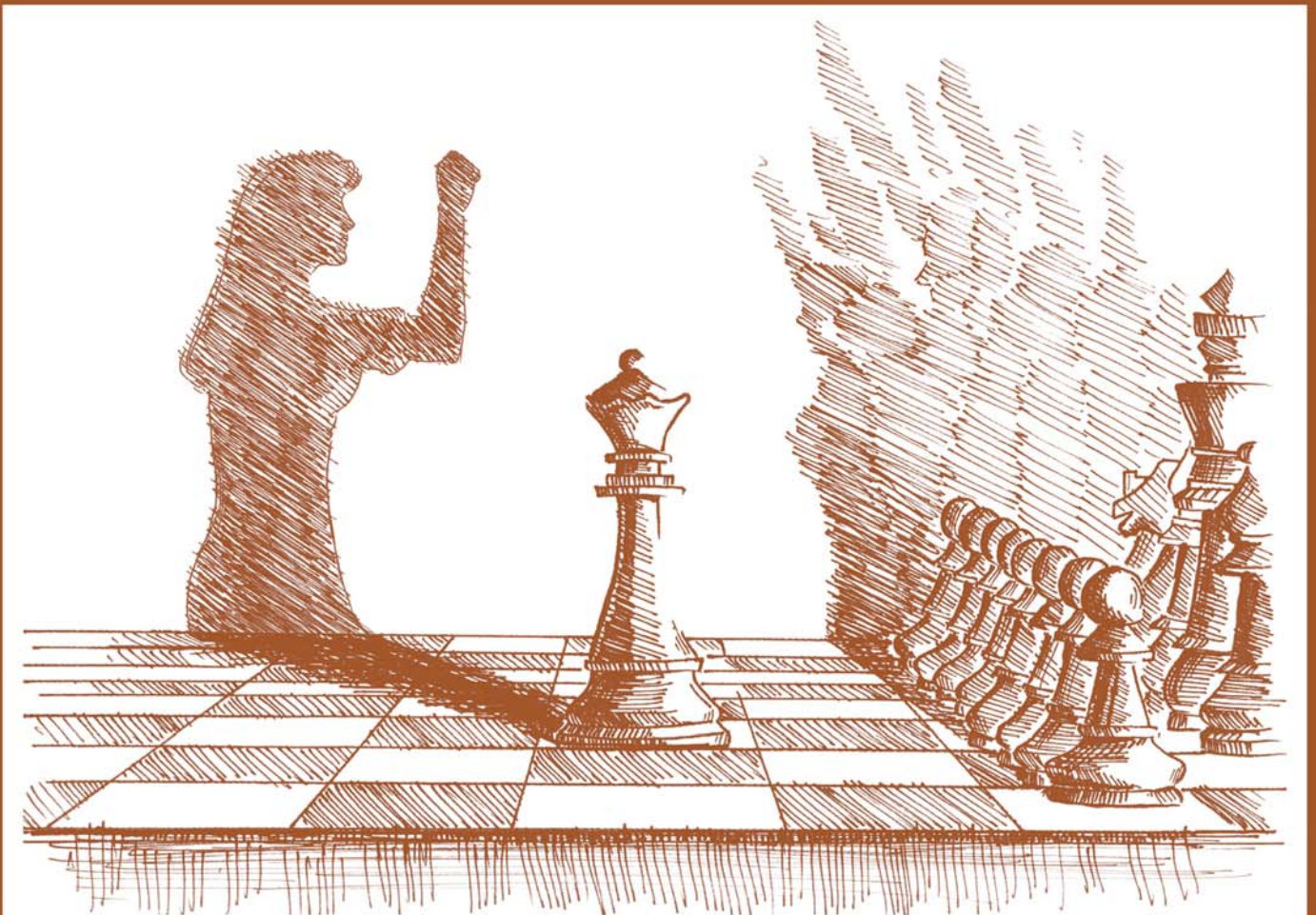


# WOMEN IN POLITICS:

Participation and Representation in Pakistan

*An Overview*



**Special Bulletin 2009**

# **WOMEN IN POLITICS:**

Participation and Representation in Pakistan

## *An Overview*

Compiled by Shahina Hanif



شَرکَت گاہ

**Shirkat Gah**

WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTRE

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**Compiled by** Shahina Hanif  
**Designed by** Muhammad Asim  
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**Published by** Shirkat Gah - Women's Resource Centre,  
P.O. Box. 5192, Lahore - Pakistan

**E-mail:**

**Lahore:** pubs@sgah.org.pk, sgah@sgah.org.pk

**Karachi:** shirkat@cyber.net.pk

**Peshawar:** sgpesh@gmail.com

[www.shirkatgah.org](http://www.shirkatgah.org)

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PAKISTAN

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## INTRODUCTION

This Special Bulletin, *Women in Politics: Participation and Representation in Pakistan with an update 1997-2009*, serves to be a resource volume documenting the history of the political participation and representation of the women of Pakistan. This edition brings up to date significant developments that have taken place in the area of political participation of women up to 2009.

The first edition of Shirkat Gah's Special Bulletin, *Women in Politics: Participation and Representation in Pakistan* was published in 1994. It traces the development of the women's movement from 50 fifty years before independence in 1947 up to the early 1990s and discusses the history, context and the struggles of the women of Pakistan in the public arena of politics. It critically examines the roles played by and the effectiveness of non-governmental organisations and the civil society. It also identifies the social, religious and economic factors that continue to impede women's progress and provides recommendations aimed at maximising their participation and representation in the political process.

In 1998, Shirkat Gah published an updated edition of the Special Bulletin elaborating on the major developments in the debate surrounding women's political participation and representation since 1994. This Special Bulletin presents the steps initiated by successive governments to facilitate the involvement of women in politics, as well the barriers that remain to be overcome. It also focuses on the continued advocacy and lobbying efforts by NGOs, women activists and rights groups.

The current edition of the Special Bulletin outlines the developments that have taken place in the political sphere with regard to women's involvement since 1997. In addition to a sequential account of the events that have occurred in the past decade, it consists of extracts from Khawar Mumtaz's paper "Women's Representation, Effectiveness and Leadership in South Asia" written for UNIFEM, and Salman Abid's publication "*Pakistan ka naya siyasi nizam aur muqamti haqoomaton ka kirdar*"; an analysis of political manifestoes conducted by the Shirkat Gah-WEMC Research Unit; and, research conducted by South Asia Partnership-Pakistan. It is being published along with the first and updated editions and attempts to fully capture the history of the political participation and representation of the women of Pakistan in one place. A list of references has been provided for further reading.

Shirkat Gah  
2009



# WOMEN IN POLITICS: Participation and Representation in Pakistan

Farida Shaheed, Asma Zia and Sohail Warraich

نحوائپن زپن انر مسام قواينپن  
Women living under muslim laws  
النساء في ظل قواين المسلمين  
Femmes sous lois musulmanes



شركت گاه

Shirkat Gah

Women's Resource Centre



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This Special Bulletin is the product of the input and effort of a number of people at Shirkat Gah, Lahore. It is an edited version of a Country Study for the Asia Foundation in November 1993. Research input and the collation of often widely dispersed materials and data for the original report was further contributed by Farrah Naz and Eman Ahmad, while editing of the report, its transformation into the present shape of a Shirkat Gah Special Bulletin and updating to incorporate developments in 1994 was the responsibility of Lubna Shah.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the 50 years preceding Independence in 1947, Muslim women in India made important inroads - transforming themselves from invisible beings isolated within the confines of their traditional roles, to emerge as organized, aware individuals/groups determined to participate in the political arena. The progress women have made since then is far from impressive. The socio-economic and cultural factors constricting women's operative framework remain largely untouched. Women's status indicators show meagre improvements but remain most unsatisfactory. Pakistan's political history with its frequent disruptions of democratic processes, has not been conducive to nurturing the political participation of any political actors, male or female.

A few general points need to be kept in mind when examining the issue of women's political participation in the areas now constituting Pakistan. Firstly, political leadership in these areas was vested in the landed gentry and women were excluded from these structures. The legal profession was another area from which leadership was recruited, but here too Muslim women were extremely rare.

Secondly, the frequent subversion of the democratic process since Independence severely stunted the ability of democratic institutions to take root and impeded the induction of all non-traditional or emerging social groups in political leadership. Most politicians (male and female) have inherited political power, though some inroads have been made by male industrialists and retired armed forces personnel.

Thirdly, while exceptional women leaders have dotted the political landscape, women's general mobilization has always been far more extensive on general political issues than

on women-specific issues. Nevertheless, starting from before Independence, women's rights have never been achieved without women actively voicing the demand first.

### Rs. 1.30 per women!

Allocation in the federal budget is an ironic example of the present government's commitment towards human resource development. It has allocated an annual development budget of Rs. 85 million (Rs. 1.30 per female per year) for women.

In a blatant display of insensitivity towards the almost 60 million women of Pakistan, the federal government has proposed to allocate Rs. 1.16 billion for the beautification of the federal capital.

The Frontier Post,  
2.16.1993



Women Living Under Muslim Laws  
Newsheet, Vol. V No.2 1993

## THE CONTEXT OF PAKISTANI WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The current levels and modes of women's political participation in Pakistan are determined by both socio-economic and cultural factors that impede or enhance this participation and by historical precedents.

### Socio-economic Indicators

Females comprise 47.5% of the population. At birth, the prospects for the majority of Pakistani women are not bright. Though slow, painstaking advances have been made in most fields, in some areas gender gaps have actually increased. Status indicators in all sectors remain amongst the lowest both

globally and within South Asia. Compared to males, women are disadvantaged in all aspects of life, whether it is education, literacy, health, employment or their legal status.

Pakistani women are not homogenous, however, and opportunities and access to resources vary significantly from being negligible in rural Baluchistan to being substantially greater in urban centres of Sindh and Punjab. On the other hand, throughout the country women operate within fairly stringent manifestations of patriarchal structures and attitudes that devalue women's remunerated work and promote her role as wife and mother. These attitudes permeate policy-making bodies where women's representation is too small to make a significant impact. Development policies and, more importantly, budgetary allocations for women are insufficient. Priority is given to economic development rather than social sectors and in both women are grossly neglected.

**Education/Literacy:** At 22.3 percent female literacy in Pakistan is one of the lowest in the world. Over the past 43 years, female literacy has only increased by 8.4 percent (from 13.9% in 1951).<sup>1</sup> In rural areas where the majority resides, education levels are even worse and progress made by women comparatively poor; only 7.3 percent of rural women were considered literate in 1981. Ten years later, this had risen to 11.3 percent, a small 4 percent increase.<sup>2</sup>

Female enrollment at the primary level trails far behind that of boys. In 1993 an estimated 53.7 percent girls compared to 84.8 percent boys were enrolled in primary schools. The drop-out rate for females is higher than for males. In 1975-76 an estimated 14 percent of women dropped out of secondary school - at par with male drop-outs but by 1982-83 the female drop-out rate was almost double that of boys (15% girls to 7% boys).<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that these two periods coincide with two radically differing perspectives on women adopted by the respective governments of the time - the former positive, the latter retrogressive.

Apart from patriarchal attitudes that view girls' education as mainly non-productive, a major factor contributing to the low percentage of girls in primary schools is a shortage of female schools and teachers, specially in the rural areas. Mobility for women in these areas is extremely restricted and accessibility a major issue. In the technical fields the gender imbalance is worse.

Women's education has been largely neglected and the policy-decision to segregate even primary schools has impeded the growth of female education. Nevertheless, there has been a recent and positive change in attitude. In the two most conservative provinces of Baluchistan and NWFP, a survey discovered that in the former, one-third of all girls attend boys schools and in the latter one-fifth of all school are de facto co-educational.<sup>4</sup> Though women's literacy rates remain inadequate, efforts by the private sector have helped, and the government's new policy to encourage women's education and integrate primary level education (Social Action Programme) are positive measures.

**Economic Status:** Assessment of women's economic status is difficult since the statistical estimation of women's labour force participation is inadequate and sometimes contains serious discrepancies. For example, the 1981 Census reports only 3 percent of all women as economically productive whereas the Agricultural Census of 1980 shows the rate of rural women's participation at 73 percent.<sup>5</sup> Among these, 76% percent of agriculturally productive women are classified as part-time workers,<sup>6</sup> because in addition to agricultural input they also do other types of work.<sup>7</sup>

In the industrial sector there has been an expansion in female participation over the past two decades. In manufacturing, women's share of the labour force increased from 12.27 percent in 1961 to 15.33 percent in 1981; in services from 14.71 percent to 29.75 percent.<sup>8</sup> These low figures do not record the contribution of an estimated 2 million women working in the informal sector, i.e. piece-rate workers, family businesses etc; a participation characterized by low levels of education and inadequate training and skills. With more accurate data recording, the female participation rate would be closer to 30-40 percent than the 12 percent quoted by the Labour Force Survey. At a national level inadequate data has resulted in negligible planning for women in economic policies.

**Health:** With a population close to 115 million and a growth rate of about 3 percent, health facilities do not meet the needs of the people. For example the number of hospitals increased from 304 in 1950 to 600 in 1981 - (less than double),<sup>9</sup> while the population more than doubled (from 33.74 million in 1951 to 84.25 million in 1981).

Early marriage, excessive child-bearing and lack of access to health facilities form the background to Pakistani women's poor health status. Between 1985 and 1993 the mean age of marriage for women has inched up from 17.5 years to 20.2 years while the average number of children born to a woman has decreased from 8 to 6.5. The gender-gap in life expectancy has decreased from 2 years in 1981 to being equal in 1993 (57.7 years for both women and men). However an alarming 26,000 women still die every year in child birth and the general mortality rate for women is higher than among men, especially during reproductive years and in old age.<sup>10</sup>

## Gender Segregation and Female Seclusion

The institution of purdah i.e. gender segregation and female seclusion permeates all spheres of women's lives in Pakistan. Purdah sharply demarcates and divides the public and private spheres, where the former (in which are located economic and political power) is designated a male domain, and the latter female.

Purdah practices are bolstered by deeply ingrained notions of honour: it is a male's duty to provide economically for his family and protect its reputation; a woman's to reproduce and service the family, and by her actions to uphold the family's honour.

As a result a woman's working for remuneration, or in public places is discouraged by society as is women's interaction with unrelated males. Making remunerative work for women acceptable and 'respectable' has been an uphill task. Purdah and rigidly defined sex roles have also contributed to the low levels of female literacy and education.

Combining with patriarchal structures, purdah has undermined women's access to traditional forums of adjudication and decision-making (panchayats, jirgas, etc.). Purdah militates against any woman entering the modern political process. Even if she were to obtain permission (or face no opposition) from male relatives, the risk of exposing herself to possible ridicule by opposing candidates is enough to prevent all but the most determined from even attempting to enter the public political fray.

Purdah is therefore a serious obstacle that women need to overcome to be gainfully employed, achieve educational standards and be politically active.

# THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT AND NGOS

## 1886 - 1947: Historical Background

The position and status Pakistani women enjoyed at Independence was a debt they owed to the Indian men and women activists of the late 19th century whose "... action and ideas were directly responsible for changing or maintaining the traditional role and status of Muslim Women".<sup>11</sup>

Initially, the focus of the Women's Reform Movement (in which Muslim women participated) was on 'modern' education for women. The issue was first raised at the all-male Mohammedan Educational Congress (MEC) in 1886. In the years to come, Muslim women organized themselves in societies and groups as well as in the formal political arena to lobby for women's rights but equally to mobilize women in politics. In 1908 Anjuman-e-Khawateen-e-Islam, was formed in Lahore and was geared towards education, social reforms, and the rights of women within the framework of Islam. In 1918 the All India Muslim League and the Indian National Congress gave their support to female franchise. Between 1921 and 1928, one after the other all the provincial assemblies granted women the right to vote. In 1928, seventeen years before France, women in India were granted the same voting rights as men. Under the Government of India Act of 1935, 6,600,000 women received the franchise and for the first time women were allocated seats: nine out of 250 for the Federal Assembly and six out of 150 for the Council of State.<sup>12</sup>

To enhance the female electorate the stipulation of education was reduced to bare literacy and the wives of registered male voters were included. Despite this special dispensation, women still only formed six percent of the electorate. However in the 1936 and 1937 elections eighty women members were elected (some through joint electorates) to the Provincial and Central Parliaments. This included a woman minister, two parliamentary secretaries, one Deputy Speaker and a Deputy President of an Upper House. Globally, India ranked third in the number of women legislators (below the U.S.S.R. & U.S.A.). Muslim women's seats were to be filled by separate electorates, and in Punjab and Bengal they were to be elected by women voters only. On the legal front, under Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act 1937, (XXVI of 1937) Muslim women were assured their right to inherit property, a right guaranteed by established Muslim jurisprudence but denied by custom.

In the 1946 elections two Muslim women, Begum Jahanara Shahnawaz and Begum Shaista Ikramullah, were elected to the Central Constituent Assembly. That same year Muslim women organized and held demonstrations protesting the government's refusal to allow the Muslim League to form a ministry. Violence was used against women demonstrators and they were arrested as well. Initially, most of these activities were confined to Lahore and Karachi. However the Civil Disobedience movement of January 1947, mobilized even the Pathan women - considered the most conservative of the sub-continent. They marched in support of the movement publicly unveiled for the first time. The most interesting form of political participation was the secret organization called the 'War Council' formed by the Pathans in which women helped run an underground radio-station until Independence.

By 1947, Muslim women had displayed their skills and activities in the political

battlefield. They had organized funds for the Pakistan Movement, mobilized women, fought against oppression on the streets, and addressed women's grievances such as education. One must keep in mind that the greatest number of women were not mobilized around issues relating to women's rights or their political and legal status, rather the cause was to gain a Muslim homeland. Nevertheless, women activists firmly believed that women would receive a fair share in the new society which they were helping to bring into existence.

