government of Punjab's three social sector service models facilitating women survivors of violence: Dar ul Amans (government shelter homes for women), Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Human Rights Centres (formerly and still commonly referred to as the Crisis Centres), and the multi-service Violence Against Women Centre in Multan. The Brief identifies the advantages of each model and cross-sectoral as well as model-specific issues. Based on empirical research carried in with multiple stakeholders and a textual analysis of the law and operational procedures in two studies in collaboration with the Punjab Social Welfare Department with support from UNFPA and FCDO, it suggests how to strengthen the functioning of these services. It also highlights potential issues following the proposed merger of all services through the extension of the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act, 2016 to all districts in November 2022.

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