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Dowry: The most frequently forgotten form of gender violence in Pakistan

By

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Pakistan, Gender based Violence:

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan is riddled by contrasts in almost every sector. It is characterized by a selective male friendly interpretation of the dominant religion Islam and elitist friendly application of laws. Being a part of the patriarchal belt of South Asia, the culture, family and society is patriarchal. Although recent entry of "elected" women representatives in the parliament and local bodies are being used as an instrument to make believe that women are empowered in Pakistan, the fact is that empowerment (social, economic, political and legal) for most of the Pakistani women and disadvantaged communities in Pakistan is yet a distant dream.

However, a number of efforts are underway to promote participation of women in all areas of development. There is also a growing attention by the current government to gender issues including violence that experienced political marginalization in previous democratic as well as military regimes. The visible outcome of such efforts which to date are limited to candid media, generous discourse and ceremonial gestures has yet to come. The country, today, like most other countries round the globe is facing the phenomenon of gender based violence.

In the recent years, whenever and wherever, one speaks of gender violence and Pakistan or Pakistani communities outside Pakistan; one cannot recall any other form of violence but Honor Killing or the plight of Mukhtaran Mai. Media, especially western media have created hype on these. The net result of these associations is the convenient forgetfulness, by the Governments, Media, NGOs and other stake holders of the commonest form of gender violence in Pakistani; that is Dowry violence.

Dowry violence is a culturally accepted; media generated and legally sanctioned form of violence, yet to be recognized as the most pertinent Pakistani gender issue by development activists in Pakistan.

Pakistan: Marriage, Dowry and Violence:

Contradictory to the obvious forms of gender based violence like rape, gang rape, custodial rape, acid throwing, karo Kari ("honor killing"), trafficking, forced prostitution, child sexual abuse etc. ; **Dowry** as a form of violence has yet to be accepted and understood by the social activists, researchers and policy makers in Pakistan. The reasons behind this collective forgetfulness include more focused attention by mainstream NGOs and media towards donor funded campaigns and programs for eliminating barefaced forms of violence, conventional and conformist mindset of the public sectors, vested interests of the corporate sectors and inability of the donor agencies to understand the inclusive premise of marriage and dowry in Pakistan.

Owing to the amalgamated uphill struggle of many NGOs, women rights activists and other non state actors the awareness level across-the-board on discriminatory laws like Huddod & Zina ordinance, Qanoone Shahadat and Qisas and Dait is quite promising. However, there is no awareness not only among masses but among the classes of those who can make a difference when it comes to the issue of absence of any law on Dowry.

Pakistan has a Restriction Act 1976 with reference to Bridal gifts and Dowry which says that neither the aggregate value nor presents given to the bride by her parents nor the aggregate value of the bridal gifts or of presents to the bridegroom shall exceed five thousand rupees. This effort through law to place limits on dowry just like repeated bans imposed on wedding meals

has little rather no effect on practice. This is not only because implementation of any law has always remained a challenge but also because the existing Act has a number of loopholes and reflects absence of rationality.

Marriage is still seen as an intact and inevitable institution in Pakistani society which is experiencing globalization and experimenting with new ideas and practices. The institution is epitomized by a number of rituals both old and new (courtesy Star plus soaps) which can be safely bracketed under the dowry system.

There is no concept of dowry in Islam which is unwavering about Dower (mehr) .Mehr is a condition of marriage contract, which is incumbent on the husband to give to his wife. However, many a times women belonging to different classes of subordination are denied of this mehr and in the absence of any restrictions on a man's right to divorce also stand the risk of being divorced on the mere demand of dower. At the same time while maintenance during marriage is considered an obligation of the husband under Islamic law, the law in Pakistan, unlike several Muslim countries, does not specify the criteria upon which maintenance is to be granted.

Pakistani Muslims have embraced the dowry system as a tradition and cultural practice due to the **Indianization of Islam** in the subcontinent. While working with Christian Youth in the slums of Islamabad I was exposed to the fact that the curse of dowry has plagued this community and class as well and interestingly they owe this influence to their Muslim friends and neighbours. Despite 59 years of independence there is no sign and signal of discarding this system which over the years has graduated from a custom to an institution.

Women (leaving aside the few genuine exceptional and the ceremonial engineered statues of empowered women) in spite of many progressive policies, international treaties and conventions, and fervent activism; for all practical purposes, are still cultural minors and social handicaps. Pakistani women till to date like their South Asian counterparts face discriminatory; laws and practices as victims, as witnesses, and as accused persons.