It is clear that from the start, the existence of women's NGOs, their field of activity, style of operation, priorities and focus (or lack of thereof) on women's issues and rights have always interfaced with women's political participation. In turn, the specificity of the women's NGO agenda(s) has been influenced not only by the political space available but also by their perception of the sitting government's commitment to women's issues.

Perhaps due to the successful alliance and overlap between those leading the Pakistan Movement and those advocating women's rights, women's groups in the newly created state believed for more than two decades that the government would automatically expand women's rights and open avenues for their participation at all levels: whether social, economic or political. Consequently until the eighties women's groups only mobilized around women's issues sporadically, and with little coordination between themselves or with political parties or politicians. It was not until the Zia government (1977-88) seriously threatened to rescind all women's rights, that women's groups felt the need to establish an advocacy lobby for women.<sup>13</sup>

## 1947 - 1970: Initial Years

With Independence women were granted the right to educational, political and economic participation; but the demand for 'equal rights' was opposed by conservative factions who had enough (or were perceived by other political forces to have enough) leverage to prevent a consensus on women's greater participation in the development process. The fact that only a small number of women were lobbying for women's rights facilitated the sidetracking or overshadowing of women's issues by what were seen as greater policy matters. For example, in 1948 women members of the National Assembly proposed a bill to secure women's economic rights. The bill was dropped from the agenda



Women in Action, ISIS International, 1/94

until thousands of women marched on the Assembly Chambers in protest. The ability of women legislators to publically mobilize women resulted in the passage of the West Punjab Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act 1948, (IX of 1948) which recognized women's right to inherit property, including agricultural holdings.

Outside the political platform, women displayed the same energy and leadership as they had in mobilizing support for the Pakistan Movement. During the refugee influx in the bitter aftermath of Partition, both women and men helped in the resettlement of

displaced peoples. The Women's Voluntary Service (WVS) formed under the leadership of Begum Ra'ana Liaquat Ali Khan, wife of Pakistan's first Prime Minister, deserves special mention here. A significant characteristic of this organization was that it was an attempt to mobilize women outside the political party framework and included low income women.

Another proposal by Begum Liaquat Ali leading to the introduction of the Pakistan Women's National Guard (PWNG) and the Pakistan Women's Naval Reserve (PWNR) in 1949 met with strong opposition. The idea of a trained corps of women that also had economic skills was viewed with trepidation and the two corps were condemned as hot-beds of vice and immorality by some vocal religious groups. By 1954 both had been disbanded due to vehement opposition from conservative elements, especially the *maulvis* (Muslim preachers).

An off-shoot of the WVS was the formation, in 1949, of the All Pakistan's Women's Association (APWA). APWA has created and sustained educational, social and economic awareness programmes. Non-political in nature, APWA was not viewed as a threat and was fully endorsed by the government. However, in addition to its welfare activities APWA did push for laws providing some protection to women in marriage and lobbied against polygamy. Another non-political NGO was the Business and Professional Women's Club, (1954) which addressed income generating problems.

In contrast the Anjuman Jamhooriat Pasand Khawateen or Democratic Women's Association (DWA), created in 1948, had a definite political agenda. With a Marxist base it worked for the uplift of working class women in factories, railways and fisheries, demanding equal wages, skills training and transport facilities as well as creche and hostels for women.

In 1955 the serving Prime Minister's second marriage sparked off agitation by women against polygamy leading to the government appointed Rashid Commission whose task included the review of family laws. Six years later under Ayub Khan's martial law regime, the Family Laws Ordinance of 1961 was promulgated. The Ordinance regularized marriages and dissolutions, introduced the talaq-e-tafweez (delegated right of divorce to the wife), expanded the grounds for dissolution by mutual consent and restricted polygamy by requiring prior permission and by opening the failure to obtain this as a ground for judicial dissolution of marriage.

Most NGOs established during the Ayub period (1958-68) were urban-based and the vast majority were welfare oriented. APWA, and later Behbud, came to dominate the social welfare scene. The Soroptimist Club (January 1967) was somewhat different and focused on organizing seminars on education, vocational training and careers for women.

## 1971 - 1977: Impetus for Women

The 1971-77 Z.A. Bhutto era was a period of progress for women. Widespread politicization of women was undertaken by Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP). Begum Nasim Jahan, a PPP founder member, mobilized educated women to impart the party message in Lahore mohallas (neighborhoods). The political sensitization of women was extended when the PPP set up a Women's Wing with provincial links.





In 1972 all government posts and services were opened to women and for the first time women were appointed as Provincial Governor, University Vice Chancellor and Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly.

The 1975 International Women's Year (IWY) was actively celebrated. At the Mexico Conference Pakistan was represented by Begum Bhutto who signed the Mexico Declaration. The Pakistan Women's Institute was set up later to mark the occasion. In January 1976, a 13 member Women's Rights Committee was formed whose task was to recommend measures to improve and facilitate women's social, legal and economic conditions. (See appendix I for recommendations on political representation). The Committee's report and recommendations were largely ignored although in 1976 a recommendation to form a Women's Division was approved.

During this period APWA changed its emphasis towards development and other groups emerged and pushed for the uplift of both urban, and rural women. Dissatisfaction with the PPP agenda led to the formation of different organizations to work with different sections of society. Trade unions and student fronts mushroomed, of which the women's wing of the National Student Organization in the Punjab was very active. It produced a regular newsletter and aimed to reach low-income women.

Other women's organizations of note in this period were the (revived) United Front for Women's Rights whose main aim was to secure the incorporation of women's reserved seats on the basis of female suffrage in the constitution. The UFWR ended without achieving its objectives in 1973. Radically different were the Women's Front, Aurat and Shirkat Gah. The Women's Front, formed in 1974-1975, was made up of left-wing women students of the University of Punjab. Its slogan was "Women and politics are one", and its programme included seminars, lectures, discussions and debates on women's status and position in society. The membership included women from all social strata and spread to other universities. Unfortunately once the original group left the campus, coinciding with the change in political climate in 1977, the organization dissolved.

Aurat was formed by progressive university teachers, students and other working women in 1976-77 in Islamabad. Focused on low-income women, its most significant contribution was its newsletter that raised community awareness regarding legal rights, health etc. Six issues were published before the group dispersed in 1981.

Formed in 1975-76, Shirkat Gah outlived both and was to be the catalyst in the formation of Women's Action Forum (WAF) in 1981 - the main political lobby for Pakistani women for many years. Shirkat Gah's agenda was "consciousness raising and research" on women with the aim of enhancing and programming development for women. Its non-hierarchical collective working style was unique. It set up a hostel for working women in Islamabad (later handed over to the government's Social Welfare Department), and produced the first annotated bibliography on women in Pakistan in 1978.

## **1977 - 1988: A Period of Reversals**

In July 1977 the coup d'etat that brought in Martial Law under General Zia-ul-Haq heralded in a period of reversal for women.

Zia-ul-Haq's military dictatorship justified its continued retention of power through a much-publicized 'Islamization' campaign. Whereas most measures were cosmetic in nature some sections of society suffered notably women, as the least powerful in

political, social and economic terms, fared particularly badly. Despite negative legislation and directives that undermined women's status, Zia's government established the Women's Division - the groundwork for which had been laid by the previous government - to look after women's affairs. Unfortunately, the potential of the Women's Division - which in theory had a wide mandate - was seriously curtailed by the lack of administrative structures below the Provincial Secretariat level. Surprisingly, in 1984, the government established a Commission on the Status of Women consisting of thirteen women and three men, which in 1985 submitted a damning report on the state of affairs.

Retrogressive laws such as the Hudood Ordinances (1979) and the Law of Evidence (1984) were brought on the statute book, others were proposed and directives curtailing women's participation in public life introduced. Paradoxically, by sharply focusing attention on gender issues and discrimination, the reversals of women's rights galvanized a wide spectrum of women and women's groups to form a women's rights lobby. In September 1981 Shirkat Gah called together like-minded women to discuss strategies against the multiple retrogressive directives and proposals floated by General Zia's early years, particularly the implications of the Hudood Ordinances. This led to the formation of Khawateen Mahaz-e-Amal or Women's Action Forum (WAF) its better known English name. In the following decade WAF remained the most active women's rights lobby and pressure group.<sup>14</sup>

## POLITICAL REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION

### Participation

While the election process per se cannot be expected to eliminate all forces of oppression and/or do away with gender biases, it nevertheless is an opportunity for women to present their issues, and provides a channel through which the elected government can integrate women into existing political structures.

In each province the level of women's participation is determined by region-specific, socio-cultural barriers and also by the historical specificity of political movements in their geographical area. Historically women's political participation at the leadership level has been the highest in the Punjab while political participation from Baluchistan is practically non-existent. Until 1993 no woman had contested a general seat from the province and Baluchi women have only been present in the assemblies through the provision of reserved seats. While both Baluch and Pakhtun women operate within strict norms of segregation and seclusion in tribal societies, the mass political mobilization of people in the NWFP by firstly Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, and then briefly through the Pakistan Movement has greatly facilitated the current degree of Pakhtun women's participation at the political leadership level.

In contrast, Baluchistan did not experience such mobilization and, when mobilization did occur, it was in opposition to central authority in Pakistan. The circumstances of mobilization in Baluchistan further excluded women who, as it is, are obliged to operate in a rigidly conservative social setting which virtually precludes women's participation in public places and hence the political process. These restrictions are accompanied by a widely dispersed and sparse population<sup>15</sup> making communication and mobilization difficult in any case.

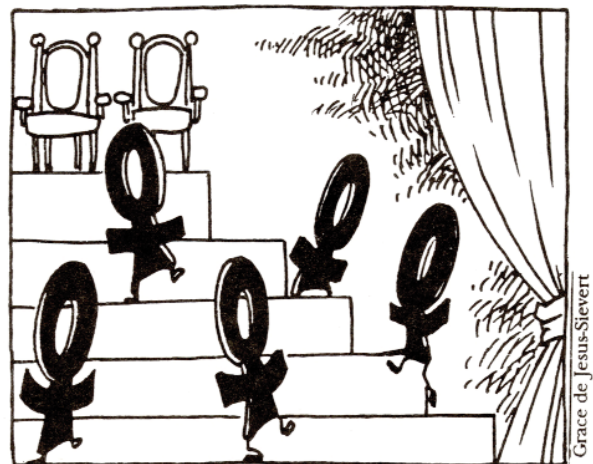
In Punjab, thanks to the higher density population, greater number of towns, dispersed industrialization and greater facilities (especially educational), women's participation has always been easier. Lahore, which was an important centre for the Pakistan Movement understandably produced the first batch of female politicians.

In Sindh, pre-independence activities were visible in several cities, not only Karachi. Here female political leadership has emerged from families traditionally active in politics, and also as a result of more recent political developments. One important development was the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy which marked widespread mobilization of rural Sindh and a conscientization of men as well as women. In Karachi and Hyderabad the situation is different. The heavy presence of a non-local population, mostly migrated from North Indian cities at Independence (*mohajirs*<sup>16</sup>) sets urban Sindh apart from the rural hinterland. Here, women's political mobilization has taken several routes: a few exceptional women have become national trade union leaders, (e.g. Kaniz Fatima, Gulzar Bano), others opted for activism through NGOs (e.g. Begum Ra'ana Liaquat Ali who became the first female Governor), but recently the mass mobilization of women has occurred through the emergence of the ethnically defined Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM).

The avenues through which women can enter and participate in the political process are therefore different in each province, but throughout the country existing political structures - whether feudal or tribal - have posed major problems for women. To be active politicians at the leadership level, women not only need a politically influential background but also strong party backing. Given the starting disadvantages, it is not surprising that women comprise, in 1993, barely 2 percent of the total elected members of the National Assembly.

## Political Leadership

Since Independence, women although few in number, have consistently participated in the political process in leadership positions at the provincial and national levels. As early as 1937 Baji Rashida Latif a progressive women for her time was actively participating in the trade union activities. She joined the Khaksars and worked for the uplift of women. She was also elected president of Women Self Defense League 1946-47. It was a group of progressive women who advocated for rights of women. In 1956, the most important national level female politicians were Jahanara Shahnawaz and Shaista Ikramullah, with Salma Tassaduq Hussain and Begum Mehmooda Salim at the provincial level. Unfortunately the disruption of the democratic political process in 1958 militated against the emergence of any political leadership - male or female - until 1968. Women found themselves excluded from the electoral college for the presidency - despite the fact that one of the two contenders was a woman. Until the seventies, female political leadership within political parties was limited to those who had joined politics before Independence.



Women in Action, ISIS International, 1/94

In many ways the 1970 elections mark the commencement of the contemporary era of women's political participation even though only one woman was fielded as a candidate on a general seat (the trade unionist Kaniz Fatima, affiliated with the National Awami Party (Bhashani Group)). The NAP in the event did not contest elections due to the cyclone in Bangladesh. The first woman to actually contest a general seat was Nusrat Rana, sister of labour leader Mukhtar Rana, who unsuccessfully stood as an independent candidate in the 1972 Faisalabad by-election. Five years later, despite a much wider political mobilization of women, hardly any women had attained leadership levels. However the only woman to contest a general seat in the 1977 general elections won; Begum Nasim Wali Khan (associated with the by then banned NAP) contested under the anti-Bhutto Pakistan National Alliance (PNA - Quami Ittehad) umbrella but never took office because of the PNA's boycott of the assemblies elected through the controversial 1977 polls.

In 1985, elections were held on a non-party basis and boycotted by all major political parties. Of interest here is the fact that 13 women contested general seats though only one from Jhang, (Syeda Abida Hussain) was successful. In the by-elections of May that year, another woman, Nasim A. Majid from Bahawalnagar who had earlier been a member of the Presidentially-appointed Majlis-e-Shoora and lost in the February 1985 general elections, won a seat in the National Assembly. In the Provincial Assemblies only two women (Farhat Rafiq and Sajjida Nayyar Abidi - Punjab) were successful. Attesting to the continuing political resistance to women's public visibility, in 1986 (the year Ms. Benazir Bhutto returned to Pakistan as co-chairperson of the PPP) the Frontier Assembly adopted a resolution demanding that women be put in purdah.

The next general elections were held in 1988. Despite the 1977-85 martial law, the intervening years had produced a middle-rank political leadership, encouraging the ANP, PPP and Tehrik-e-Istaqlal to field at least a few women candidates on general seats. To the surprise of many non-Pakistanis and in spite of all the structural barriers to women's participation in politics, these elections brought 35 year-old Benazir Bhutto to power who took oath on December 2, 1988 as the youngest and the first female Prime Minister in the Muslim world.

In 1990, contrary to expectations that major political parties would give more tickets to women, the PPP with its two women co-chairpersons issued no PPP tickets to any other woman, though the PPP-led coalition (Pakistan Democratic Alliance - PDA) fielded a nominal number including Shahnaz Javed from Chichawatni (who lost). Another PDA candidate, Mehnaz Rafi, unsuccessfully contested a provincial seat from Lahore. Opposing the PDA was the Muslim League (PML) led Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI). Its only female candidate was Abida Hussain (who lost). Since the provision of women's reserved seats had by then lapsed, the two Bhutto women were the sole female legislators in the 1990 National Assembly. The MQM, despite its strong women's wing failed to field even a single female candidate. The reticence of parties to field women candidates is due to their stated perception that women are weak candidates and in a tough fight it is preferable to field a male. In many ways this is a self-fulfilling prophecy as women can never hope to become strong candidates if they are not given an opportunity to test the waters.

The 1993 general elections, (in which 13 women contested general seats for the National Assembly) have seen the Pakistan Muslim League selecting women candidates after almost a 50-year period during which none of the various factions Muslim League had fielded women).<sup>17</sup> 1993 also saw the Mohajir Qaumi Movement include women candidates

for national and provincial assembly seats (although the MQM subsequently boycotted the NA polls). The PPP and PML(N) together, put up seven women for the National Assembly. Among these the electoral victory of Shahnaz Javed of the PPP presents an interesting study. Ms. Javed was given a party ticket by the PPP after they gauged her chances for success. She has not 'inherited' politics and has developed her stature as a politician as a result of her own social and political work in her constituency. The MQM fielded two candidates and the remaining four women stood as independents, predominantly in the Punjab. The Jamaat-e-Islami led Pakistan Islamic Front (PIF) not surprisingly, did not give even a single woman a ticket.

Other than Ms. Bhutto, only three women have been returned to the present National Assembly. Three women were returned on general seats at the provincial level: one each in NWFP, Punjab and Sindh. Additionally a woman was elected on one of the Christian minority seats. (The third consecutive win for Dr. Sheila B. Charles, a social worker)<sup>18</sup>. Not a single woman was returned to the Baluchistan Assembly, although for the first time four women contested general seats. The low number of votes they obtained (only one polled above 100 votes) reflect women's marginalization in the province's politics.

The 1993 elections also returned Benazir Bhutto to power and while it is hoped that her government would enhance women's status, her government's performance during her previous tenure was poor, and much will depend on the ability of women to lobby the legislatures after their formal participation through voting.

## The Role of Political Party Women's Wings

Segregation of upper class and middle class Muslim women, and their virtual absence from the public arena has always been a barrier to their mobilization. In pre-Partition India the Muslim League responded to the challenge of women's mobilization by forming a separate Women's Committee and, later, a female students organization. These special structures within the party essentially aimed at mobilizing the female half of their constituency on the general political agenda. They did not therefore provide a forum for women to specifically discuss and activate themselves on gender specific issues, i.e. while norms of gender segregation and female seclusion were seen as obstacles to making visible female support for the party, the obstacles were circumvented rather than addressed. Nevertheless Jahanara Shahnawaz was not considered a representative of women only and

was invited to sit on the Muslim League's Central Committee, the party's decision-making body.



