It is now well known that behavioral and social sciences are relevant to health. In 2008 Behavioral and Social Sciences (BSS) Division was formally established in CHS. However, informally it has been an integral part of CHS thinking and practices that focused around its community based PHC prototype development, its first health systems research in Thatta district, and many subsequent community based projects. BSS takes its legitimacy from the Alma Ata Declaration of 1978, and the 2008 report of WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health.

Growth of CHS, over the years, has been impressive. Different Divisions and teams within CHS pursue themes that dovetail with BSS contents. A defining feature of BSS is to bring together the health and social themes. Thus, whether it is economics, political science, sociology and anthropology, ethnography or any other qualitative research, how it contributes to health and health outcomes is a BSS concern. For fostering synergies with CHS, it is important that thinking and work of BSS is shared with CHS faculty and students. It was thus decided to start a newsletter to inform the CHS community of the thinking and activities that encompass BSS. It would welcome and include in its folds any work that CHS faculty thinks intersects with BSS. It is meant for CHS faculty and students.

**Lecture on Ibn-e-Khaldun—BSS Launches its First Seminar Series**

BSS launches its first series of seminar known as *samajiaat*—understanding our societies—on May 24, 2012. The aim of this series is to discuss with invited speakers how understanding of society could contribute to our own concerns with the health of specific populations and the conditions in which they live. In this respect, the first seminar was conducted on Ibn Khaldun: The First Muslim Sociologist (1332-1406).

Facilitated by a faculty from the Department of Sociology, University of Karachi, Mr. Amjad Javed elaborated in detail some of the key concepts that are central to Khaldun’s intellectual legacy. According to Khaldun, “human social organization is something necessary” for people and which is based on their sense of mutual cooperation in a given society for fulfillment of their basic needs. Complexity of such cooperation gives birth to the cyclical process of formation of civilizations into Bedouin (suburbia) and Sedentary (city dwellers) cultures. He demonstrated that how different objective social conditions (Bedouin & Sedentary) shape the character of these two different natural social groups.

Ibn Khaldun also developed the theory of state formation in which social groups with strong group feeling or *asabiyyah* could dominate and establish rule over those with weak *asabiyyah*. (Sohail A Bawani)
**BSS & WGW organized discussion the World Bank Report, Gender Equality & Development 2012**

On July 4, 2012, in AKU, the World Bank Report, Gender Equality & Development was discussed. WGW (working group for women, AKU) & BSS (behavioral & social sciences division, CHS/AKU) were the organizers. Over thirty persons participated from a diverse institutions -- : PILER, Collective for Social Research, HANDS, Marie Stopes Society, HELP, ITREB-P Aahung, Raasta Development, and AKU. Kaiser Bengalee and Haris Gazdar were among the discussants. Each chapter was critically appraised. Three conclusions were drawn: the report brings together valuable data; it assumes the market to be the panacea of all material suffering; report is not relevant to Pakistan. One recommendation followed: write our own report.

WGW & BSS to take forward the recommendation. A group has been identified for the work.

*(kausar s khan)*

**People’s Health Movement (PHM) Sindh; People’s Health Assembly 3 Cape Town, South Africa**

Amandla! Ngawethu! (Power! To people!) was people’s outcry who were gathered at the Third People’s Health Assembly (PHA3) at the University of Western Cape in Cape Town, South Africa. PHA3 was reunion of around 800 health activists, professionals and researchers who voluntarily support the global People’s Health Movement (PHM) and who have been concerned about the growing health inequities which negatively impacts people’s health status and health systems around the world. Hence, the chant Amandla! is an expression of discontent against the unequal power distribution among selected few and the masses. The Assembly was entirely self-organized. It comprised plenaries, sub-plenaries and workshop conducted by the participants. One of the BSS-CHS faculties, representing PHM Sindh, Pakistan, has also participated and successfully conducted a workshop on the title Understanding Movement for Movement Building.

*(Sohail A. Bawani)*

**Dialogue with political parties**

Elections for the national and provincial assemblies are scheduled or 2013. All political parties are busy revising their manifestoes, and many civil society organizations are aspiring to influence the manifestoes. PMA, Sindh, gave a call to many civil society organizations to dialogue with representatives of the political parties for commitments to improve the health of the people of Sindh. A dialogue was organized (April 28, 2012). Brief presentations were made on women’s health, child health, and a CHS faculty made a succinct recommendation for strengthening the health systems of Sindh. Representatives of the major political parties presented their party position on health. A CHS faculty moderated the dialogue.