Son preference even today not only persists but has become a commodity (see the boards of all high profile clinics in big cities betting for gender selection of the unborn) which can be afforded by the rich. Female feticide is an emerging trend and "skillfully immaculate" form of violence against women and girls. In this situation patriarchy flourishes further and the status of girls becomes even more curtailed. The question of marriage becomes the most important problem once the girls enter their teenage. The whole family experiences psychological trauma due to society bred customs and norms regarding marriage.

Dowry is no longer a set of gift items meant for contributing towards a convenient start of the practical life of a newly married couple. Lavish and loud marriages, designers' items studded bride, bridegroom and other family members, many course meals etc. all stand for the dowry system .In a country where a vast majority of population lives below poverty line and is devoid of basic human needs like water, sanitation, electricity. health and education the growing trend of such Exhibiting Marriages is adding to the miseries of the not so privileged and creation of the lesser God.

Dowry System causes a number of psychological and emotional traumas and ethical challenges by causing delayed marriages, marriage with inept person/elderly person, threats, taunts and torture of greedy in-laws and husband, and financial crises. In some parts of Pakistan, girls are wed with **Quraan** so that family wealth and property can be safeguarded. It is almost imperative for Pakistani women as sisters to give up their inheritance rights in favor of their brothers. Dowry and expenses on marriage are frequently used explanations for the denial of right of inheritance to women.

There are certain tribes and clans in the province of NWFP and Baluchistan where boys have to pay for the bride. If they cannot pay the right **Bridal Price** they cannot get married. This practice itself qualifies as a separate research entity. On the other hand the Bride who is **sold** is treated as a property and is entitled to be sold further. I wonder if Islamic Ideology Council and Clergy in Pakistan have ever spared their precious time in doing something effective in this connection.

An interesting and innovative response to the question of limiting marriage expenses that has come from some welfare oriented Pakistani NGOs and welfare wings of certain Religious groups and public departments in the recent years is the phenomenon of **Mass Weddings**. While I have no doubts in the good faith of the planners and implementers of such weddings I cannot endorse this kind of way out. This solution besides carrying transparency issues (for instance how the eligible couples are selected, what is the actual expense etc.) and compromises on the individual self esteem is in fact endorsing the custom and institution of dowry.

Fight Against Dowry (FAD)-a case study from SACHET-Pakistan

Taking notice of the discernible absence of the issue of dowry and related violence in the development agenda; in 2001 a non-governmental organization Society for the Advancement of Community, Health, Education and Training, (**SACHET**) took a pioneering step by initiating a five year advocacy project under the title **Fight Against Dowry (FAD)** on 26th November 2001.

SACHET is a registered non-profit, voluntary NGO based in Islamabad, Pakistan. SACHET undertakes gender-sensitive, youth-focused, community-based welfare oriented and development driven not-for-profit initiatives in the thematic areas of Health, Education, Poverty Alleviation, Training and Gender.

SACHET's core objectives are as to:

- ✓ Promote gender awareness and sensitivity
- ✓ Narrow gender gaps in health, education and economic participation
- ✓ Promote economic empowerment of the underprivileged
- ✓ Promote awareness and sensitivity about Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) rights, information, education and services
- ✓ Promote gender sensitive media advocacy on development issues especially HIV/AIDS, youth and gender based violence including dowry violence.

SACHET has been providing primary and reproductive health care services, facilitates educational activities, engages skilled but disadvantaged men and women in poverty alleviation efforts and invests in human resource development through a set of coordinated strategies and activities.

Background of FAD

SACHET developed a TV Magazine show entitled "Gender Watch" that was aired through all three channels of the national TV network in 1999-2000. It was a pioneer on Behavior Change Communication. Gender Watch was seen as breaking the silence on many gender issues. The program was highly appreciated by the viewers and they suggested through their mails a wide range of social issues that needed to be highlighted. Among those issues the custom and institution of Dowry and Dowry violence was on priority. It served as a momentum to initiate a different but relevant approach towards Dowry, a gender based violence issue through an Advocacy Project.

SACHET implemented FAD across Pakistan with the following vision, aim and objectives:

The vision of FAD was to strive for a society that disregards the custom and institution of dowry. FAD was aimed to challenge the existing factors that encourage the system of dowry with culturally appropriate and religiously correct communication, to bring a change in the mind sets, legislation, policy and practices.