In the seventies the PPP expanded the notion of a Women's Committee to that of a Women's Wing - intended to include and mobilize women from the grassroots to the leadership levels on a permanent

basis. This structure was adopted by numerous other political parties: both older parties such as the Muslim League as well as newer ones like the Sindh Awami Tehrik and the Mohajir Qaumi Movement.

The promotion of Women's Committees and later women's wings was a double edged sword: if it helped women to enter politics, it also contributed to a dual marginalization: firstly female politicians within the party were restricted to these wings and secondly, gender issues were also relegated to these wings which for the most part did not focus on women's issues. Parties, such as the ANP and Tehrik-e-Istaqlal, which do not have women's wings were quicker to field women candidates from general seats. The experiences of the women's wings of two of the youngest political parties - the Sindh Awami Tehrik and MQM are of interest here.

Both parties emerged in the eighties as active proponents of the ethnic politics that have marked the province of Sindh. Both have strong and active women's wings that have contributed to the political agendas of their respective parties: mobilizing people around identity to gain development benefits. However the different operational style of the two parties is mirrored in their women's wings.

Ms. Zareen Majid, Vice Chairperson of the MQM, has been with the party from the start. Established from the inception of the MQM in 1986, the MQM Women's Wing was crucial to the 1987 Local Bodies elections in gathering votes and organizing support for the MQM which swept the elections in Karachi and Hyderabad. The MQM's success in both urban cities was attributed in equal measure to their women's wing and to male mobilization. In July 1988 MQM women conducted a major rally which displayed their organizational capacity and their readiness to join the 'Kalashnikov politics' of Sindh.

It is difficult to obtain information on the MQM's Women's Wing. Reportedly, issues are debated and anti-women laws are opposed but there is negligible interaction with other women's groups. It is known that women from all walks of life are represented, but the women's wing of the close-knit hierarchical and disciplinarian MQM operates strictly within the confines of party discipline, has no independent programmes and minimal interaction (if any) with outside forces; it functions in a subsidiary role to the central party.

In contrast, the operational style of the Sindhiani Tehrik (of the Awami Tehrik) is fairly autonomous and it has consciously sought and strengthened ties with other women's groups. To its credit, Sindhiani Tehrik has successfully mobilized women who have hitherto remained in seclusion. Nevertheless, in the final analysis Sindhiani Tehrik's allegiance is to the Awami Tehrik and its leader, Rasool Bux Palejo. Sindhiani Tehrik women have incorporated the militancy which has become a part of Sindhi political culture as much as in the rest of the country; on Palejo's birthday in 1989, women from Sindhiani Tehrik marched with Kalashnikovs.

In the political process therefore, women's wings have largely been a uni-directional means of mobilization, used by political parties to include women in their support bases. The political agendas of parties have not (or rarely) been influenced by the activities undertaken by their women's wings which are hampered by a lack of authority within party structures and, where this exists, rigid hierarchies. When women's wings have mobilized on women specific issues, it has been the outcome of interaction with independent women's advocacy groups. For women's wings to be a vehicle for mobilizing women on women's issues, there needs to be a strengthening of interlinkages between these wings and independent

women's advocacy groups or lobbies. The 1993 election campaign witnessed a greater effort by all political parties' women's wings to motivate and mobilize women voters. This was brought about both by the efforts of advocacy groups and a greater recognition of the power of the female vote. Campaigning included addressing of exclusive women's rallies and meetings by male party leaders, an extremely uncommon occurrence in previous political campaigns.

## Women in Local Councils

If women's political participation at the national and provincial levels has been disappointing, the situation at the lower administrative levels is scarcely more encouraging. Approximately 10 percent of the total number of seats are indirectly elected Special Interest seats for women.

There are three main factors associated with women's participation in the Special Interest seats in local government. Those elected on these seats are accountable to the male councillors through whom they are elected. Most of these candidates are merely names on paper, without actual powers or potential. Most of them belong to the dominant political party in the area and follow the party mandate rather than focus on women's issues.

In the three local elections since 1983 the total number of seats allocated to women have only increased by 568 while general seats have been increased by 5365. Even those who were elected on these allocated seats made little if any impact on local government. In Baluchistan and NWFP many women elected on reserved seats are unaware of having been elected because they are 'excused' from going to the Local Bodies offices.

As in the case of provincial and national level politics, some exceptional women have successfully contested general seats in the local bodies, notably Syeda Abida Hussain who was later elected as Chairman District Council from Jhang. She returned to national level politics in 1985. Other women to rise to the provincial assembly from local bodies were Begum Farhat Rafique who won from a Lahore Walled City constituency in the 1985 polls, and Begum Sajjida Nayyer Abidi who won a provincial seat from Sialkot District having been on the Sialkot District Council. They are however, an exception and generally the local bodies have not provided an effective training ground for provincial or national level politics. Ms. Fazila Aliani is a case in point. She entered the political process through a reserved seat in the Baluchistan Assembly in 1970, went on to become a member of the Quetta municipality through reserved seats and was later nominated to the National Assembly again on reserved seats. But her movement between these various seats has notably not helped her join mainstream politics as indicated by the nominal votes she polled when contesting a general seat in 1993. To mainstream women's political participation therefore requires strategies other than merely reserving seats at different levels. To enhance female leadership, the pool from which leaders could emerge has to first be substantially expanded.

## Women Voters

Using the Vote: At the most basic level of participation i.e. voting, the general and local body elections held in the country have obliged all major political parties to address the half of the electorate that consists of women. Yet, even at this level women face problems: fewer women than men are registered; they have greater problems exercising their right of

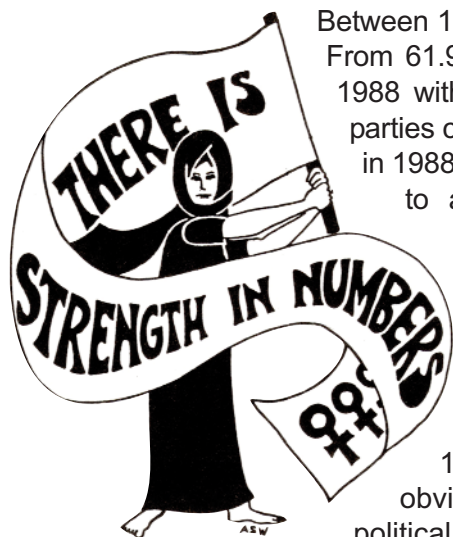
franchise and the political discourse of elections has only recently started focusing on their issues.

According to the Election Commission in 1993, the total number of Muslim voters is 50,834,648 of which 54.5 percent (27,724,707) are men and 45.5 percent (23,109,941) are women. As women constitute nearly 48 percent of the population, the disparity in voting strength of men and women is larger than the difference in population. Due to under-registration there are 4.7 million fewer women voters than male voters.

According to the Election Commission in 1997, the total number of Muslim voters is 55,026,324 of which 55.5 percent (30,533,49) are men and 44.5 percent (24,492,975) are women. As women constitute nearly 48 percent of the population, the disparity in voting strength of men and women is larger than the difference in population. Due to under-registration there are 6 million fewer women voters than male voters.

At present women outnumber male voters in only two Sindh National Assembly constituencies; NA-158 Naushero Feroze and NA-161 Nawabshah-II. At the other extreme in Peshawar-II the number of women voters is less than half that of male voters, respectively 54,050 females and 120,341 males. In fact, in some areas of the NWFP women are not allowed to utilize their right to vote due to cultural and purdah norms.<sup>19</sup>

Historically it is difficult to gauge women's participation in the electoral process, but undoubtedly the PPP was the first party to mobilize a large number of women supporters and women activists who contributed to the PPP's success in 1970. In addition to pre-existing social and cultural constraints the voting criteria became more stringent in the 1980s. While the 1973 Constitution had provided for the voting age to be lowered to 18 in the second general elections under this Constitution, for the February 1985 elections held under General Zia-ul-Haq the minimum voting age remained 21 years. The original Constitutional provision setting the voting age at 18 was subsequently omitted via the Presidential Order of 2 March 1985 and substituted for 21. In the 1988 elections it was made mandatory for all voters to produce national identity cards (ID cards) when voting. This created problems for women voters nationwide as many do not have ID cards.<sup>20</sup>



International Women's  
Tribune Centre IWTC)

Between 1977 and 1993 there was a decrease in voting turnout. From 61.9 percent in 1977, voter turnout fell to 43 percent in 1988 with only a marginal increase in 1990.<sup>21</sup> The political parties charge this to the mandatory stipulation of ID for voting in 1988. The reality is perhaps different and may be attributed to a growing voter disenchantment with the political choices available: cynicism with a system which has not fulfilled voter aspirations and a lack of confidence in the electoral process itself. (Out of the six general elections only those held in 1970 and 1988 were generally accepted as 'fair' and free of ballot fraud).

**Soliciting Women's Votes:** From the elections of 1990 to those of 1993 there has been a more obvious and active solicitation of women voters by political parties. While political parties have always been conscious that women represent almost 50 percent of the electorate, until 1988 most parties only addressed women



voters in the broadest terms. Political manifestos for the 1988 general elections already reflected the impact of the activist lobby for women's rights that operated outside the framework of political parties. Parts of the agenda of the women's rights lobby were adopted in 1990 by, for instance, the PPP and the Tehrik-e-Istaqlal.

The 1993 elections have been qualitatively different in terms of the concerted efforts of all major political parties to woo the female voter. It was observed that women were addressed separately as a potential vote bank not only on gender specific issues but also on issues of general relevance. All three leading parties, the PPP, PML(N) and PIF (Pakistan Islamic Front) placed women more prominently on their election agendas. (See appendix III for party manifestos).

The PPP had a 23-point section of its manifesto addressed to women which amongst other things promised:

- economic empowerment for women;
- to review all discriminatory laws and ordinances “under guidance from the Quran” and to eliminate exploitation, discrimination and oppression;
- to suitably amend the Hudood Ordinances;
- availability of credit to women farmers and rural entrepreneurs;
- laws stipulating minimum wages, working hours, health and maternity benefits;
- recognition of family planning as a basic human right;
- make family laws more equitable for women and ensure their equitable application;
- women-headed qazi courts.

Both the main contenders, the PPP and the PML(N) have promised to sign the U.N. Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The PML(N)'s programme has a more social welfare approach. While ignoring the Hudood Ordinances, the PML(N) has promised steps to ensure the protection of women and for the first time has addressed the issue of violence against women. Both party manifestos promise economic empowerment to women and hope to extend coverage as regards minimum wages, working hours, health and maternity benefits, etc.

Even the Jamaat-i-Islami which traditionally ignores women voters felt the need to address them; thousands of Rupees were spent on newspaper advertisements which highlighted the Jamaat's programmes for women. The Jamaat-led PIF promised jobs to women in the fields of health and education, the establishment of mobile family courts and separate women's universities.

While it remains to be seen whether women's inclusion in party agendas to mobilize their votes will materialize into something substantial for their uplift, beyond manifestos the election campaigns of the main parties showed an unprecedented focus on women. For the PPP, large rallies of women are usual, but for the first time, the PML(N) and PIF too consciously organized special women's rallies and active campaign participation by female relatives of the major candidates. For the Jamaat-e-Islami, with its traditional posture that women should be secluded in their homes, the active public canvassing - albeit suitably veiled - by the wife and daughter of its leader (Amir Qazi Hussain) was an unprecedented break with tradition.

Yet despite the conscious canvassing of female votes, according to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) poll-watch, women continue to be under-represented in the electoral rolls. This may be due to the manner in which voters lists are collected (from anyone in the household at the time of interview); to the lack of interest shown by both political parties and families in the effective updating of the lists which still depend on information collected for the 1977 elections; and in some areas, to the existence of strong purdah norms which may actively work against the registration of female voters.

Even when women are registered, procedural difficulties undermine their participation. Between 1988 and 1997, the ID card issue has caused problems. Firstly, fewer women have ID cards than men. Secondly, in respect of purdah norms women often have their ID cards made without their photographs. Thirdly, voter lists were originally collated in 1977 when ID cards were not required for casting a vote. All too often there is a discrepancy between the names as given in electoral lists and those on ID cards - which fall under the jurisdiction of two unrelated departments. Further women voters may be listed by their maiden names while ID cards have been issued to them as 'wives of' (or vice versa). Family and residential information in the case of women whose marital status has changed is therefore also not compatible, a problem compounded when ID cards do not have photographs.

These discrepancies have made ballot fraud easier in the case of female votes and every election sees candidates and parties protesting against voting frauds particularly (though not only) in female polling stations. In a Lahore polling station in the 1993 elections, the polling officer indicated that she had had to turn away almost 50% of the women who came to vote because of discrepancies in names/addresses between electoral rolls and ID cards. She also said she had caught several false ID cards and that more than a dozen 'tender' votes had been cast (i.e. when one woman matching the electoral roll seeks to vote but finds that another woman claiming the same identity has already voted, both apparently having appropriate ID cards.<sup>22</sup> The second ballot can be cast but is not added to the final count).

Finally even when there are no technical difficulties, women may be deprived of their vote due to purdah norms. For instance, in 1990 all major political parties in some areas of one constituency in NWFP and in some neighbourhoods of Karachi agreed not to let women vote on the basis that this would violate cultural norms (our research also indicates a similar situation in some wards of Sheikhpura, Punjab). In 1993 the HRCP reported similar cases in some areas. Ultimately transforming women's de jure voting rights into a de facto right depends on women's ability to take greater control over their own lives, and have a much larger quantum of economic, social and cultural autonomy.

## PARTICIPATION: BARRIERS AND AFFIRMATIVE MEASURES

### Barriers

In 1985, the government appointed Commission on the Status of Women noted in its report:

“Two primary methods of political participation are voting and seeking an elective office. A third criterion for judging involvement is representation in the government. The record of Pakistani women on all three counts has been rather poor”.<sup>23</sup>

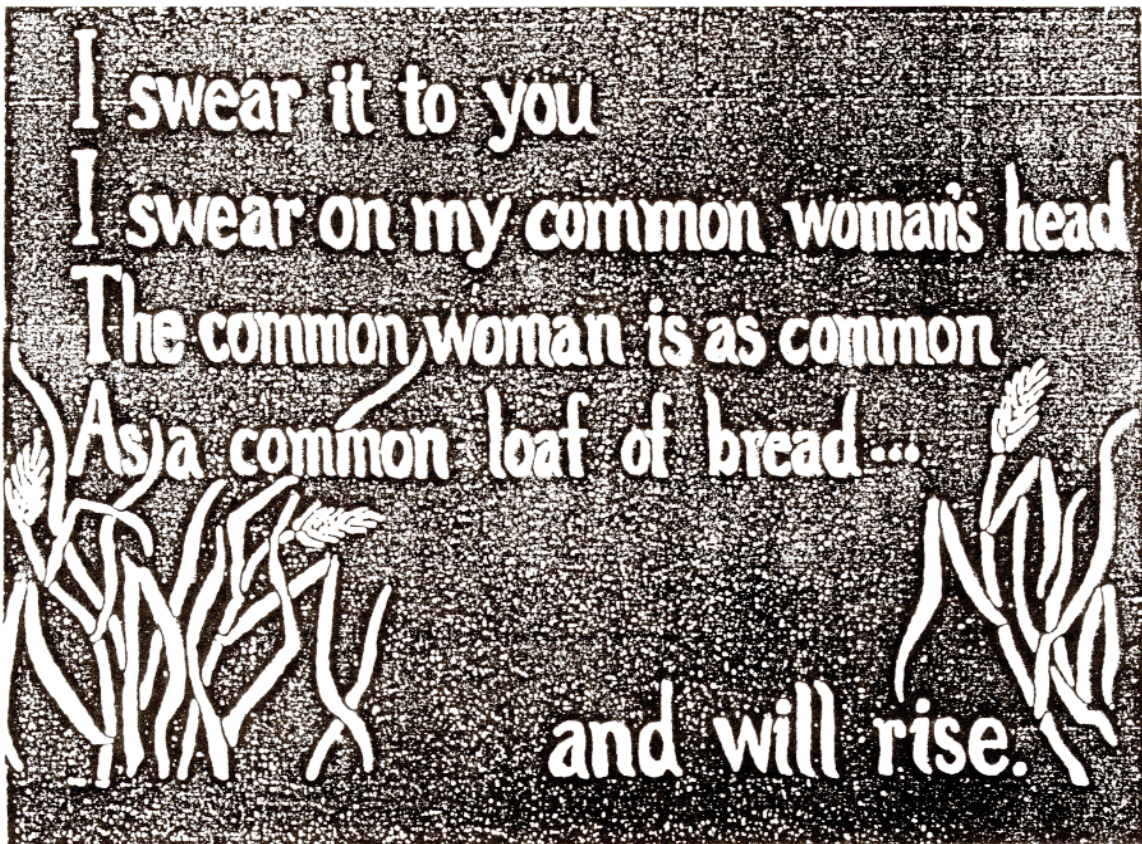
The major obstacles for women can be classified into three distinct, although interconnected categories: socio-economic, societal structures and religious argumentation or discourse. In addition to obstructing entry, each of these also prevents women from developing political skills and experience; producing a vicious cycle. When exceptional women do break through barriers to achieve leadership levels, their effectiveness has been impeded by the lack of a women's political caucus and poor interlinkages between political actors and independent advocacy groups.