*(kausar s khan)*
Introduction to Pierre Bourdieu

Through BSS, effort has been made to integrate social thinkers to better understand our own realities and practices as health professionals & researchers. The aim is to improve our actions by generating knowledge about actions. Pierre Bourdieu is one such French social thinker who has extensively worked on understanding social practices: “how and why we do as we do” and has been assimilated into various avenues, within and outside AKU. The first successful attempt was made in the HP&M programme at CHS where students were able to analyze our existing health systems and inequities prevalent by applying his two key concepts i.e., Field and Habitus. Similarly, they were also introduced to the Bioethics Group for improving and making better sense of institutional practices at AKU in order to know ethical reasoning behind them. Besides, Bourdieu’s social analysis is also proving insightful for the WEMC writing group in understanding women’s social environment in which they live. His key ideas equally enriched participants’ discussions during the Movement Building Course for Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights BSS offered by realizing why and how cultures of struggles are formed and sustained.

(Sohail A. Bawani)

Course on Movement Building

Community mobilization, a public health aspiration, emanates from Article IV of the Alma Declaration -The people have the right and duty to participate individually and collectively in the planning and implementation of their health care. CHS has considerable experience in community mobilization, but the notion of ‘movement’ for health was first embodied in a short course developed in BSS. It was an outcome of a request to BSS to help a group of NGOs document their learning from their project: Movement Building for Sexual & Reproductive Health & Rights. To help position their understanding of ‘movement building’, a three days course was conducted (Lahore April 2-4, 2012). It was appreciated and reported in the regional learning forum (Vietnam) of this initiative.

(kausar s khan)

A Module on Qualitative Research

A three day module (from May 28-30, 2012) was developed to introduce qualitative research to the Masters in Health Research students in the Khyber Medical University, Peshawar. The hallmark of this module was its design. It included both the conceptual part as well as the required skills to link theory with practice. Moreover, reflexivity, as the key component in qualitative inquiry, was also introduced to bridge concepts and skills together. For the conceptual part, participants were familiarized with two major approaches to qualitative research in health i.e., critical ethnography and participatory action research. In addition, two specific skills i.e., listening and hands-on experience of observation was also introduced for conducting in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. This workshop was primarily based on recommended reading and a non-didactic approach to learning.

(Sohail A. Bawani)
WEMC Writing Group (WWG)

Do our researchers address the real world outside beyond our proposals and what we find at the end? Can we deepen our understanding of what is happening in the communities around and make our researchers valuable for the communities from where we gather data? Can our analysis be further sharpened in terms of how responsible we are as health researchers so that it could speak anew for the community? Can we generate and shape an alternative public discourse through our works which could benefit our communities where we conduct our researches? With these questions Women’s Empowerment in Muslim Context (WEMC) Writing Group was formed on January 17, 2012 and since then it never looked back. The group attempts to understand finding from WEMC data in an analytical manner than merely by describing what women have said and did. It creatively engages its members to debate and discuss data through collective data analysis. Through self-learning session, the members are also exposed to various social thinkers to deepen their analytical insights into the data. To date the group has produced and submitted two papers into two peer-reviewed journals.

(Sohail A. Bawani)

Proceedings of AKU Symposium 2011 on Social Determinants of Health

Social and economic determinants of health are the overarching research theme of AKU. AKU’s Symposium 2011 was on the same theme, and had Sir Michael Marmot, ex chair of WHO Commission of Social Determinants of Health, address the audience that overflowed from the AKU auditorium into other lecture halls of AKU. Very valuable presentations were made by a diverse group of speakers. Hence the organizing committee decided to publish the proceedings of the symposium. CHS was not represented in the organizing committee of the symposium, the four members Editorial Committee was chaired by a BSS/CHS faculty.

All material was edited by end of June for submission to JPMA. The proceedings to be published as a special supplement of JPMA.

(kausar s khan)

The Emerging Issues of Social Sciences in Pakistan — abstract submitted

Three of the faculty members submitted their abstract from BSS-CHS in a Conference called Emerging Issues of Social Sciences in Pakistan held at the Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad during April 27-29, 2012. One of the three faculty members, Asher Malik, was able to present a paper at the conference. The focus of these abstract was on the social and economic determinants of health. Following were titles submitted.