Aim

To stimulate a thinking process by sensitization and awareness against the institution and practice of dowry & dowry violence in Pakistan.

Objectives

- To identify perceptions, attitudes, practices in connection with dowry in Pakistani Society.
- To inform all stakeholders, primarily youth and students about the social, economic, psychological and health hazards of dowry and dowry violence.
- To engage mass media in promotion and dissemination of awareness against repercussions of dowry
- To lobby for various reforms with the various levels of government.
- To organize and mobilize students and parents against dowry.

The Project: An Analysis:

FAD worked with media, youth and all interested groups to highlight cost and consequences of the custom and institution of dowry. FAD took some practical steps for the cause by breaking culture of silence, promoting positive dialogue and organizing activities to involve youth in the process of advocating the message. FAD while addressing youth as the main audience also keeps in focus other interest groups such as Parents, policy-makers & in particular media.

The key strategies to achieve these objectives included Media Advocacy, youth involvement, working with legislators, religious leaders, opinion makers and research.

The key activities to materialize these strategies included:

- Communication to advocate the cause and disseminate relevant information through a series of TV programs, Radio programs, theatre and working with print media.
- Lobbying with the parliamentarians to raise the issue on the floor
- Youth Involvement by incorporating FAD as a component in other youth-focused projects of SACHET and alliance with popular cafes for mounting posters and signatures campaigns in the capital city to command the attention of Urban, middle class and elite youth .
- Survey among University students and secondary data analysis of mainstream Newspapers.
- Working with Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan and Parliamentarians on a draft law against dowry.
- Involving communities on the issues of dowry violence by working with CBOs across Pakistan

○ **Challenge, Communicate, Change**

Following the vision of FAD, the following two far-reaching and innovative activities were undertaken. It would be reasonable to underscore that had FAD been a typical donor-funded project, the following two activities would have been perceived as two individual and costly projects. FAD managed these two activities following the principles of social enterprising with cost-minimalist approach; a phenomenon yet to be discovered and deciphered by an overwhelming majority of Pakistani NGOs who have sadly started surviving as consultancy firms in the disguise of voluntary agencies.

- **Advocacy through TV:**

AGEHI (Advocates of Gender, Education and Health Information) Resource Centre of SACHET produced a 15-minute 13-episode series FAD-jahez k khilaf jang.

Airing schedule:

channel	Time of transmission	date
PTV	khawateen time(late morning)	January-April 2003
PTV (re telecast)	Roshan Pakistan(morning show)	April-June 2003
PTV (re telecast)	Night Transmission	PTV (re telecast)
ARY Digital	Evening Transmission	May-June 2003

The series was based on entertainment to educate approach and included poetry, songs, docu drama as well. Each program dealt with a specific food for thought on a particular dimension of the complex issue of dowry like patriarchy, loop holes in the law, role of boys and girls in perpetuating dowry systems etc. Further, true stories of dowry victims and survivors were also included in seven episodes. The program voiced opinions and concerns of people not only from Pakistan but also from Bangladesh, Nepal, India and Srilanka.

FAD was divided into three main segments: Youth Views, FAD tip and Civic Will.

The segment Youth Views showed views of rural and urban Pakistani youth regarding their perceptions, attitude and knowledge about marriage expenses, customs, traditions, dowry system, dowry violence and their potential to change the negative practices which have become norms.

The FAD Tip utilized the services of a well known woman TV artiste to disseminate information regarding Nikkah naama, rights of women and cost of dowry violence.

Civic will brought together academicians, intellectuals and activists to express their views on the issues of dowry.

Extracts from the segment Civic Will-FAD

"I think that whole dowry business is a terrible curse. The poor and the middle class put themselves into problems like to borrow money and then they are impounded for the rest of their life to pay for the marriage especially for their daughters. This reduces also the status and the value of the girl in the family; parents don't want to have girls because this is an added burden.

Country cannot progress unless girls and women in a society have equal rights to boys and men. Country needs all of its population to participate equally without discrimination"

Dr.Nafis Sadiq

Special advisor to the Secretary General, UN

"If it is not possible for parents to fulfill the demand of dowry, then they have to suffer a lot. We should not only condemn this custom but our National and Provincial assemblies should pass laws against it. It is completely against our democratic principles and religious beliefs."