**Socio-economic Factors:** To begin with, women are constrained by the socio-economic and cultural factors mentioned earlier which are also responsible for their generally poor status. At the most immediate physical level, the heavy burden of childbearing/rearing hampers women's entry into the political arena. Then, a woman's access to economic resources - so essential in Pakistan's politics where few political parties finance a candidate's campaign - is severely restricted. Her lack of financial resources also negatively impacts on her decision-making powers within both her family and community. The lack of independent financial resources was recognized as a major impediment to women's status and political leadership by Pakistan's first two women legislators who, joining hands with women active outside the assembly, formed the United Front and successfully lobbied for the enactment of the West Punjab Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act 1948, (IX of 1948) and its 1951 amendments ensuring that women were granted the right to inherit property including agricultural holdings.

Last but not least, politics is a supremely public process requiring high mobility for interaction and constant public appearances, while cultural norms in Pakistan promote the segregation and seclusion of women - often justified through the use of religion. In Pakistan women speaking in public is still an unusual event, though some headway has been made with women canvassing for votes and mobilizing women as discussed earlier.

**Structures of Power:** At a broader level, existing structures of economic power inevitably find reflection in the sources of political power. In the tribal areas of Baluchistan that possess a rigidly hierarchical system of leadership (*sardari*) - the scope for women's entry is severely marginalized. It is only exceptional women like Fazila Aliani and Begum Noor Jehan Panezai (the latter currently the Deputy Chairperson of the Senate) who manage to break through traditional barriers that exclude women from decision-making bodies in their own context. In the NWFP, political leadership has again emerged from within the traditional tribal leadership. In Sindh and Punjab, where rural power rests in the hands of the large landowning families it is these families that have produced the bulk of the political leadership. Only exceptionally have leaders emerged from the purely industrialist or professional groups without also having strong rural connections.

In this general scenario, it is hardly surprising that those few women who have assumed political significance, should belong to the same backgrounds, and mostly belong to



The New Woman's Survival Catalog, Berkeley Publishing Corp. New York 1973

families whose men were already active politicians. The pattern was established right from the start. The two Muslim women (Shahnawaz and Ikramullah) who served on Pakistan's first Constituent Assembly (1947-54) both belonged to landed families whose men were political leaders. Similarly, when in 1964 Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah was chosen by the Combined Opposition Party to oppose Ayub Khan as a presidential candidate (replacing the original male contender when he died), the deciding factor was her relationship to a recognized male leader (she was Jinnah's sister) rather than her own personal abilities. Today the pattern remains visible in the mother-daughter Bhutto team - taking on the baton from their husband/father, and Nasim Wali Khan who entered politics when her husband was in jail under trial for treason (1976-77). (Wali Khan himself inherited the 'political profession' from his better known father, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan.) Another example is the wife of MNA Rubbani Khar, Sumaira Rubbani Khar, who stood for the 1991 by-elections to a Muzaffargarh provincial assembly seat. Unknown in her own right, her campaign posters simply referred to her as 'Mrs Rubbani Khar'.

It is only in the eighties that a handful of middle class women from non-political families have emerged onto the political scene, though here too, one must emphasize that exceptions, like Mehnaz Rafi of the Tehrik-e-Istaqlal, were actively involved in politics even earlier. Nevertheless, the economic background of such female politicians does undermine their ability to win elections.

**Religion and Politics:** In Pakistan, religion has been used as a vehicle for expressing political opinion and for mass mobilization by politicians. Since Independence, it has been

used by those in power and those out of it, more often by right-wing elements than progressive forces but inevitably its use has been in a bid for political power; for consolidating support or legitimizing force.

In the process it has been used to oppose women's participation in both politics and in the public domain in general. But the use of Islam has been selective. For instance, Ayub Khan, known for his dismissive attitude towards 'backward *maulvis*', had no compunction when facing Fatima Jinnah, in rallying *maulvis* to give a *fatwa* (edict) stating that according to Islam women could not be head of government/state. Paradoxically those who supported Fatima Jinnah's candidature included the Jamaat-e-Islami, which until then had vehemently opposed the idea of a woman head of government and had a well known aversion to 'uneducated' women voters and women's issues in general. They too claimed their position was formulated on the basis of Islam. Clearly, having decided it was politically expedient to support Fatima Jinnah, the Jamaat-e-Islami went so far as to issue a *fatwa* stating that in special circumstances women could be head of government/state. Ironically, religion i.e. Islam was used by both sides in a tussle in which the eventual end of promoting or reducing women's status and participation was tangential to the main purpose of advancing the position of those engaged in a tussle for power.

Meanwhile the general public had no qualms about voting for Fatima Jinnah earlier or for Benazir Bhutto later as heads of government and for other women standing and winning from general seats.

During the 1988 election campaign the question of whether a woman could be head of government/state in a Muslim country was raised as a campaign issue by forces opposing the PPP. Once Benazir assumed power as head of government, politico-religious groups revived the issue as a means of destabilizing her government. Parties like the Jamaat-e-Islami which had supported Fatima Jinnah's candidature in 1965 now found themselves in direct conflict with their earlier *fatwa*.

In 1989 Maulvi Manzoor Chinioti, well-known for his anti-women stand, coordinated an effort to collect *fatwas* against women being head of state/government. By September-October the campaign intensified and anti-women slogans/posters were placed all over major cities. The level to which the opposition was willing to stoop was exemplified in a meeting at Lahore's Mochi Gate on 11 September 1989, where speeches made by top level IJI leaders exceeded the norms of decency to such an extent that even the Muslim League women were constrained to protest. When in response to these attacks, WAF demonstrated and marched to Parliament House in Islamabad, IJI members of parliament including their two female members Syeda Abida Hussain and Dr. Attiya Inayatullah came out to apologize.

Interestingly, post the 1993 elections the Jamaat-e-Islami and the Jamiat-Ulema-Islam appear to have grudgingly come around to accepting Benazir's right to be the elected head of government. It is too early (and, given Pakistan's history, would be foolhardy) to state that religious argumentation will not be used to oppose a woman being head of government in the future. But whether this specific issue is raised or not, religiously formulated positions that argue for gender segregation and female seclusion (i.e. *purdah*) shall probably continue to be espoused by the more conservative political forces. As seen, *purdah* limits women's access to resources in general (economic, informational and political); it also restricts women's mobility and visibility both of which negatively affect their political participation at all levels: from the simple act of casting a vote, to standing as candidates.

## Government Provisions and Attitudes

Starting with such debilitating handicaps, women's political participation has had to rely - to a great extent - on the sitting government's attitude towards this participation and the special provisions made to incorporate women in the political process. Additionally the lack of effective mass female mobilization outside the periods of elections or specific movements, and the lack of lobbies for women's rights and participation has undercut the ability of the few national level women politicians and representatives to radically broaden the avenues for women's general political participation.

**Government Attitudes:** Each successive government in Pakistan has not been progressively more supportive of women and their participation: women's participation has increased or decreased in fits and starts. Those who assumed state power at Independence were coloured by a liberal position on women and some measures were adopted in their favour: universal franchise, equal rights to education and employment and reserved seats for women in the national and provincial legislatures. Unfortunately the subversion of the democratic process by a decade of martial and quasi-martial law prevented women from enjoying the first and last provisions.

Between 1956 and 1970, governments encouraged women to participate but not in the political process so much as in the social welfare sector and government departments. Exceptional women were posted as ambassadors but on the whole politics was not seen as an appropriate arena for women's participation or one where their presence was necessary. Nor, it would seem, did women seriously consider politics a career. Post the overthrow of the Ayub government and the traumatic experience of a civil war that led to the independent state of Bangladesh, the political arena assumed much greater importance.

The 1973 Constitution accorded a much better status to women with Article 25 specifically stating that there shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex alone. Other measures were taken to widen and strengthen women's participation, such as the formation of the PPP's Women's Wing, and the creation of party provincial centres.

With Gen. Zia ul Haq's Martial Law and his subsequent domination of the political process as President until his death, the years 1977 to 1988 mark a period in which the ruling authorities actively mobilized against women's participation in all spheres of life and accompanied this with measures rescinding women's rights and reducing their public visibility. The Council of Islamic Ideology (a constitutionally created body) has been responsible for some of the most retrogressive opinions regarding women's rights. Negative advice to the legislature and legislation reducing women's legal and social status created immense problems for women in general and militated against women's participation in politics. When Martial Law was lifted in 1985, the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution was passed validating and indemnifying all ordinances passed by the Martial Law and leaving undiminished the problems women faced in many areas of law.

However it is interesting that attempts to limit women's political participation - even when proposed - were never enacted; some women were included in the Majlis-e-Shoora (see constitutional provisions for reserved seats, below) and Special Interest seats were reserved for women in the Local Bodies. The quota of reserved seats for women was doubled (to 10%) and equally surprising, both local and national elections saw more women participate than before. However it must be said that this participation was despite government attitudes rather than in consequence.

During the 1988 Benazir period, the Women's Division was given the status of a full ministry and renamed the Ministry for Women's Development which, in collaboration with the UN (1990) adopted a development oriented approach to women's well-being including expanding their economic self-sufficiency as well as social, legal and political awareness. During Ms. Bhutto's tenure the research wing of the Ministry of Women Development set up 5 committees<sup>24</sup> related to women's rights. It was also suggested that the Ministry serve as the secretariat for a permanent commission on Women in Development (WID). In June 1990 at the second SAARC Ministerial Meeting on Women in Development, Nusrat Bhutto proposed an eleven-point strategy for facilitating the formulation of a joint, comprehensive and direct approach to integrate women into the development process, including a clause for maximizing the number of female ministers. The PPP also tabled the idea of an Islamic Women's Parliamentary Group. But the concrete measures during this period were far less significant than the creation of a general environment and attitudes which were supportive of women's participation and a greater willingness to interact with independent women's advocacy groups and individuals.

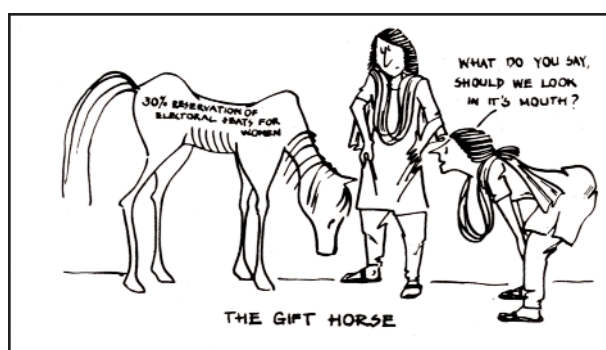
The Islami Jamhoori Ittehad government which came into power in 1990 ignored the question of women's reserved seats in the assemblies and chose to turn a blind eye to discriminatory laws such as the Hudood Ordinances. After four decades, women's presence in the National Assembly was reduced to 2 out of 217 seats, less than one percent of the legislators. The IJI government of Nawaz Sharif tended to ignore women, for example leaving them out of economic reforms altogether.

With the return of the PPP government (in 1993), it is hoped that more concrete measures will be adopted by the government in all aspects of women's lives.

**Constitutional Provisions for Reserved Seats:** Since Independence, various government initiatives have tried to promote women's political participation, or at least ensure that women are not entirely excluded from political structures by introducing a quota for reserved seats for women in public office. These provisions have to be seen against the background of the general policies on and attitudes towards women introduced in each period.

The first step was taken by the women members of the Constituent Assembly tabling a bill (Charter of Women's Rights) that demanded equality of status and a 5 percent quota of reserved seats for women. The number of reserved seats finally approved in 1954, approximated 3 percent. Subsequently, the 1956 Constitution stipulated a double franchise for women with women's reserved seats based on territorial representation. (See chart: Constitutional Provisions for Reserved Seats and Women Representatives).

The importance of these provisions was that they would have obliged women seeking political office to canvas votes from a particular constituency - ensuring public interaction which would have served as a training ground for later contesting a general seat. The territorial basis of these seats would have also enabled elected women to strengthen their political base and therefore stature.



Women in Action, ISIS International, 1/94

Unfortunately, national elections were never held under this Constitution. Ayub Khan's martial law entirely rejected the principle of universal franchise in favour of a five-tiered system in which only the local body representatives (Basic Democrats) were elected by universal franchise. This entirely male electoral college (comprising some 80,000 members) then voted for all higher tiers including the presidency. Women voters did not therefore participate in the 1965 elections in which - ironically enough - Fatima Jinnah stood for the country's highest political office.

Ayub's 1962 Constitution did reserve six seats for women in the National Assembly but stipulated that these were not to be elected by direct franchise (female or male) but by the deputies of the provincial assemblies (later amended to members of Parliament). Deputies increased from 150 to 218 so women's reserved seats represented between 4 and 0.9 percent of the total respectively. The mode of indirect elections reduced the six women members of the National Assembly to being tokens with no political power.

The principle of indirect elections for women's reserved seats introduced by Ayub has been upheld in each subsequent constitution (see chart overleaf) and has proved to have a far reaching and negative impact on women's political participation. The procedure suits male dominated political parties since it provides them with a means for increasing their share of the total seats in the assemblies without obliging them to commit themselves to women's issues.

But in spite of party constraints some women on reserved seats have taken the initiative to support or table issues.<sup>25</sup> However support for these initiatives even from within their own parties was seldom forthcoming. Little or no weightage was given to such concerns by male parliamentarians.

The 1973 Constitution increased women's reserved seats to 5 percent in the national and provincial assemblies but maintained the principle of indirect elections. The insufficient quota and the problems endemic to the procedure of filling the reserved seats on the basis of electoral colleges were recognized by women as early as 1976 when the Pakistan Women's Rights Committee submitted its report. In her Note of Dissent, Nasima Sultana Akmut proposed several alternatives precisely because she felt that indirect elections made women representatives primarily accountable to male legislators rather than to women (See appendix II). Amongst other suggestions she recommended that it be made obligatory for political parties to have party lists that "contain women candidates of not less than a prescribed ratio - not less than 20%, preferably 25%".

Her dissenting note was to form the basis of the recommendations of the 1986 Commission on the Status of Women Report regarding women's political participation. (See appendix III). Indicating the lack of progress in the intervening years, the later Commission's report again highlighted the disadvantages of delinking women's political representation from popular constituencies, and recommended:

- at least 20% of seats should be reserved for women in the National and Provincial Assemblies;
- at least 2 seats be reserved for non-Muslim women in the National Assembly;
- women on reserved seats be directly elected by women. (They did not however discuss the important issue of delimiting constituencies for the purpose);
- a political party which does not have at least 20% women membership should not be allowed to contest elections; and



- at the local level, a minimum of two women in each Union Council in all provinces.

In the meantime Gen. Zia-ul-Haq replaced the elected assemblies and in 1981 installed a nominated Federal Advisory Council - the Majlis-i-Shoora. Its main purpose was to give the regime a semblance of legitimacy by inducting members of the dominant socio-economic strata into the ambit of state patronage.<sup>26</sup> Whatever the general political purpose, from the perspective of women's political participation it is significant that despite the numerous other negative legal, administrative and public/cultural measures initiated at the time, General Zia did appoint twenty women as functionaries in the Majlis. While women members were largely token representatives, they managed to make their presence felt on some issues, testifying to the importance of even token representatives if they are vocal.<sup>27</sup>

Under Zia's regime the Ansari Commission was appointed in July 1983 to present an 'Islamic' political framework. Its report presented in August 1983 attempted to limit women's participation. It recommended that there be separate electorates for women and men;<sup>28</sup> that the office of the head of state be closed for women and non-Muslims; and that women candidates to the assembly be above 50 years of age and have written permission from their husbands to contest seats.<sup>29</sup> The recommendations of the Ansari Commission were never acted upon and, signalling a change in times, Zia instead doubled the quota of reserved seats for women (to 10%) in 1984 and thirteen women contested from general seats in the non-party based elections of 1985.

After the 1988 elections that brought Benazir Bhutto to power, the life span of the provision of reserved seats for women lapsed. Given the low number of women who contested general seats in 1988 it was clear that women's presence in the assemblies would require special affirmative action. In November 1989 the Cabinet sought consensus for the extension of the provisions in the Constitution regarding reserved seats for women in the national and provincial assemblies. The Federal Minister for Women's Affairs, Rehana Sarwar, was directed to approach different political parties to gauge their point of view and on November 30, 1989 a bill on women's reserved seats was moved in the Upper House by Senators Mohammed Ali Hoti, Dr. Noor Jahan Panezai and Syed Fasih Iqbal. Before the bill could be acted upon the Bhutto government was dismissed in August 1990, and the possibility of extending reserved seats for women through a constitutional amendment requiring two-thirds support of the National Assembly and the Senate, receded. The new IJI government under Mian Nawaz Sharif did amend the Constitution (through the Twelfth Amendment in 1991) but failed to take action with regarding women's seats.

With the return of Ms. Bhutto's government in late 1993, one of the first bills to be drafted has been on women's reserved seats. The contents of this bill are not known since at the time of writing it has not been tabled due to procedural complaints by the PML(N) Opposition (which announced that it wanted a single bill presenting all Constitutional amendments), and the matter is under negotiation.

However it is clear that merely reserving seats is not enough to mainstream women's political participation. Reserved seats need to be territorially based if they are to ensure interaction between women politicians and their constituencies and help break down the attitudinal barriers of purdah and women's invisibility. They would also have to be accompanied by far more impressive measures in the social, economic and legal fields.

## INTERACTION BETWEEN ADVOCACY GROUPS AND POLITICAL ACTORS

### Independent Advocacy Groups

In the interface between women's issues and the political process there is no doubt that the presence or absence of independent women's advocacy groups whose principle commitment is to women and not a political party can make a major difference. The need for women politicians to link up with a lobby outside parliament was recognized by the first female legislators. Unfortunately, the decade of martial law suspending the political process in 1958 stunted the potential development of more solid and continuous linkages between women politicians and women active in other fields such as development, the law or even social welfare. Later, during the seventies, women active in the political arena operated strictly within the confines of their own parties or political groups with little inter-communication and support. During this period women's issues were, more often than not, subsumed in general political agendas and it is only in the eighties, with the emergence of WAF - initially a lobby-cum-pressure group which brought together women's organizations and individuals to press for women's rights - that an organization emerged which could play a linking role.

