

Women Groups Become More Active In Pakistan

Ever since Ms. Benazir Bhutto took over the reigns of Pakistan, women's groups have become more active in an atmosphere they find more congenial.

There are about ten main women's organizations in Pakistan working for women's upliftment and creating general awareness among them for their rights in Pakistan. The oldest among them is the All-Pakistan's Women Association (APWA), established in 1950. Some others are: Women's Action Forum (WAF), «Aurat», International Women's Club, Business and Profession Forum and Women's Voluntary Forum.

Ms. Zahida Ahsanuddin, Chairperson, APWA, member of International Women's Club and interior decorator, said they had been organizing seminars and demonstrations against the «Shariat» and other political issues adversely affecting women. Many victimized women are given free legal aid.

Ms. Jamila Bandial, president OAKS, Islamabad, and member WAF, said her group was actively involved in providing employment to destitute women. Their voluntary vans went around the villages near Lahore with a doctor and a nurse who dispensed free medicine to sick malnourished women as well as health guidance.

Ms. Yasmin Tahir, broadcaster, said that in addition to making women aware about their rights, they were trying to educate women to be economically independent. First woman pilot, Ms. Hijab Imtiazali, feels all these years women's role has been limited to a few areas. «It was high time they were encouraged to be themselves», she added.

Ms. Safia Saeed, social worker, said all women's groups were trying to help uneducated women set up small businesses. With Benazir Bhutto in power, women were feeling a sense of dignity and pride, she said.

Source: Report of the Alumni meeting of Kinnaird College, Lahore, February 8, 1990. The visit was an extension of the diamond jubilee celebrations of the college in Lahore. The reunion included 40 Pakistani women, all former Alumni members, who were given a warm welcome by their Indian counterparts. All the relevant information is taken from the newsletter of *The Asian Women's Institute*.