Prof.Dr.Mehrab Karim

Aga Khan University,
Karachi, Pakistan

- **Struggle for a law against Dowry:**

In 2003, FAD organized a two day national consultation in collaboration with the Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan to amend the existing Act of 1976 and propose rational and gender sensitive amendments in the Act by working with all the stake holders. The workshop that was attended by a good number of NGOs, activists, academicians, lawyers, Chief Justices and public servants concluded with the consensus that; Dowry and Bridal gifts are two separate issues and must be dealt separately and the issue required fresh legislation as dowry as a means of discrimination and exploitation should not be acceptable in an enlightened society. Since social issues are yet to be prioritized as national issues the draft did not reach the corridors of power.

Some recently published news items that a report has been presented to the Senate is apparently a ray of hope but what is disturbing is the news of sanctioning dowry of rupees fifty thousand. One wonder if this is a solution or opening of a new Pandora's Box.

FAD remained a staunch advocate of a realistic law against dowry in Pakistan just like India has in the form of **The Dowry prohibition Act 1961**. (This law can be used to prosecute the perpetrators when a woman is subjected to varying degrees of cruelty-even burnt to death e.g. the "accidental stove death"- for failing to bring an adequate dowry on marriage); without arguing that a law would or could change the centuries old practice, traditional mindsets, gamut of greed, culture of pretensions or show offs overnight. A good law would illustrate the sensitivity of the state institutions and the propensity of the state to deal with gender specific violence. The Indian experience has revealed that presence of a strong law increases the reported cases of dowry violence, investigation and prosecution. On the other hand, absence of a law results not only in strengthening the social ignorance and patriarchal consensus but regrettably influence the judicial pronouncements which often echo biases in social attitudes. A legislative intervention will also provide a window of opportunity to those who want to stand up for their rights.

o **FAD and Sustainability:**

FAD started concentrating on technical, social and institutional sustainability of the project turned social movement in 2002. The financial sustainability was deliberately ignored in terms of winning project funding from donors on their terms because FAD was never meant to act like a donor driven and dependent initiative. However, financial and material resources though limited were secured through the sales of general-purpose handbags launched by the Resource center of SACHET with messages against dowry on February 12, 2002 in connection with National women's day. The center has also produced handbags with slogans against dowry & violence for development workers & students. The sale of VCDs/DVDs of FAD TV series is also supporting the process.

FAD ensured social and institutional sustainability of this project which remained alive through voluntary contributions only by initiating FADAN in 2003.

FADAN (Fight against Dowry Advocacy Network):

"When a gift becomes demand it is a form of violence."

Based on this philosophy FADAN a national network against dowry violence was formed in 2003. One of the major achievements of the project is the formation of this national level advocacy network to strengthen partnership with the stakeholders. It aims to create and sustain a social movement against 'dowry by demand'. FADAN membership takes into its fold both individuals and organizations, with the essential prerequisite criteria of determination, commitment and devotion of the members to the network's goals and objectives. FADAN is a national network of change makers who are working against dowry violence. Till the end of June 2006, the network had lead change makers in all four provinces of Pakistan and Pakistani administered Kashmir and nearly 200 volunteers as change makers who belong to civil society.

Silver ribbon:

The initiative of "Silver Ribbon campaign" which was launched by FAD (Fight Against Dowry) on 27th November 2004 to portray the element of simplicity, austerity and courage against ills of dowry on demand. Silver ribbon was decided to be the logo for FADAN at the occasion of Second National FAD workshop in July 2006.

Results generated by FAD:

It is very difficult to present the results of an innovative project like FAD. However, the following table reflects some trends through numerical information.

S#	Indicator	Quantity/number
	interactive dialogue with students & parents	100

	signature campaign with youth and parents to denounce the practice of dowry	10,000
	using internet for communication/ awareness information	Frequent use. In MAY 2006, an e-group was initiated.
	awareness and sensitization raising events with intelligentsia and development activists	5 FAD Evenings were organized with eminent writers, scholars and promising activists
	Production of TV programs	A 13-episode advocacy series was aired on PTV & ARY during 2002-2003 A one-minute message spot was aired many times on PTV in 2001-2002

This table does not include the number of talk shows/discussions aired on TV and Radio through the efforts of allies and associates of FAD, the write ups that appeared in different magazines/newspapers and seminars/workshops organized by different universities.

A chronology of main activities and short term achievements may substantiate the innovative aspects of FAD and show how passion can overcome material barriers.