**Formation of a Women's Lobby:** Most active between 1981 and 1988, WAF was initiated and led by middle and upper-middle class professional women from the large urban centres of Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad. (A fourth chapter in Peshawar was only sporadically visible.) Supported by a broader spectrum of women (mostly working but also housewives), WAF's membership never exceeded several hundred in each city. Its activists were predominantly not seeking political careers or office and viewed WAF's role essentially as a lobby-cum-pressure group. It did not launch a mass movement or mobilize women nationwide but nonetheless had a major impact in the political arena by:

- putting women on the national agenda, ensuring that the government and political parties (progressive as well as conservative) addressed the issue;
- actively and publically mobilizing women to resist all discriminatory laws and directives such as the Hudood Ordinances.<sup>30</sup> It delayed the enactment of the Law of Evidence for two years and when finally passed in 1984, it was substantially modified. More dramatically, the Law of Qisas and Diyat tabled in 1984 was passed only recently in 1992 under the Twelfth Amendment to the Constitution, with the clauses discriminating against women deleted;
- putting forward a charter of demands for women as regards their rights and circulating this to political parties some of which like the Qaumi Mahaz-e-Azadi and Tehrik-e-Istaqlal adopted some of the demands. (See appendix IV).
- catalyzing new women's advocacy groups and reorienting existing ones.

**Pressure Group Strategies:** Until 1981, women's organizations had lobbied with the sitting governments in an amicable face-to-face manner, always considering government representatives as either supportive or indifferent. Even when public demonstrations were held they did not bring mobilized women into conflict with the government so much as with political forces outside government (e.g. in the 50's and 60's when women demonstrated for reforms in Family Laws the confrontation was with religions / conservative groups). The circumstances after 1979 were radically different and interaction between the government and the women's lobby was characterized by



Subha, Shirkat Gah

open confrontation and hostility.

Since the government itself was initiating the anti-women measures, the women's lobby was convinced that what was needed was to bring pressure to bear on it from the outside.

The women's lobby led by WAF successfully learnt pressure group tactics - defying bans and regulations to regularly hold demonstrations and other forms of loud and visible protest. The irritant value created by a small group of women (supported from time to time by others) was enough to force the government to respond. Consequently where the government was concerned WAF's primary role was more that of a 'pressure' group than a lobby.

**Lobbying:** WAF's lobbying activities were primarily geared towards mobilizing public support and influencing organizations of civil society such as trade unions, concerned citizens groups and political parties.

At least in partial response to lobbying by WAF, some trade unions (and federations) have started addressing women's issues. PILER (Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research) for instance, has established good working relationships with WAF and several other women's organizations. The interaction has expanded the field of concern of trade unions to include the families of male workers and women's specific concerns many of which have little to do with the workplace. PILER has set up two Working Women's Centres in Karachi to address problems facing women workers.

WAF catalyzed the creation of several new advocacy oriented women's organizations formed by individual members (such as Simorgh, Aurat, Bedari etc.) and its sub-committee War Against Rape evolved into a full-fledged organization that, surprisingly, has as at least as many men as women activists. It also successfully interacted with older women's organizations, resulting in a sharper focus on women's rights within these groups. At the political level, the existence and activism of WAF was directly responsible for orienting organizations such as the Sindhiani Tehrik on women's issues.

Sindhiani Tehrik came into the public eye in 1982. Its main objective has been a large scale grass-roots organization of both urban and rural Sindhi women through regular interaction, meetings and study circles. Politically active on general issues of importance

to the Awami Tehrik such as opposing the Kalabagh Dam and the repatriation of Biharis from Bangladesh, Sindhiani Tehrik's activities include discussions on the ills of feudalism, talks about socialism, education and on demonstrating how Islam has been used to subjugate women. It produces and disseminates literature and has used religious meetings as a strategy for reaching out to women as it feels that working within commonly acceptable formats may be one way to enlist support for and by women.

Sindhiani Tehrik has cooperated with WAF on women's concerns and has campaigned against early marriages and polygyny, and has demanded the right of consent in marriage for women and greater education, agitating for more reserved seats for women in medical colleges and other institutions. It has a mutually beneficial relationship with WAF in particular but also with other women's advocacy groups; contacts with WAF assist Sindhiani Tehrik to bring the problems of Sindhi rural women on the non-Sindhi and national agendas while Sindhiani Tehrik ensures that the issues raised by WAF reach a far wider audience than its urban activists could achieve.

**Impediments to Effectiveness:** In terms of direct interaction and lobbying with political parties and politicians, WAF's performance is less than what could have been expected. Reasons stem firstly from the circumstances under which it came into existence and secondly from the backgrounds of its activists.

Firstly, WAF was formed at a time when political parties and activities had been banned and when each passing week seemed to bring a new ordinance, proposal, or directive that undermined women's rights or status. Starting as a reactive body, WAF's strength was in quick response public activism on a specific issue. Secondly, refusing as a matter of principle to accept any funding from any government, bilateral or international agency, the floating nature of the platform turned organization - with neither full-time workers nor infrastructural facilities - was not conducive to evolving long term sustainable campaigns. That WAF did sustain campaigns on legal issues, violence and individual cases goes to its credit. However WAF did not manage, despite discussions along this line, to be proactive. Thirdly, as a lobby, it was hampered by the deep seated distrust its members had regarding the martial law authorities that it found itself in conflict with. A number of its members categorically refused to lobby with an 'undemocratic, unelected' government that had 'no legitimacy to rule'. Lobbying, when it did take place was not encouraging.

Those within WAF who felt that, irrespective of procedure and legitimacy, once enacted laws were far more difficult to amend or rescind (as exemplified by the Hudood Ordinances), did try to lobby with the Majlis-e-Shoora in 1983 (particularly with its female members) on the proposed Law of Evidence. It is difficult to gauge the effectiveness of this lobbying attempt marked as it was by mutual distrust. Most of the Majlis women members viewed WAF as radical women who defied martial law regulations to demonstrate and, therefore, a group to be avoided; while the WAF women considered the Majlis women as persons who were naive or opportunistic enough to join hands with a dictatorship. That the proposed laws of evidence and qisas and diyat (retribution and bloodmoney) were eventually radically modified prior to being passed as ordinances has more to do with successful pressure group tactics than with lobbying abilities.

In terms of its membership, WAF had singularly few politicians amongst its activists though otherwise the professional range was fairly impressive covering virtually every profession (e.g. lawyers, teachers, social and economic scientists, business women, social workers, artists, trade unionists and middle-level development workers). Some of

the women had previous political experience but usually outside the framework of the parliamentary and electioneering processes. The lack of political experience can be gauged from the fact that having collected tens of thousands of signatures from all over the country in its first campaign, WAF members were at a loss on what to do with these; neither holding a press conference nor issuing a press release (eventually the packet was presented to the President via a woman politician). Entering the political arena was for most of these women a learning process holding press conferences and issuing press releases for example came long after - not before - arranging large gatherings, demonstrations and pickets. The few women politicians affiliated with WAF provided some level of guidance, but the input was limited and they too failed to initiate a mechanism for sustained interaction between WAF and political parties.

Finally, when it was formed WAF stated that it was a non-political body for two reasons: (a) given the complete ban on political activities, the label was intended to preempt adverse government action but (b) the label was also intended to encourage participation from the widest possible spectrum of concerned women's groups and individuals many of whom would have shied away from something designated (or that could be construed) as political. It is important to bear in mind that long periods of martial law erode the political space even after they have been lifted.

The 'non-political' nomenclature was therefore strategic and allowed WAF to consciously exploit the narrow gap between what were deemed 'strictly women's issues' and what was considered unquestionably 'political'. Indeed, it took several years of activism before the general membership of WAF itself accepted the intrinsic relationship between the general political process and women's rights (in 1984-85). This factor explains some of the initial reluctance to build more concrete working links with political party activists.

## Interaction with Political Actors

The few links that did exist with women politicians encouraged WAF to formulate a brief political agenda for including women in the manifestos of political parties. The agenda was floated to political parties signatory to the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD) between 1983 and 1986. Parts of the WAF statement were incorporated into the manifestos of the Qaumi Mahaz-e-Azadi and Tehrik-e-Istaqlal (both having limited popular support). Yet neither the parties nor WAF strengthened ties. In WAF's case the arms-length distance in lobbying was at least partially due to an intense conviction that a women's group had to be completely autonomous and the fear that too close an association carried the risk of the organization being swamped by any given political party, none of which had till then displayed any convincing evidence of a commitment to women's rights.

With the revival of democracy and elections in 1988, WAF brought out a Charter of Demands presenting a more comprehensive women's political perspective. This was again circulated to political parties, but once again insufficient effort was made to lobby with parties and party members with the aim of having the demands incorporated in party manifestos. Additionally, groups associated with WAF printed pamphlets explaining to women the importance of using their right to vote and encouraging women to look at the party's agenda on women before casting their ballot.

Subsequently between 1988-90, WAF sent material on issues to the legislators and then (as in the subsequent government's tenure), the Islamabad WAF chapter actively lobbied

parliament members to improve the rights and status of women. Some lessons were learnt in lobbying techniques, and some level of understanding of the workings of government achieved, but too late, for instance, to prevent the Shariat Act being passed in 1990. NGOs in general - whether WAF or others - rarely have sufficient knowledge or understanding of how legislation is actually passed, the stages it goes through, the channels through and timing at which lobbying or mobilizing public opinion can make a difference.

## The Current Situation

The years 1981-85 mark a formative period for today's women's advocacy groups. Experience reinforced belief in the need for an independent women's lobby (or lobbies) not affiliated with any political party and able to maintain its distance from government. Given historical circumstances, pressure group tactics developed more rapidly than lobbying strategies. Lobbying when it occurred focused on other special interest groups and the public at large. Less emphasis was placed on lobbying with either political parties or government institutions. Consequently in 1988 with a democratically elected government, the women's lobby found itself ill-equipped to effectively intervene in the political arena.

The revival in 1988 of the political process had other ramifications for the women's lobby. The commonality of purpose defined by opposition to a martial or quasi-martial law government unfavourable to women disappeared and political differences among the women activists and groups loosely brought together through WAF surfaced. In the changed circumstances, the sense of urgency that had earlier mobilized and activated women dissipated and with it the level of many women's involvement fell. Simultaneously many women who had accorded their own professional careers and/or organizations secondary importance to WAF in the previous years, focused greater attention on these. Finally in the absence of new problematic proposals or legislation/directives, WAF was not able to take the initiative in proactive advocacy strategies. Since 1988 women's groups have learnt to lobby, but the initiative has often been taken by groups other than WAF.

By 1993, the experiences of women's advocacy groups and political parties led both to recognize the value of greater cooperation and collaboration. After a decade of activism women's advocacy groups (of which there are now many) are self-confident of being able to maintain their independence while establishing contacts and links with others. To some extent women's groups associated with WAF and those associated with the Joint Action Committees (initiated by WAF) have learnt to lobby with both the bureaucracy and with political parties.

Meanwhile, advocacy groups and NGOs in general have gained a respectability and acceptance they did not previously enjoy. The process has been greatly facilitated by the fact that individual members of these groups have independently received professional recognition in development forums nationally and internationally and have integrated their professional concerns with their advocacy concerns to a much greater extent than had ever previously existed. (For instance if government representatives find it relatively simple to dismiss a WAF member when she argues for women's greater rights, the same individual as a well-recognized professional consultant making the same point complete with data and analysis is more difficult to dismiss.) On the human rights front, far more closely associated with politics in general, the same phenomenon can be seen with

individual activists gaining international recognition for their efforts. All of this has contributed to the changed circumstances in 1993.

The 1993 elections saw greater maturity in lobbying strategies by different women's organizations. WAF brought out its revised Charter of Demands (see [appendix IV](#)) which it sent to each political party. Others such as the Women's Legal Aid Cell of AGHS printed posters and flyers on women's rights and voting. Some joined the efforts of the HRCP to monitor elections but perhaps the most interesting effort was undertaken by Aurat which invited different levels of women from all major political parties (each separately) for a dialogue. They tabled issues that have been taken up by WAF and discussed these with the women politicians in an effort to evolve some minimal level of consensus on women's issues. The Charter of Demands was discussed for inclusion in the party manifestos. Aurat also focused on getting the attention of female voters. Motivational songs were circulated, posters depicting women's electoral strength were pasted and pamphlets handed out which encouraged women to be responsible voters.



Certainly the greater attention of major political parties to women's issues, the promise by both the PPP and the PML(N) to sign the UN CEDAW convention and other manifesto and campaign promises are the fruit of women's advocacy groups over the last decade.

After the elections, at a workshop on the impact of the 'Islamisation' of criminal laws on women<sup>31</sup>, it was suggested that efforts should be pooled on initiatives already begun in the areas of women and politics, and formulating legislative change in family law, criminal law, etc. Participants agreed that advocacy groups need to mobilize to (a) evolve a consensus in terms of minimum common demands and (b) to lobby with politicians and political parties. The inclusion of systematic lobbying with political parties across the spectrum is new and a trend that needs to be strengthened. However, this would also require far greater knowledge regarding the political process and parliamentary affairs than most groups now possess. Recently, the need for greater interaction between women's groups and women politicians has been recognized by both sides. In May 1994, WAF took the initiative to build consensus around the issue of women's political representation, consciously involving women from major political parties.

## CONCLUSION

Pakistan's recent history reveals a recognition by political parties of the female electorate as a vote bank to be drawn upon when needed, but there have been insufficient measures by parties and government to encourage women's political participation in mainstream politics.

From the start, women's NGOs and activists have viewed the status of women as intrinsically linked to their greater political participation. From Begum Shahnawaz, who prepared the charter of women's rights in 1954 to Women's Action Forum's Statement of Demands (1988) and, most recently lobbying by advocacy groups in the 1993 elections (see appendix IV) - the struggle to sustain women's political participation while improving their status has been a continuous one. Against a background of women's general marginalization, it was mainly exceptional women like Begum Shahnawaz who, in the past, were active both on the political front as well as lobbying for women's rights outside the party agenda. Despite the formation of WAF in the eighties and the impetus it gave to advocacy for women's rights and political participation, much remains to be done.

Obstacles that prevent women's full participation have to be removed and measures taken to assist and promote the development of women's political leadership. There is a need for consistent advocacy at the policy level to press for official as well as legislative provisions that enhance and facilitate women's active involvement in political life. This is far easier said than done. The obstacles confronting women are diverse, operate at multiple levels simultaneously and reinforce each other. Some are so deeply ingrained in the social fabric that they elude short term objectives-specific interventions. The norms of purdah are a case in point. Clearly the slow process of changing societal norms and attitudes, increasing the visibility, status and autonomy of women in all spheres and improving the access of women to resources and facilities are long term objectives that must be the ultimate aim of all interventions.

Before either political parties or the government adopt appropriate measures to encourage women's political participation, they need to feel a substantial and vocal support for the issue. This depends on making heard women's voices in the political arena through active women's lobbies that create a groundswell of opinion and operate outside the framework of political parties.

Today, the traditional means of interaction amongst women and of information gathering by women are insufficient to address the needs defined by the rapidly changing parameters of and forces affecting their society. At the intersection between community and national concerns women risk being completely excluded from all decision-making processes.

Ideally, political parties should have assumed the initiative and responsibility for interacting with their female constituencies, unfortunately this has not been so and even the number of women politicians integrated into the main party structures is too negligible to make a difference. For their part, the women's wings have been virtually reduced to mobilizational tools used for canvassing votes in elections. Political, economic or social issues are rarely discussed in these wings and members are singularly lacking in political knowledge as well as skills.

In this respect the Sindhiani Tehrik is an exception, both in terms of its consistent



high-profile activism and in terms of its internal level of political consciousness and focus on women's rights.

In every political party, women are grossly under represented at the leadership level. The traditional routes to leadership impede rather than enhance the entry of women, while, so far, women's wings have not become a launching pad for women who want to later enter mainstream politics. In fact, despite all the exceptionally positive aspects of the Sindhiani Tehrik it is unclear whether it provides an effective channel through which women can enter into general politics beyond women-specific concerns since no woman has made this transition.

Nor have the reserved seats for women through indirect elections provided an effective training ground though this was definitely one of the original intentions. The major drawback of previous provisions has been the isolation from any sort of popular constituency of the women who come through the reserved seats. Their inclusion in parliament, provincial assemblies, and local bodies is useful only to the extent that it provides an opportunity for women to gain an understanding of parliamentary and administrative procedures. Women who have gained an understanding can constitute a valuable resource pool for women outside parliament. However, in terms of leadership training, without being obliged to seek votes through interaction with a constituency, women on these seats can never hope to gain the experience needed to enter the main political arena, nor can they achieve the political standing that would give them independent political weightage.

A final drawback of indirectly elected reserved seats is that they reinforce the impression of women being incapable of holding their own in a non-protected political arena. It encourages political parties not to field women in elections thereby depriving politicians of the opportunity to develop stronger leadership qualities and presence. While reserved seats are still needed, a new mechanism needs to be devised.

As far as the vital issue of advocacy and networking is concerned a few factors need to be kept in mind:

- there are no women's political caucuses in Pakistan;
- two-way interaction and discourse between the political leadership and other organizations (women's, human rights, trade union, development NGOs etc.) is not common;
- on-going communication and linkages between non-governmental organizations is also rare. A few groups, however, have attempted to bring together different NGOs in the pursuit of common goals;
- networking at the regional and international level is determined by the scope of activities of a particular NGO. A few women NGOs have the status of ECOSOC registration (e.g. APWA), others are part of international federations (Soroptimist Club, Business and Professional Women's Association, etc.), yet others have links and interact with regional organizations (WAF, for instance) and some with global women's rights and human rights networks;
- only some of the development-oriented and women's rights organizations disseminate information through newsletters, publications, and films (e.g. Aurat, Shirkat Gah, etc.) and maintain libraries and documentation centres.