1. Social Sciences for Health – Challenges & Opportunities (Kausar S. Khan)
2. Economic Burden of Mental Health in Pakistan (M. Asher Malik & Murad M. Khan)
3. What’s going wrong? Can Social Thinkers help us Understand Health? (Sohail A. Bawani)

(Sohail A. Bawani)
A Seminar on Economics of health and Health care in Pakistan

A one day seminar was held at Aga Khan University, Karachi on 18th June 2012. Experts from diverse backgrounds such as academia, research and public sector presented their research in the field of health economics in Pakistan. The seminar was divided into three plenaries. The first emphasized on health policy and economics, second on key challenges to healthcare systems. Last plenary was on the future of health economics and outcome research and policy in Pakistan. The presenter emphasized that universal health coverage can resolve many issues pertaining to equity and efficiency of healthcare system in Pakistan. is recent case studies of South Korea, Mexico, Taiwan, Thailand and India provide rich experience on achieving UHC in low and middle income countries. Second session included presentations on Health and economic hazards of tobacco consumption. High cost and productivity losses on none communicable diseases are identified as the emerging threat to the health care system. The last session emphasized more research in the discipline of health economics and its use by the public policy makers in Pakistan. (Ashar Malik)

Debate: Attempted Suicide should be decriminalized

On 29 June 2012, the HPM Program organized a debate for year II MSc HPM students as part of their course titled “Public Health Law and Legal issues in Health care”. The motion under discussion was “Attempted Suicide should be decriminalized”. Two student teams engaged each other in a lively debate and discussion that lasted two hours. Based on arguments and evidence presented and countered by both teams, the house took a vote and the motion was carried by a large majority. The BSS Division had a notable role in making the event a success. Ms. Kausar S Khan from the BSS, acted as a student mentor during the preparatory phase and also served on the jury during the actual debate. (Xaher Gul)

How wide is our embrace? Ethics of medical coverage – A Bioethics Grand Round

The recent Bioethics Grand Round held at May 30, 2012 shed light on knowing underlying values an institutional practice may convey when it formalizes policy on the medical coverage for its members health. The Grand Round argued for institutional reflexivity and place for ethical reasoning that should be brought in whereby institutions get more sensitive and inclusive of the needs of their members and be protective of their social and cultural health.

The conclusion provided a critical sociological angle to the presentation whereby medical coverage policy shouldn’t be a system of inclusion and exclusion, or a system of boundary maintenance it sets out by saying what it uncovers and what its not. Organizations cannot live in isolation, totally delinked from the social life of its workers. (kausar s khan)
**Bioethics Teaching for the AKU Undergrads**

Bioethics is a longitudinal theme in the undergraduate medical education at AKU. In 2011, a new curriculum was developed by a small group from the larger Bioethics Group (BG) at AKU, and BSS/CHS was represented in this group. The first session, Understanding Bioethics, was scheduled in 2012, for Year 1, Class of 2016. Reflexivity, a skill that BSS has been championing, was included in the session. Students were required to fill a work sheet at the end of the session, and a reflexive note was also to be written in it. Analysis of students’ reflexive note is being done by BSS and feedback to students is planned in one of the bioethics sessions.

(kausar s khan)

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**BSS Vision—The Upstream Metaphor**

We know our downstream mess! Women die in pregnancy; there are unwanted pregnancies; high fertility rate; low CPR; poor access to EMOC; unmet FP needs; coercive sex; unsafe abortions; impact of abortion on mental health; women have no say in number of babies, birth spacing; ….. and we can add to this list of the mess we know.

What is happening upstream also has to change, if health outcomes are to improve.

BSS strives to draw attention to upstream conditions; & build capacity for upstream work.

**BSS Vision**

To be a strong base of social sciences for community/public health and have expertise in understanding practice, equity & the Socio-economic & cultural determinants of health outcomes of vulnerable groups, health systems, and health policies; and role of people in social change for health. It is not a vertical program, but a well integrated part of CHS & AKU.

**key concepts:** equity, socio-cultural determinants of health; poverty; gender; health outcomes; vulnerable groups; social change; practice; participation – specially of poor & marginalized; ethics & distributive justice [how re-

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**Upstream Metaphor**

“What the satisfaction of needs for medicine, food, education and housing, even if accomplished, is not enough for the health of any community or society. Values and ideals, and the identities to which they relate and give form, have always been important for humankind. They give direction and points of reference in the face of rapid change. Successful development requires community engagement and mobilization, but it also needs to occur in a cultural context which preserves individual local values and ideals.”

His Highness the Aga Khan, at the inauguration of the restored Baltit Fort, 29 September 1996 (September 2005 Bulletin)