Chronology of FAD-Fight Against Dowry

2001

October

Research survey Oct –2001, to assess the perceptions of youth

Launched on 26th November 2001

November

Group discussion on dowry with target audience being youth

Signature campaign started on 26th November 2001,

December

FAD started its Interactive Advocacy sessions with community stakeholders

2002

January

Presentation of a research paper in an International Conference on Dowry: Realities & Strategies for intervention 30-31st Jan 2002, Dhaka Bangladesh

March

Seminar on Gender Based Violence & Dowry at Lahore 14th March, 2002

Generating awareness by involving mass media through our Public service message –Video Spot aired on PTV

Launching of Advocacy Bags of Dowry March 2002 in Khawateen Mela: PTV Lahore

May

First Open Forum on PTV, Highlighting the issue of Dowry, may 2002 in Khawateen Times.

June

discussion forum on dowry in Morning Transmission of PTV, in Islamabad in by the media campaign leader.

Exhibition of Advocacy Bags carrying FAD slogan Fight Against Dowry

July –August

July 31st to August 21st FAD interacted with institutions from all over Pakistan for generating a thought provoking process for positive response and encouragement of youth to be an active participant of this campaign against Dowry.

Sept –October

FAD announced a National Poster Competition inviting youth of Pakistan to give artistic depiction of the dowry problem in Pakistan.

On 29th October eminent journalists, youth and professionals were invited as judges selected best six entries.

October-November

Two FAD evenings

On 15th October 2002 FAD invited creative minds and challenge seekers to FAD evening. The impressions about dowry were launched in the form of poetry and prose.

On 19th November 2002 students, professionals and NGO's Personal took part in the evening dedicated to FAD with their thought provoking expressions.

December

A research Paper was presented in Annual Conference of Population association of Pakistan (PAP) by the author: "A micro study on the coverage of dowry related issues in the selected newspapers of Pakistan: Dowry and silence of the civic Society as reflected by the newspaper media" 19th December 2002

2003

January

On the basis of best entries of poster Competition FAD Launched Calendar/Poster on 7th January 2003.

As a strategy FAD used mass media for generating maximum consensus on the subject and produced a TV Magazine Show FAD-Fight Against Dowry. The first episode of which was aired on 9th January 2003 in Khawateen Time at 10:30.

February

FAD organized a press show on 6th February 2002, so as to make media people aware of the theme and format of FAD, a TV venture and what aims and objectives it carries.

FAD arranged a lecture on the book of Advocate Syed M. Anwer titled "Islam mein Aurat Ki Gavahi Adhi Nahein", to reiterate its commitment towards the legal empowerment and an end to all discriminatory laws against women at FAD evening.

March

FAD conducted screening of its TV magazine show, which was utilized by research students, civil society professionals and housewives.

April

At the end of Last year FAD started its research on Dowry law, after various consultative process and research FAD conducted a workshop with Legislators on 3rd April 2003, in which plan of action and suggestive amendments were proposed in the Dowry and Bridal Gift (Restriction) Act, 1976.

FAD advocacy network was launched on 3rd April.

FAD gave amendments to Law and Justice Commission in connection with the introduction of the draft law for the prohibition of unnecessary expenditure on marriage ceremonies and dowry for general comments and review of the public by the said commission.

On 22nd April FAD TV series started its rerun on PTV` s morning transmission every Tuesday at 8:45 am and every Thursday at 12:45 pm.

May

Press show at the conclusion of first airing of FAD TV series.

ARY digital TV channel started airing FAD TV series.

June

Work on a bi lingual book FAD started.

July

FAD and Law and Justice Commission jointly organized a two-day national consultative workshop on "Prohibiting Excessive Expenditure on Marriage ceremonies and Dowry".

PTV and Geo TV hold live talk shows to highlight the issue of dowry.

August

A special session on FAD was held on the day 2 of first International Youth Conference by SACHET.

Creative Anger, Pakistan and Context Theatre UK presented a play on the issues of dowry at the concluding ceremony of the conference.

The first formal meeting of FADAN was held at the conference.

November

FAD evening with renowned scholars was held. The theme was "Concept of masculinity in Islam".

December

FAD evening with renowned woman writers and activists was held.

SACHET planner 2005 WITH THE SLOGAN Fight Against Dowry was launched.

2004

January

A seminar was organized in Jacobabad,Sind by FAD volunteers.

February

A theatre was performed on the occasion of National Women's day.

March

"Say no to dowry" advocacy badges were launched on the occasion of international women's day.