While women's groups, NGOs and government organizations do cooperate on specific programmes and projects from time to time, there has been little in terms of joint political effort, apart from APWA's prior to 1961 and WAF's since the early eighties.

The greatest need is for increased cooperation among advocacy groups and an umbrella platform that can help evolve a consensus on and present a common agenda. This requires further and more efficient networking. The most pressing need is in procedures and lobbying techniques.

To be effective lobbying requires considerable preliminary work in researching issues and formulating policy positions. For this, through interaction with women politicians, research groups need to function as think tanks and provide the informational and conceptual base for policy discussions.

In the final analysis, however legal provisions can only open doors and are therefore necessary but not sufficient to bring about widespread meaningful participation. For their part, government measures depend on political will and commitment to improving women's participation which, as we have seen, varies significantly from one period to the next. Ultimately it is a combination of efficient lobbying and effective political leadership that permanently changes the parameters of women's political participation for the better by helping bring about greater autonomy for women in all aspects of their lives.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the state of women's political participation in Pakistan and the manner in which it has developed, it is imperative that a combination of actions be taken a) to remove the barriers in the way of women, b) to maximize women's political participation and create opportunities for the enhancement of women's political leadership potentials and skills; and c) to improve networking and advocacy skills of women's lobbies and non-governmental organizations.

### Removing Barriers

The basic measure recommended for ensuring the removal of social, economic and legal barriers is the establishment of a Permanent Commission on the Status of Women composed of government representatives, women politicians and independent women's advocacy and research groups. This Commission would function as a think-tank on women's issues, commission policy research and ensure that effective measures are being adopted and implemented in the field of development, rights and politics.

At the socio-economic level, the Commission should make sure that, for example, all official statistics are rectified and disaggregated to cover women's economic contribution in the family and economy and to accurately reflect the female labour force participation;

- the budget gives priority to women in social sectors i.e. education, health, family and economic initiatives;
- women are involved in the planning, implementation and monitoring of all government and non-government development efforts;
- law-enforcing agencies are reformed, gender-sensitized and include female staff;<sup>32</sup> and that
- a positive, progressive and non-sexist attitude to women is adopted in all media.

At the legal level the Commission should lobby for the repeal of the Eighth and Twelfth Amendments to the Constitution and all discriminatory laws such as the Hudood Ordinances, Qanoon-e-Shahadat (Law of Evidence) etc, and for the enactment of positive legislation favourable to women.

### Maximizing Participation and Representation

Specific measures need to be adopted to accelerate women's political participation. Forums/avenues/activities throughout Pakistan could allow them to congregate and collectively discuss issues of relevance to themselves as women and as citizens. Some measures are merely procedural and can be immediately adopted. Others which are constitutional in nature may need a groundswell of opinion for women's participation. Women's advocacy abilities should be strengthened. All measures need to be supported through training programmes for women in the political process (both politicians and non-politicians).

## Voting

To enable women to enjoy their de jure right to vote, electoral lists need immediate and systematic updating so that all eligible women are registered. Electoral rolls also require urgent rationalization: deletion of deceased persons and repetitions and correction of existing names (spellings, nicknames etc.).

As long as voting rights are contingent on ID cards: women should maintain their original ID cards issued as “daughters of”; ID card numbers should be included in all electoral rolls to avoid confusion, and photographs be made mandatory on all ID cards.

## Reserved Seats

Without even the quota of reserved seats women run the risk of being completely marginalized in the political process and the reserved seats for women need to be revived. To promote female political leadership and facilitate mainstreaming of women in politics it is recommended that:

- At least 20 percent seats be reserved for women at all levels: local bodies, provincial and national assemblies;
- The election procedure be directly linked to general seats. Women should stand for general seats. Those who win would automatically be inducted. Unsuccessful female candidates would constitute the pool from which women would fill the reserved seats. In decreasing order of votes polled, the number of women equivalent to the quota would become members of assemblies or local bodies;

This would ensure interaction with popular territorially defined constituencies as well as direct elections, while avoiding the impracticality of vast constituencies (as experienced in the current reserved seats for minorities). Finally it would encourage parties to integrate women into the main party structures and field them as candidates;

- It be mandatory for all parties to include a minimum of 10 percent women as their candidates; and
- 20 percent of the seats in the Senate be reserved for women. (pt.17 from WAF Statement of Demands)

## Training

Training programmes are essential for women politicians, concerned women's lobbies and women voters. For politicians, training in the following areas are recommended:

- leadership training of middle and top level politicians;
- training of women's wings and political leadership (middle tiered and leadership levels) in the techniques of political mobilization that increases women's participation in the political process;
- on women's issues and the political process for women's wings; and
- similar training programmes devised for women members of local bodies.

## Improving Advocacy and Networking

Increased lobbying skills and better integration of research and advocacy activities would improve advocacy. Networking requires concerted efforts on the part of those involved and appropriate forums to bring together advocacy groups, politicians and government representatives. Another requisite of effective monitoring is the availability of infrastructural facilities that allow consistent monitoring, intervention and follow-up. The following points should be kept in mind when practicing advocacy and networking:

- advocacy groups and women politicians should be trained in the functioning of government judicial and parliamentary procedures;
- interaction between (a) advocacy groups and women politicians and (b) these and government functionaries should be promoted through appropriate workshops and forums; and
- existing development programmes should be encouraged to add a component on women's issues and the political process to mobilize a groundswell of opinion and to encourage women to make their presence felt. Women's NGOs who have advocacy programmes should be involved in these exercises.

## Induction of Women at Party Policy-Making Level

For all this to be meaningful, women would have to be represented in greater numbers and proportions in the top-level leadership of political parties. Therefore measures also need to be devised that encourage political parties to induct women at the policy-making level. One possible method would be for the government to institute committees on women's issues for which female political party representatives would be invited on condition that they have some authority.

## REFERENCES AND NOTES

- 1 Economic Survey 1992-92, Government of Pakistan
- 2 Economic Survey 1992-92, Government of Pakistan
- 3 Calculated from data obtained from the Ministry of Education, December 1984
- 4 'Primary Education Development Programme in NWFP and Baluchistan Education Management System'. The Baluchistan Government has agreed to revise its gender disaggregated enrollment data (reducing statistically recorded male enrollment and increasing that of females) as a result.
- 5 Farida Shaheed and Khawar Mumtaz, '*Women's Economic Participation in Pakistan: A Status Report*', Pictorial Printers, 1990
- 6 Ibid
- 7 In NWFP full-time women workers in farms are estimated at 89.54% whereas in Sindh 74.36% women are full-time. Punjab shows 55.6% whereas in Baluchistan only 16.04% of women are recorded as involved in full-time work. In Baluchistan 82.84% women are shown as involved in part-time work as opposed to 17.27% in Sindh and 8% in NWFP.
- 8 Farida Shaheed, '*Diversification of Women's Training and Employment in Pakistan*', 1987
- 9 Pakistan Economic Survey 1985-86, Finance Division, Economic Adviser's Wing, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad
- 10 Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 1990-1991, National Institute of Population Studies, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad
- 11 Khawar Mumtaz and Farida Shaheed '*Women of Pakistan: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back?*', Zed, 1987, p.40
- 12 Ibid, p.42
- 13 While thousands of women's organizations are registered throughout the country - mostly under the Social Welfare Department - they have not been reviewed here since they have little (if any) input in the political process and no advocacy programmes at all.
- 14 See Appendix IV: WAF's Charter of Demands
- 15 Baluchistan comprises over 40% of the land mass but only 9% of Pakistan's population.
- 16 Literally meaning 'refugees' - the term originally denoting refugees from North India who emigrated to Pakistan at Independence.
- 17 In the 1990 elections Syeda Abida Hussain was an IJI candidate but not a Muslim League member.
- 18 Dr. Sheela Charles was de-seated in 1996 after losing an election petition. However, in the 1997 elections, Mrs. Raj Hameed Gill was elected to a minority seat in the Punjab Assembly for the fifth time.

- 19 I.A. Rehman 'Women without Vote', The Frontier Post, Lahore 5.10.1993
- 20 See p.16 below
- 21 The 1990 turn out is a controversial topic since many believe the elections (bringing in a two-thirds majority win for the Muslim League-led Islami Jamhoori Ittehad coalition) were rigged.
- 22 Communicated to a Shirkat Gah member on monitoring duty for the HRCP.
- 23 Report of the Pakistan Commission on the Status of Women, Islamabad, 1985, (p.120)
- 24 These were:-
- i) Women's Legal Rights Committee
  - ii) Women's Legal Aid Committee
  - iii) Women's Committee for Karachi Abadis
  - iv) Women's Jail Committee
  - v) Women's committee on Bursting of Oil Stoves.
- 25 Further research on their contribution is being conducted by Shirkat Gah and will be available in a forthcoming Special Bulletin.
- 26 Ayesha Jalal, 'The State of Martial Rule', Vanguard Books Pvt. Ltd., 1991 (p.322)
- 27 The nominated Majlis-e-Shoora (that replaced an elected assembly) in 1984 counted 20 women in a total of 294 members. This consultative assembly passed laws drafted by the Council of Islamic Ideology in 1980 regarding Qisas (retribution) and Diyat (blood money). According to this law Diyat for a female victim would be half that of a man. Another section of the proposed law declared abortion under any circumstances illegal. From the debates held in the Majlis-i-Shoora it becomes evident that women were involved in most proceedings. Though the supposedly Islamic 1984 Law of Evidence was accepted by the women members of the Shoora with amendments, seriously undermining the equal status of women, on the Qisas and Diyat Laws the women of the Shoora made their presence felt. Before the Majlis came to an end in 1984 the women in the Shoora had created a bitter controversy over the Qisas and Diyat Laws. One must also not forget the contribution made by women's groups regarding these issues from outside the Majlis.
- 28 Separate electorates for non-Muslims was enacted.
- 29 The recommendations of the Ansari Commission as regards head of state were as follows:-
- The qualifications and criteria for the office of Amir-e-Mamlakat shall be the following:
- a) That he should be a Muslim and a male.
  - b) That he should have been at least for a period of ten years a citizen of Pakistan and a resident thereof.
  - c) That he should not be less than 40 years of age.

- d) That he should be physically and intellectually capable of performing satisfactorily the duties of the Amir.
  - e) That he should have adequate knowledge of Islamic teachings.
  - f) That he should practice the obligatory duties laid down by Islam and abstain from the major sins.
  - g) That he should not have since the establishment of Pakistan, opposed the ideology or integrity of Pakistan.
  - h) That he should be qualified to be elected a member of the Shoora.
- 30 The Hudood Ordinances cover theft, drunkenness, *qazf* (bearing false testimony) *zina* (adultery/fornication) and *zina bil jabr* (rape). The level of proof required for hadd (maximum punishment) is that four, adult, male, Muslim eyewitnesses of good reputation should see the act of penetration or it should be a voluntary confession. The law thus protects rapists, excludes women from testifying and confuses rape with *zina*. In 1980 soon after the Ordinances were passed, there were forty women in Multan Jail; a decade later more than 1500 were imprisoned, mostly under the Hudood Ordinances, reflecting their hugely negative impact on women. Meanwhile the Qanoon-e-Shahadat (Law of Evidence) established the principle that in financial and in matters of future obligations the evidence of two men or one man and two women would be required.
- 31 In connection with an on-going project on Women and Law in Pakistan.
- 32 For example since 1988 there has been an increase in recorded incidents of violence against women including rape in custody. A factor could be better reporting in the media. Many women's organizations had raised these issues in the press and held demonstrations. As a result of the campaign by women's groups against rape in custody a separate police station for women was introduced in Lahore and a woman DSP was appointed. In 1994, Section 167 of the Criminal Procedure Code was amended. Police are not to confine women accused (except in extreme cases of murder or dacoity) in the police lock-up. All women accused are to be held in jail and their removal for the purposes of investigation must be granted in writing by a Magistrate and be conducted by an investigating officer not below the rank of Sub-Inspector who is also to be accompanied by a female police officer appointed by a Magistrate. All interrogations by police taking place in jail must be in the presence of a jail officer and a female police officer.





# **APPENDICES**

- Appendix I     Extracts from Women's Rights  
                         Committee Report (1976)
  
- Appendix II    Extracts from Status of Women  
                         Commission Report (1986)
  
- Appendix III   Extracts from 1993 Party  
                         Manifestos PML(N) and PPP
  
- Appendix IV    WAF Charter of Demands



# Extracts from Report of the Pakistan Women's Rights Committee (1976)

Government of Pakistan - Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs (Law Division)

## Part II - Recommendations:

3. Women's committees should be formed in every village to perform multiple functions such as settling disputes, motivational work, and creating awareness of rights and duties among the women in the village community.
6. An all-out campaign to give men and women a truer understanding of women's rights, to inculcate respect for women in the public and to do away with ambivalent attitudes towards women's work outside the home should be launched.

Each Ministry concerned should prepare pamphlets, brochures and leaflets on women's position with regard to Family Laws, political rights, employment rights, etc.

The media in general should be persuaded to take a progressive stance with regard to women and project their role as achievers.

The mosques should be used to impress upon the community the need to respect and honour women. The Imams should also pay attention to this subject. Women should be free to worship in mosques.

12. It is recommended that Government include representative from women's organizations on all bodies dealing with planning and policy making wherever the welfare and interests of women are concerned.
13. The Government must conscientiously follow a policy of including women in all boards, commissions, activities, and committees appointed by the Government or any purpose.

A list of qualified women should be maintained by the Government and while appointing any statutory bodies or ad hoc bodies of any nature, the qualified women must be included in such bodies.

A specific recommendation would be a compilation of directories of working women (who can be contacted) kept by NGO's, University career advisory services and employment exchanges.

- 87 Party manifestos should be expected to include a programme for increased

participation of women in the nation-building process.

- 88 All political parties should give a reasonable proportion of party offices to women.
- 89 The Election Commission may appoint women at different levels in their organization to ensure that the rights of the women electorate are adequately protected during electioneering and polling.
- 92 The Planning Commission should set up a special cell to look into ways and means to raise the status of women and increase their participation in productive activity through national development plans.
- 97 The Mass media should project the advantages of women working outside the home and the training and education of women and the participation of women in community and political life.

# Extracts from Commission on the Status of Women Report (1986)

## POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN POST-PARTITION ERA

The achievement of Independence was followed by the holocaust of communal strife, killings and mass migrations across the border. There was a colossal loss of life and widespread human misery on both sides. It was said that two million men, women and children died and some twenty million were uprooted. The women were the greatest sufferers and had to undergo the most bestial cruelties. The women of Pakistan came out in great numbers to face this emergency. A Government that had not been as yet properly set up could not have fulfilled its commitments without the active assistance of its women and students who made a tremendous contribution to the relief and rehabilitation of homeless millions who came from across the border.

Although women had played a prominent role in the political battle for freedom, and had borne the brunt of the communal frenzy, they were given a very poor deal when it came to sharing power in the newly established State. Only two women were included in the Constituent Assembly who served on such committees as Committee on Fundamental Rights and Minorities, Committee on Re-distribution of Seats in the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, Finance Committee, Basic Principles Committee, the Steering Committee. In 1951-52 elections, the women of the Punjab got the right to elect women representatives into the legislatures by a "2 vote franchise".

After 1954, the constitutional laws passed by the legislature or promulgated by the Government determined the extent of women's political participation which decided the political future of women.

Various provisions related to political role of women under different Constitutions of Pakistan are mentioned below:—

### 1956 Constitution

*Article 44: Composition of the National Assembly.*

- (1) The National Assembly shall consist of 300 members, one half of whom shall be elected by constituencies in East Pakistan and the other half by constituencies in West Pakistan.

- (2) In addition to the seats for the members mentioned in clause (1), there shall, for a period of 10 years from Constitution Day, be 10 seats reserved for women members only of whom 5 shall be elected by Constituencies in East Pakistan and five from the Constituencies in West Pakistan and Constituencies shall accordingly be delimited as Women's Territorial Constituencies for this purpose.

Provided that a woman, who, under this clause, is member of the Assembly at the time of the expiration of 10 years shall not cease to be a member until the assembly is dissolved.

*Article 77 (1):*

- (1) Subject to the succeeding clauses each provincial assembly shall consist of three hundred members.
- (2) In addition to the seats in each Provincial Assembly for the members mentioned in clause (1) there shall, for a period of ten years from the Constitution Day, be ten seats reserved in each Provincial Assembly for women members only; and constituencies shall accordingly be delimited as women's territorial constituencies for this purpose.

Provided that a women who, under this clause, is a member of the Provincial Assembly at the time of the expiration of the said period of ten years, shall not cease to be a member until the Assembly is dissolved.

It may be seen that in the 1956 Constitution women seats were based on territorial representation.

## 1962 Constitution

The 1962 Constitution discontinued the procedure of territorial representation. Instead, it introduced indirect elections as stipulated under the following provisions:-

*Article 20: Composition of the National Assembly.*

- (1) There shall be one hundred fifty six members of the National Assembly, one half of whom shall be elected in accordance with this Constitution and the law for the Province of East Pakistan and the other half of whom shall be elected from the Province of West Pakistan.
- (2) Three of the seats of members for each Province shall be reserved exclusively for women but this clause shall not be construed as making a woman ineligible for election to any other seat of the National Assembly.

*Article 71: The Provincial Legislature*

- (1) There shall be one hundred and fifty five members of the assembly of each Province, who shall be elected in accordance with this constitution and the law.

