**Domestic violence**

Domestic violence against women in developing countries is budding as a serious concern for public health workers. World Health Organization (WHO) defines domestic violence as "the range of sexually, psychologically and physically coercive acts used against young and adolescent women by current or former male intimate partners." There are many forms of domestic violence against women ranging from psychological abuse in the form of controlling behavior; economic abuse or pressures and social isolation; physical abuse in the form of torturing, beating or slapping, and sexual abuse in the form of forced sexual intercourse.

Domestic violence is prevalent in Pakistan at an alarming rate, in both rural areas as well as developed cities. Women are the sufferers and are subjected to physical, psychological and sexual abuse in their home by partners, in-laws and in some circumstances by their brothers and parents. In a study published in Lancet in 2002, an estimated 99% of housewives and 77% of working women in Pakistan are beaten by their husbands. HRCP’s Annual Report of 2004 presented the percentage of domestic violence in Pakistan as 65% (physical violence), and almost one third (30.4%) of sexual violence often leading to serious injuries, which required emergency medical attention. In 2005, the Domestic Violence in South Asia Fact Sheet brought forward that in Pakistan 32.8% respondents admitted to ever having slapped their wives and 77.1% admitted to ever engaging in a non-consensual sex with their wives. While domestic violence is prevalent across the country, the situation in Punjab is dire. The Aurat Foundation in its Annual Report of 2009 highlighted that of the 608 cases of domestic violence reported in the year, 271 occurred in Punjab, 134 in Sindh, 163 in the NWFP, 22 in Baluchistan and 18 in Islamabad.

There are many common precipitating factors which are responsible for domestic violence in Pakistan. Some example are: domestic violence against women due to daily conflicts, family related problems, disagreements between women and men on any decision, choice preferences, conflicts of the two genders, etc. Besides this there are some distinguished factors which make women prone to domestic violence like women’s low educational levels, imbalanced empowerment issues between males and females, least participations in political activities due to low empowerment, existing misconception about Islamic thoughts and traditional norms, lack of awareness about women rights, falsified beliefs, misuse of women in the name of honor justifying honor killing, low socioeconomic levels and poverty, existence of unjust traditional dowry system in the society, the common beliefs in the inherent superiority of males ignoring the women's autonomy, male dominant social structure and lack of support from the government.

It is apparent that integrated supportive services, legal intervention and redress need to be made available in situations of domestic violence. Support and help for women to rebuild and recover their lives after violence, need to be a part of the intervention strategy, including counseling, relocation, credit support and employment. In order to prevent women from domestic violence and provide them medical as well as judicial and legal support, new plans and interventional maps need to be made in the societies in collaboration with health team members, religious and societal leaders, NGOs, police department and people from other similar groups.