A series of activities took place including display of IEC material on dowry and screening of FAD TV series at different for a.

May

FAD book was published.

November

FADAN-1st National workshop in November was held.

FAD khaddar bags were produced.

May-December

Signature campaigns-activism and interactive sessions continued.

December

Planner 2005 was distributed among development professionals, youth and NGOs.

2005

January-June

4 provincial seminars in multan, Hyderabad, Peshawer and Quetta were organized to sensitize people from different walks of life. Around 15, 00 people were sensitized.

Signature campaign continued and thousands of signatures were obtained on Posters displayed in different popular cafes of Islamabad.

February

A shadow theatre was shown on 12th Feb`05 to commemorate National women's day.

March

Planning for second FADAN workshop started.

April

VoA (Radio) did a live show on the issue on 5TH APRIL. The participants were Dr.Rakhshinda Perveen, Mustanser Hussain Tarar (Pakistan) and a US Based scholar and young representative.

July- September

Statistics from selected national News papers were collected and compiled by AGEHI Resource Centre.

Round the year

- o Sale of fad cds continued
- o Sales of fad book continued
- o Signature campaign-activism and interactive sessions continued.

Due to devastating earthquake that hit Pakistan on 8th October 2005, the momentum of activities for FAD could not be maintained till March 2006.

2006

January

FAD Planner was launched and distributed.

February

Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. Islamabad, invited the author to deliver a talk on dowry violence

March

Power 99 broadcast a live interview on 13th March 2006(6-7 pm)

April

Awareness Material Development- 2 FAD posters (English and Urdu) were launched and distributed.

Interview of Dr.Rakhshinda Perveen in PTV's live morning show on the issues of dowry.

May

Activation of yahoo group

FAD Brochure was printed

June-August

Four provincial workshops were conducted by the author to sensitize media professionals on Gender based violence.

These were organized by the Ministry of women development. Dowry violence was also included and some episodes of FAD TV series were screened.

July

Second national FADAN workshop was organized.

August-December

Strategic planning for FADAN

FAD was acknowledged in an assessment report on "Dowry as a social menace" by "Vista POST" magazine on October 31st. Dr. Rakshinda Perveen described how dowry violence is accepted and being absorbed in the institution of marriage in our society.

December

FAD Planner 2007 was launched.

Round the year

- o Sale of fad cds continued

- o Sale of fad book continued
- o Signature campaign-activism and interactive sessions continued.

Impact of FAD:

One may question whether a five year voluntary project like FAD qualifies to be examined for any impact? Technical criteria may suggest the answer in a loud and clear No. In spite of being aware of the technically determined shortcomings of FAD, I would like to share with the readers that FAD may be viewed for social impact in Pakistan.

FAD has generated an ongoing discourse in mainstream print and electronic media on the issues of Dowry. It has revived the issue of "accidental stove deaths" in the development sector. A renowned NGO Family Planning Association of Pakistan has launched a project with the assistance of EU on the issue of burning of women. University students and young leaders in development are paying attention to dowry violence as evidenced by a number of mid term research papers and thesis produced on this issue in the last two years in Pakistan.

Population Council of Pakistan included the issues of dowry as a part of research questions in the first ever representative survey on adolescent reproductive Health in 2002.

In 2005, the Ministry of women development has produced posters saying that dowry should not be an excuse for the denial of right of inheritance to women. The adoption of this message which was reported in many FAD related documents is the breaking of silence on the issue by the concerned public department.

The country gender assessment report 2005 launched by World Bank in 2006 acknowledges the impact of FAD in Pakistani society.

The institutionalization of FAD in the form of FADAN (Fight against Dowry Advocacy Network) is itself an impact indicator.

FAD: Challenges not conclusion

Dowry system is a multi-faceted issue with different dimensions and degrees of complexities. The arguments are endless and different opinions and positions may be taken. Dowry demand is a form of violence - dowry violence is a public health issue and this is a preventable form of violence. One is and should not be against human happiness and individual choices and freedom. However, one must not choose such ways and means of happiness that reveals one's absolute scarcity of social consciousness. The **Demonstration Effect** disseminated by the dowry system has a very high social cost. Therefore, dowry system, no matter how much private affair it is, needs to be discussed publicly and demands a discrete resolution within the power structures of our society. It would be unethical if not criminal on the part of the civil society to keep on overlooking, shelving and justifying dowry violence in the name of religion and or a ritual.