- (2) Five of the seats of members of the Assembly of each province shall be reserved exclusively for women, but this clause shall not be construed as making a woman ineligible for election to any other seat to the Assembly.

*Article 162:*

- (1) For the purpose of the election to the seats in the Provincial Assemblies reserved exclusively for women, the (Election) Commissioner shall, in accordance with law, from time to time divide each province into five zones.
- (2) For the purpose of the election of members to the seats in the National Assembly reserved exclusive for women, the (Election) Commissioner shall in accordance with law from time to time divide each province into three zones.

*Article 169:*

- (1) After a general election of members of a Provincial Assembly, the persons elected as members shall, before the first meeting of the Assembly, elect five members to the seats in the Assembly reserved exclusively for women, so that there is one woman member for each zone referred to in clause (1) of Article 162.
- (2) After a general election of the members of the National Assembly, the members of that Assembly elected from each Province shall, before the first meeting of the Assembly, elect three members to the seats in the National Assembly reserved exclusively for women for the Province, so that there is one woman member representing each zone formed under clause (2) of Article 162.

*Delimitation of Zones for Reserved Seats*

- (1) After completing the deliberation of constituencies under Section 13, the Commission shall divide each province. (161)—(i). For purposes of election of members to the seats in Provincial Assemblies reserved exclusively for women, the Commission shall in accordance with law from time to time divide each province in 8 zones):
  - (a) With 5 zones for purpose of clause (1) of Article 162;
  - (b) With 3 zones for the purpose of clause (2) Article 162.

In 1962 elections, eight women won the National Assembly seats (East Pakistan: 4, West Pakistan 4).

The elected women MNA served on the following Committees of the Assembly during their tenure:

Committee on Finance; Committee on Education;

Committee on Information and Broadcasting;

Committee on Labour and Social Welfare;



Committee on Law and Parliamentary Affairs;  
and Rules and Procedure Committee.

In the Province of West Pakistan, a few women were taken into ministries in 1962. The first opportunity ever given to the women of minority communities to participate in the national elections and to serve in the Assembly was in 1962 in the West Pakistan Assembly.

In 1965 women were again given representation through indirect franchise i.e. where the directly elected male members chose women to sit in the legislature; encouraging a new concept in women politics where the latter catered firstly to the needs of their male members, rather than to women in general.

In 1965 Elections, six women were returned to the National Assembly seats, three from East Pakistan and three from West Pakistan.

During their tenure they served on the following Committees:–

- Committee on Economic Affairs, National Economic Planning and National Coordination;
- Committee on Education;
- Committee on Information;
- Committee on Health, Labour, Social Welfare; and
- Committee on Rules and Procedure.

## Legal Frame Work Order 1970

The 1970 elections were held under the Legal Frame Work Order (LFO) as 1962 Constitution was abrogated with the coming of the Martial Law in 1969. The LFO stipulated as under:–

### *Section IV: Composition of the National Assembly*

- (1) There shall be a National Assembly of Pakistan consisting of 313 members of whom 300 shall be elected to fill the general seats and 13 to fill seats reserved for women.

### *Section V: Composition of the Provincial Assemblies*

- (1) There shall be Provincial Assembly for each province consisting of the number of members elected to fill the general seats and to fill seats reserved for women, as set out in schedule II in relation to such province.
- (2) Clause (1) shall not be construed as preventing a woman from being elected to a general seat.

The Section 6 of LFO fixed the Principle of Election as mentioned below:

Except as provided in clause (2), the members shall be elected to general seats for territorial constituencies by direct election on the basis of adult franchise in

accordance with law.

- (3) As soon as practicable after the general election of members of the National Assembly the members from a Province for the seats reserved for women in that Assembly shall be elected by persons elected to the general seats from the Province in accordance with the law.
- (4) The members for the seats reserved for women in Provincial Assembly shall be elected by persons elected to the general seat in that Assembly in accordance with law.

Seven women contested and won the National Assembly seats from NWFP, Punjab, Sind and Baluchistan. One woman politician rose to the rank of Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly (11-8-1973 to 11-1-1977).

### 1973 Constitution:

The 1973 Constitution accorded a much better status to women. The right of participation of women in all walks of life was ensured by article 25 which stipulated that there shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex alone. Its article 34 further provided that steps shall be taken to ensure the full participation of women in all spheres of national life. It gave complete equality to women to contest for all election posts. Women were accepted to hold the highest state offices such as that of the President, Prime Minister, Governors and Cabinet Ministers. In addition, for the next ten years or the period of two general elections, 5 per cent additional seats were exclusively reserved for women in the National and Provincial Assemblies (Article 51 and 106). Despite these guarantees, one major problem was indirect mode of elections for the reserved seats.

#### *Article 51 (4):*

Until the expiration of period of 10 years from the commencing day or the holding of second general election to the National Assembly, whichever occurs later, ten seats in addition to the number of seats referred to in clause (1) shall be reserved for women and allocated to the province in accordance with the Constitution and law.

- (4) For the purpose of election to the seats allocated to a Province under clause (4), the members of the National Assembly from that Province shall constitute the electoral College.

#### *Article 106(4):*

Until the expiration of period of 10 years from the commencing day or the holding of the second general session to the Assembly of a Province, whichever occurs later, there shall be in the Assembly a number of additional seats reserved for women equal to five per cent of the number of members of that Assembly specified in Clause (1).

- (5) As soon as practicable after the general election to a Provincial Assembly, the members to fill seats reserved in the Assembly for the persons reserved in

clause (3) or for women shall be elected in accordance with law by the members of that Assembly referred to in clause (1).

## 1977 Elections

Women achieved a break-through in 1977 when for the first time in the political history of Pakistan a woman was ever granted a ticket by a political party. She contested the general elections and won a National Assembly seat. Ten women came to the National Assembly on reserved seats in the 1977 Elections. One of them later became the Chairman of a Political Party.

## 1985 Elections

In the recent elections of 1985, held on non-party basis, the number of seats reserved in the National Assembly and the Provincial Assembly was doubled. Thus the reserved women seats in the National Assembly are 20. In the Punjab Provincial Assembly the number was raised to 12, in Sind Provincial Assembly to 5, in NWFP Assembly to 4 and in Baluchistan Provincial Assembly to 2. Thirteen women filed their nomination papers for National Assembly and contested for general seats. Only one woman succeeded in getting elected. (Another woman contested and won the general seat in the National Assembly in the by-elections that followed in May 1985). Three lost by a small margin while another three polled more than 12,000 votes. Of women candidates who fought for Provincial Assemblies from general seats only, two were successful from Punjab. From other three Provinces no woman was successful.

The 1985 elections have projected the trends of low participation of women in the political life of the country. Absence of a favourable attitude to the rights of women, the small number of female candidates and the heavily biased public attitude has been sharply felt.

Pakistan is the only country in the world where seats have to be reserved for women as otherwise they cannot hope to be represented in the assemblies. Faced with blind prejudice and their dependent status—economically, socially and culturally, they remain politically depressed. There were only 66 women candidates for 24 seats as compared with 3,853 male candidates for the 483 provincial assembly seats. Sixty four women candidates contested for the 20 reserved seats of the National Assembly. There is not a single woman in the Senate at present. In the present 20-member Cabinet (the Cabinet is not complete as of to date), no woman has been appointed as Federal Minister. Only one woman has been included as Minister of State. Two women have been taken as Ministers in the Punjab; none have been appointed in Sind, N.W.F.P. and Baluchistan Provincial Governments.

The political status of the contemporary women of Pakistan may be best defined by reproducing the daily Dawn's evaluation of the women's participation in the recent elections held in February, 1985:—

“The recent elections have thrown into bold relief some trends which do not reflect too favourably on the role of women in politics in Pakistan. The absence of a debate on women's rights in the election campaign, the dismally small number of female candidates and the heavy bias in favour of men in the composition of the legislative

bodies simply confirm what has been known generally namely the low participation of women in political life.

Two primary methods of political participation are voting and seeking an elective office. A third criterion for judging involvement is representation in the government. The record of Pakistani women on all three counts has been rather poor”.

## INDIRECT ELECTIONS

The indirect mode of election of women members against reserved seats in the National and Provincial Assemblies has repeatedly come under severe criticism. Realizing the handicaps of women elected on the reserved seats, following methods of elections to women’s reserved seats were suggested by two women MNAs (1972-77):

- (i) On the basis of urban constituencies;
- (ii) On the basis of women members elected to lower tiers starting with local bodies and going up to the higher tiers;
- (iii) The method adopted in China and some Muslim countries, namely that women’s organizations form the electoral college to elect their women;
- (iv) Twenty constituencies instead of 10 composed of males and females, should be reserved only for women’s elections, and in this way both males and females would elect women only; and
- (v) Women to be elected on the basis of proportional representation according to the number of votes a woman candidate obtains.

All the above proposals were rejected by the National Assembly. The National Assembly also rejected the reservation of Senate Seats for women.

The indirect elections of women, by an electoral college of the national and provincial assemblies, has brought forward a category of women, who would be responsible to a male dominated House. The political party which gains a majority in the legislatures would have the women’s seats under its control. The boards giving party tickets are normally either composed of men, or one woman representative is included. This encourages the elected women members to neglect the work of representing women in the legislatures.

Parliamentary work needs a highly specialized knowledge of parliamentary practice, and procedures. Resolutions, questions, cut motions, private bills, amendments require hard work and a systematic collection of data. The framing and passing of a Constitution is a laborious job and needs a working knowledge of the Constitutions of the world. Able orators and women who are capable of fighting prolonged battles in legislatures are able to get the best results. Questions and speeches in the assemblies have a vast impact on the executive and are projected on the mass media. The women legislators who take their work seriously, are handicapped when faced with the dual responsibility of representing women and their all male electorate.

Political activity and awareness of both men and women should be considered as an on-going process and should not be confined to the elections. Political parties need to give women representation at all levels of their organisational structure. Party manifestos and

specially of the parties who claim to present a progressive image, should be expected to include programmes for participation of women in production, development and nation building activities.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The women councillors in Local Government constitute a cadre of leadership small in number but powerful in influence and wide in scope of duties and responsibilities. They total about 8,000 (5240 in Punjab alone) and can be the catalysts of change for the emancipation of women, as they operate at the grass root levels.

In the two-tier rural councils, both at the union and the district levels, the role of women representatives needs to be strengthened in order to adequately promote the rights of women within their councils. When involved in the monitoring and supervision of women's programmes, the role of women councillors would not only be strengthened within their own councils but they would also begin to serve as agents of change for development of the community of women whom they seek to represent. Similarly, in the three-tier urban councils the town committees, the municipal committees, and municipal corporations, monitoring and supervision of programmes would be greatly facilitated by women as Resource Persons with regard to the designing and structuring of programmes at the community levels, and at the same time ensuring that local committees for evaluation and monitoring purposes are firmly rooted in the community.

Women councillors are elected by the male elected members of their councils; this does not bar women standing from the general seats, and this has resulted in quite a few being thus elected in the second term of the local body elections. One of them has the coveted position of heading Jhang District Council for the second term.

The second term has shown marked improvement in the educational level of the women councillors but vast shortcomings have also been reported. Women councilors do not have specific areas demarcated for their activities e.g., Lahore Municipality has 10 women members, they are responsible for the city at large and have no specific areas of responsibilities. Thus much time is wasted by them trying to get hold of women activity, other than casting their vote for some issue. Secondly most women have no knowledge of how to make proposals. Their quota of 2% for women's programmes, from the total of their council's budget often lapses or is "mis-used" by their male counterparts.

## CONCLUSIONS

The above description of the extent of participation of women in national, provincial and local political process and measures adopted to promote it suggest the following conclusions:

- (1) That women participation in national political process has been very limited. Whatever token participation in political organs of the State has occurred has been mostly restricted to the upper class urban women. The women from urban middle and lower classes and almost from all rural classes have had little opportunity of genuine participation in this process.

- (2) Due to absence of regular elections, political consciousness and organisation among women has not developed. On few occasions when elections were held, women were generally indifferent to them voting only when asked or compelled by male head of the family.
- (3) Women membership of political parties and their executive committees have been very small—urban upper and middle class women have occasionally joined political movements. This, however, was sporadic and could not be converted into sustained political activism. A noticeable degree of political activity by women related to their legal and political rights has, however, developed since 1983.
- (4) Grant of right to vote and reservation of seats for them in national and provincial assemblies to a certain extent have raised the level of political participation of women. But this has not improved the political status of women significantly nor has it secured them political equality.

The above review and its conclusions raise two basic questions:

- (1) What are the critical factors which explain lack of women participation in political process in Pakistan?
- (2) What concrete measures could enhance the level of this participation?

The most important factor explaining low political status of women in Pakistan is the persistence of a patriarchal and authoritarian mode of social organisation. This mode is based on supremacy and domination of male over the female in most spheres of social life. It prevails and persists even in advanced industrial societies but is deeply entrenched in less developed agricultural societies. Limited success of women liberation movements in contemporary industrial societies is an indication of the tenacity of this system. What re-inforces and strengthens in this system is that women all over the world are brought up in the belief that women are by nature subservient to men in spite of the heavy cost to them in terms of their self realisation, and fulfilment. In pre-Muslim India the patriarchal system was undergirded by religious beliefs and the classical Indian caste system which institutionalized high degree of inequality among various castes—and as a consequence further lowered the status of women. Emergence of Muslim rule in the sub-continent, though somewhat weakened the caste system, it did not improve the status of women primarily because it also brought with it patriarchal and feudal social structure evolved in the countries of the origin of Muslim rulers. With regard to political status of women, in fact, the two systems reinforced each other.

The British colonialism generated contradictory pressures on political status of women. To the extent that colonialism supported the preservation of traditional culture and social structure, the pre-existing status of women including political remained unchanged. However, imperatives of colonial rule required introduction of a new layer of educational system, rapid means of transport and communication, limited replacement of traditional subsistence agriculture with commercial crops, and creation of a nascent industry which partly upset the traditional social and economic relations. But patriarchal system was so well established that these changes affected it only marginally.

Emergence of a new political consciousness among Muslim of the sub-continent

culminated into demand for a separate homeland. In order to win support of all strata of Muslim society, for this demand, All India Muslim League brought into political arena a certain number of Muslim women belonging mostly to urban upper and middle classes. Their participation was inspired by the hope that political set-up in the Muslim homeland would grant equality of political status to the women. With the creation of Pakistan, women were indeed granted right to vote and various Constitutions provided equality of rights to women and reservation of certain number of seats for them in national and provincial legislatures. However, these measures only marginally improved their political status as the patriarchal and feudal social structure in the countryside remained intact. The newly emerging urban middle class remained essentially conservative in outlook particularly with regard to status of women. Only the number of women in politics from educated urban upper classes increased. But these politically active apparently liberated and "modernized" women did not and could not wage a sustained struggle to upgrade the status of women as a whole.

Lack of democratic political development in Pakistan foreclosed the possibility of such a struggle which could be waged only in a democratic and participative framework which due to various reasons did not develop. Furthermore, intellectual environment for articulating the demand for equality of political status became emotionally charged as fundamentalist, revivalist and conservative political organisations entered the political arena and forcefully advocated a conservative interpretation of Islam with regard to status of women in a Muslim society. This conservative approach gained ascendancy as a political alliance developed between some fundamentalist religious political organisations and the Governments which by and large lacked the democratic base which could have fostered human right movements.

Within the framework of traditional conservative and restrictive power structure described above which persisted throughout the history of Pakistan with marginal modifications, strong democratic and representative women organisations which could forcefully articulate demands for changing this status did not develop. Most of the upper class women who led women organisations were more oriented to the social work approach rather than demand structural transformation of Pakistani society. The middle class urban educated women, some of them trained abroad and intellectually equipped to comprehend the systemic source of women's problems were mostly adjusted to the ethos of public bureaucratic organisations in which most of them worked and rarely took active part in the political life of the nation. Thus genuinely activist leadership for creating and leading women's organisation was more or less absent. Even if such a leadership had become available, it could not have found a significant number of urban and rural women for recruitment and mobilization as most women were not economically and socially free to engage in political work. In any case, most of them continue to accept the legitimacy of the existing social order and seek only marginal adjustment in it in order to make their lives somewhat more comfortable. The mass of women are illiterate and politically uneducated, too oppressed to aspire for liberation. They do not believe that political organisation and action can change their status. This indeed is not an unrealistic assessment of the situation in a society where political activity by female has been suppressed occasionally by force, and where it brings dishonour to the family and the biradari, and where male-dominated political organisations have not achieved any significant success in securing rights of the people.

In the absence of significant structural transformation of Pakistani society which could weaken the authoritarian feudal patriarchal system, promote women education and strengthen women organisations, it will be unrealistic to expect that political status of women would improve by itself through the agency of unplanned forces of change. In fact such forces may weaken rather than strengthen the women status. Therefore direct intervention of the State is a necessary condition for realising this objective.

We feel that the government may formulate a clear policy to promote women's active participation in the political life of the country, with following objectives:

## **POLICY OBJECTIVES**

- (1) to remove all barriers which stand in the way of women's participation in political processes;
- (2) to create conditions in which women can become eligible to hold any public office including the highest office, on merit, and without discrimination;
- (3) to promote involvement of elected representatives in the planning, implementation and supervision of development programmes and projects.

To help achieve above objectives following recommendations are offered:

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Political Status**

- (1) The Government should reaffirm and widely publicise the official policy regarding the equal participation of women in the political process;
- (2) Mass Media should be used to enlighten the general public on the role of women in national policies and on the need to integrate them on a large scale in the political processes and the need to promote in them leadership qualities;
- (3) Special efforts should be initiated both at governmental and non-governmental levels to educate the female electorate on political issues and on the need for their active participation in public life.

### **National and Provincial Assemblies**

- (4) At least 10% seats should be reserved for women members in the Senate;
- (5) At least 20% seats should be reserved for women in the National Assembly and Provincial Assemblies;
- (6) At least two seats be reserved for non-Muslim women in the National Assembly;



- (7) During the transitional period required for fully integrating women into the political life of the nation and in order to more adequately reflect the view point of the women, women members of the National Assembly, Provincial Assemblies and Local Councils should be elected through direct women franchise;
- (8) Subject Committees particularly those dealing with primary education, health, and social welfare in the National and Provincial Assemblies should include 50% women members whereas all other committees must have adequate number of women.

### Political Parties

- (9) All Political Parties should seek maximum enrolment of women membership. A political party which does not have at least 20% women membership should not be allowed to contest elections.
- (10) All active Political Parties should have in due course women's wings with properly elected organizational structure;
- (11) Manifestos of all political parties must include programmes for participation of women in production, development and nation building activities.

### Local Councils

- (12) The number of women seats in local councils at various levels should be increased. There should be at least two women members in each Union Council in all provinces;
- (13) Women councillors must be informed through media, about their duties and powers and the ways to perform duties and assert their powers;
- (14) The Federal Ministry and Provincial Departments of Local Government, NGOs and professional groups should launch more frequent and better organized training programmes for women councillors to make their role more effective;
- (15) Two per cent of the total local council's budget allocated to women councillors is too meagre an amount to carry out concrete projects. While at present this allocation should be totally consumed on women's projects, its future allocation should be raised to 5 per cent;
- (16) Local Councils should advance loans to women from their Special funds for small projects like poultry, gardening, sericulture, etc, and its repayment should be made easy;
- (17) Local Councils must ensure the establishment of multi-purpose women's centres with qualified staff in each village in cooperation with the concerned departments to provide facilities for adult literacy, vocational training, nutrition and health education, family planning, day care centres, women's rights

education, legal aid, and recreation;

- (18) Local Councils should make special efforts to reduce women's household burden and drudgery by providing and maintaining devices like water tanker for the supply of water, biogas for fuel and energy, community tandoor etc;
- (19) Local Councils should establish marketing centres where products prepared by women are placed for sale, eliminating the middle man. They may also ensure quality control;
- (20) Women councillors should be included in the Arbitration Councils and Conciliation Courts, especially when the women are involved;
- (21) Women councillors should form women's panchayat/Committees at the village level to assist in the supervision of primary education, MCH Centres, multi-purpose Centres, and other women's development programmes.

## Research

- (22) Research should be carried out with a view to determining the difficulties faced by the women representatives at all tiers of Government—National, Provincial and Local and to find out remedial measures to be taken to ensure their more effective participation.

### Extracts from Political Party Manifestos (1993)

#### 1. PML(N) Manifesto-1993

There is equal protection of law for every citizen irrespective of his or her religion, sect, or creed; and all forms of exploitation, oppression, and injustice are eradicated.

#### Women

Women constitute more than fifty percent of our population. However in most cases they are deprived of their basic social, economic and legal rights. No society has made progress without the development of women. The Muslim League will take determined and far-reaching steps to upgrade their condition and status with the following specific policies and programmes:

- To ensure women's participation in the National Assembly, measures will be taken to revive the Constitutional provision under Article 51(4) for 20 reserved seats for women.
- Effective formulation and implementation of laws to protect women against oppression, maltreatment and discrimination including the ratification of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.
- Stronger legislative and administrative measures will be undertaken to create a safe social and physical environment for women; and combat all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence, harassment, and humiliation of women.
- Financial support will be provided to those organizations which provide legal aid and counseling centres for women in need of help in different parts of the country. In addition suitable shelters, called saiban, will be established for female victims of violence and injustice.
- Expanding and upgrading the women police force, improving prison conditions, and providing state counseling for women prisoners.
- A national employment policy for women will be formulated for female workers in the formal and informal sectors and steps taken to extend the legal cover of an adequate minimum wage, acceptable working hours, health and maternity benefits to casual, temporary, and piece-rate workers.
- Government will promote through the private sector the establishment of child-care centres and working-women's hostels to enable women to take up full time employment, according to their qualifications.

## 2. PPP Manifesto-1993

### Chapter XIII

#### RIGHTS OF WOMEN THE FUTURE PROGRAMME

Starting from Um ul Momineen Hazrat Bibi Khadija the History of Islam is glittering with examples of the struggles and sacrifices of women. It is the path illuminated by these revered ladies of Islam that inspired the leadership of the PPP and thousands of other women in Pakistan to lead and participate in the most heroic struggle of the people of Pakistan against dictatorship.

The party is committed to create conditions where the new consciousness of our women finds a practical outlet in bettering their own condition and in nation building we shall:

1. Organize a female literacy corps with its roots in every village to impart literacy and education to our children, specially to girls.
2. The Rural support centres will concentrate on professions like garment making and handicrafts in which women can specialize. Marketing support will be provided and export of these items will be taken up directly.
3. While replicating programmes like OPP and AKRSP maximum effort will be made to involve women in income generation and community development programmes.
4. Taken guidance from the revolutionary spirit of the Quranic teachings all laws and ordinances will be reviewed and new laws framed to eliminate exploitation discrimination and oppression and to ensure the role of women as equal members of our society.
5. Anti Jahez campaigns will be patronized.
6. Women will be given equal status in all walks of life.
7. Quota of employment for women shall be reserved in all Government and semi government organizations.
8. Special seats for women in the National and Provincial Assemblies shall be restored.
9. A permanent commission will be established on the status of women. The terms of the commission will among others include following as well:
  - discrimination against women at constitutional, social and legal levels.
  - portrayal of women in the media.
  - violence against women.

10. Pakistan will become a signatory to the UN convention on elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.
11. Family planning will be recognized as a basic human right and information as well as service will be adequately provided to the population.
12. Hudood ordinance and other discriminatory laws against women will be suitably amended.
13. Minimum age for marriage will be raised.
14. Women's fundamental rights to life, security, freedom of movement, and their full participation in all spheres of national life will be ensured as declared in article 34 of the Constitution of Pakistan.
15. A special Women's police force would be set up.
16. Pakistan will pioneer an Islamic women's parliamentary group so that Muslim women gain experience from each other.
17. Distinguished women lawyers shall be appointed to the superior judiciary.
18. Each deserving widow shall receive a basic allowance through a computerized register to enable her to support herself and her dependent children.
19. Family laws relating to marriage, alimony, child custody, family courts will be made more equitable to ensure fair and equal rights for women. Family laws will be simplified to facilitate quick and easy adjudication.
20. Hostels for working women will be established in all big cities.
21. Laws for adequate minimum wage, acceptable working hours, health and maternity benefits to all working women in the informal sector will be enacted.
22. Female headed households will be given priority in allotment of land for housing and credit.
23. Credit will be provided on special condition to reach the women farmers and rural women entrepreneurs at their doorstep by opening more branches of the First Women Bank.

### Record of the PPP

Ministry of Women Development right from the beginning was seized with preparation of a long term plan, and in June 1990 a portfolio of 20 Special projects for the upliftment of women for the next three years of the 7th Five Year Plan was approved involving an investment of about Rs. 450 crores as against an investment of only Rs. 71 crores during the past ten years:

These projects included:

- Pakistan University for Women.
- Chamber of Commerce and Industry for Women.

- Polytechnic Institutes for Women at Divisional Headquarters.
- Secretarial Training Institutes for Women at Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar and Quetta.
- Home Economics College for Women at Islamabad in collaboration with private sector.
- Twelve (12) Women Development Centre.
- National Clearing House and Resource Centre for Women issues.
- National Institute of Studies and Policy Planning for Women in Development.
- An Institute of Research and Religious Studies on Women.
- Working Women Hostels at all district headquarters with day care centres.
- National Institute of Nutritional Education for Women and Children at Islamabad.
- National Institute of Women Psychology Islamabad.
- National NGO Advisory Council for Women.
- Production Credit for Rural Women through cooperatives.
- Guidance Bureau for the self-employed women.
- Women and Environmental Education, including conservation of Energy.

## Chapter XIV

### MINORITIES

"You are free, you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other places of worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed that has nothing to do with the business of the State (applause)... we are starting with the fundamental principle that we are all citizens and equal citizens of one state (loud applause) ... Now I think we should keep that in front of us as our ideal and you will find in course of time Hindus will cease to be Hindus and Muslims will cease to be Muslims not in the religious sense, because that is the personal faith of each individual but, in the political sense, as citizens of the state, "(Quaid-e-Azam)".

The PPP will ensure that the minorities become part of the national mainstream and secondly that their religion and cultures and their representation in proportion to their respective population strength is protected in legislative forums. As such, we will:

Revert to the 1973 Constitution provision of allowing the minorities to get elected and vote for all seats, of the National and provincial Assemblies.

In addition reserve the existing number of seats for each minority.

# Women's Action Forum

Rawalpindi / Islamabad

## STATEMENT OF DEMANDS

Women's Action Forum (WAF) is a non-governmental and non-hierarchical women's rights organisation which is not affiliated to any political party. WAF is opposed to all forms of discrimination, whether on the basis of sex, class or religion. WAF upholds the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to which Pakistan is a signatory. WAF believes that women's rights are inseparable and indistinguishable from the rights of men. Patriarchy and its structures - social, economic and discursive - are the root cause of the marginalisation and subordination of women and deny them their rights to education, health and decision-making within society.

WAF does not accept the dichotomy between the public and the private spheres of life, where only the public is accepted as the area where "legitimate" human rights violations occur, and where the only violations acknowledged are those committed by the state against the individual. For where the right to privacy is a basic human right of all individuals, which neither the state nor any group or individual may violate, the individual's right to life and security is a prior right to privacy, and the state must take responsibility for individual acts that violate human rights, whether in the public or in the private sphere. WAF feels there is a critical need for radical change in the national policy on women, in order to eliminate the anti-female bias that prevails in the country.

Based on these considerations, WAF demands the following.

1. a. **Repeal of all discriminatory, inhuman and retrogressive laws** such as the Hudood Ordinance (1979), Law of Evidence (1984), Shariat Act (1991), Qisas and Diyat Ordinance (1991), the Law against Blasphemy included in the Penal Code in 1986 and further amended in 1992, and the changes in the Penal Code under Section 123(A) which questions the integrity and loyalty of all Pakistani citizens.
- b. **Further reforms in Personal Laws** to bring them into line with the demands of contemporary socio-economic realities and provision of facilities in implementation of these laws.

2. **Revival of the 1973 Constitution as originally enacted**, as a basis for restoring the fundamental rights of women.
3. Pakistan should sign the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women**.
4. In budgeting national expenditure, **priority should be given to the social sectors, particularly to health, education and basic amenities**, instead of to defence and non-developmental expenditure.
5. The government should help **promote a positive, progressive and non-sexist attitude** towards women through the media.
6. WAF demands **universal literacy and primary health care for all** by the year 1995. Girls should have equal access to education at all levels as boys. The quality of education should be improved for girls and boys.
7. Women must have **the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work, to protection against unemployment, to receive equal pay for work of equal value** and to **paid maternity leave**. WAF seeks the removal of sexist bias in employment, in media projection and in all other fields of economic activity and image/attitude-building.
8. The **recruitment age of a woman for government service should be extended to 35 years**, in view of the fact that she is the member of the household burdened with childbearing. She should have the choice of part-time employment during child-bearing years.
9. **Finances should be allocated for hostels** for working women.
10. **Finances should be allocated for day-care centres** for children of working mothers, especially in the public sector.
11. An inquiry should be conducted into the deplorable conditions of the existing homes for shelter-less women. **Finances should be allocated for more shelters**. In order to ensure more efficient working, women residents should be involved in the management of these centres.
12. **Family planning should be made an effective part of the health care programme** and there should be more mobile services and rural health care centres. Dumping of dangerous drugs and contraceptives must be stopped. Family planning programmes must address both men and women.
13. Owing to increasing numbers of working women who suffer hardship due to inadequate public transport, WAF demands that **more transport facilities be provided**, particularly to students of all educational institutions.
14. **Women must not be forcibly segregated and no official dress code** should be enforced upon them.
15. **The law enforcing agencies should be reformed** to combat the colossal number of incidents of sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation of women. The government must give priority to eliminating all such crimes.



16. Women must have **the right to participate in recreational activities, sports and all aspects of cultural life** at national and international levels.
17. Regarding the reserved seats in the Assemblies, WAF demands that the Constitution and the Political Parties Act be amended to include the following:-

**In stage one WAF demands that reserved seats be increased to 20%** with changes in how women are elected, i.e., they must be elected by women themselves or, in other words, that **women have double votes**, as occurred prior to 1956. At the same time, parties should only be allowed to stand if 10 percent of their tickets are given to women in the next elections whenever this may be and even if these occur before the five year parliamentary period is up.

In the second stage, WAF has stipulated that reserved seats be abolished but that **20% of the tickets be given to women and that this figure be increased by 10% during each election, until parity is achieved**. This should be mandatory as long as inequalities of any sort remain.

In addition to this, WAF demands that **1/3 of seats in local bodies** be reserved for women to be directly elected by women. In other words, women would have a double vote in the local bodies election. WAF also demands that **10 percent of the seats in the Senate be reserved for women**.
18. WAF demands that **all political parties** should (a) **have a clear-cut stand on equality for women** and (b) **induct women at the policy-making level**.
19. WAF demands that **women convicts be housed in their home district. Adequate and improved facilities should be provided** for women prisoners.
20. Currently, women's contribution to national development in general and the GNP in particular, is invisible. WAF demands that the government rectify this so that **all official statistics correctly reflect the female labour force and its real contribution**.
21. WAF demands that women should be **involved in the planning, implementation and monitoring of all government and non-government development efforts**.

## Update on WAF Demands

1. In the 1993 statement "Put Women's Rights on the National Agenda Now!", WAF expanded its demand for women's representation in the Senate to state that: "the number of seats in the Senate be at least 20% for women and that the political process should ensure women's involvement at the local government levels."
2. In early 1994 WAF modified its position rejecting the double vote for women and instead the January 1994 WAF National Convention demanded that:

"In the first stage reserved seats for women should be restored immediately.

"In stage two, the Political Parties Act must be changed to make it mandatory for parties to field women candidates (10-25%) to make any party eligible for standing for elections. Simultaneously, for the next two elections at least, reserved seats must be retained with the provision that those women candidates who have not won the elections (on general seats) will come on the reserved seats on the basis of the number of votes they have won. The highest will automatically come on to the reserved seats."

The exact size of the reserved quota, however, is yet to be finalised; the suggested size of this quota was 33%, but this is currently under discussion.

3. In May 1994, WAF broadened the discussion to encompass the reconceptualisation of women's representation and debate issues such as dual constituencies, providing a female representation of 50%.



# WOMEN IN POLITICS:

Update 1993 - 1997

Fazila Gulrez and Sohail Warraich



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## UPDATE: WOMEN AND POLITICS

### INTRODUCTION

Since the publication of the first edition of Shirkat Gah's Special Bulletin, Women in Politics: Participation and Representation in Pakistan, in 1994, although women continue to be grossly under-represented in Pakistan's legislative bodies there have been a number of major developments in the debate surrounding women's political participation and representation.

As this Special Bulletin update goes to press in 1998, the women's reserved seats have yet to be restored in the national and provincial assemblies. However, newspapers (*The News* 17.1.1998) reported that the current Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) Government had promised a constitutional amendment package would be announced after Eidul Fitr (falling on 30th January 1998), with Federal Minister for Law and Justice Khalid Anwar being quoted as stating that "the issue of restoring women's seats in Parliament will be sorted out smoothly as it is not a controversial matter." Until March 1998 no such package has been forthcoming and given the present political environment, with Awami National Party (NAP) having parted ways with the government of Nawaz Sharif, it may be difficult for the government to make any constitutional amendments.

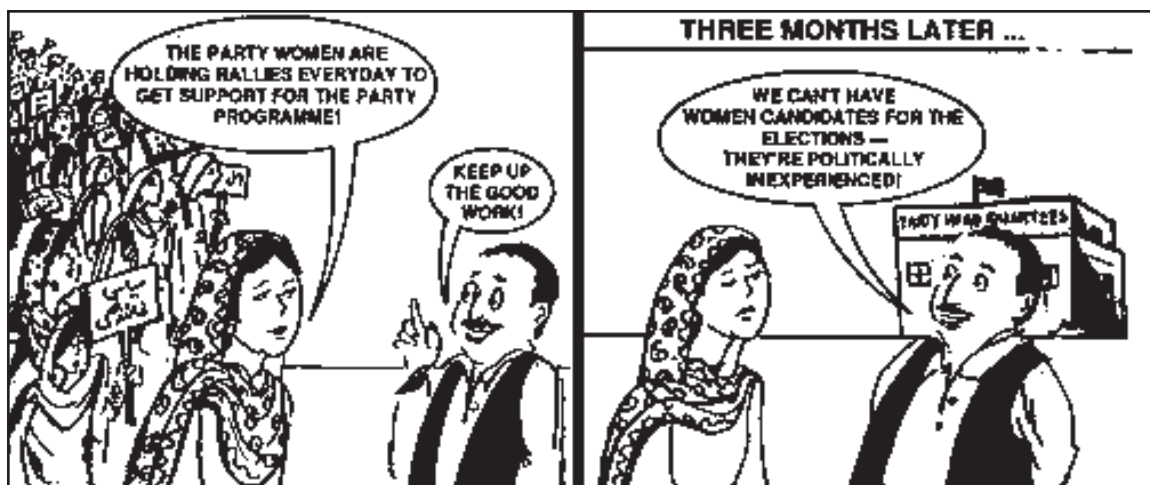
Thus along with the reprinted original Special Bulletin, which continues to be in demand, Shirkat Gah presents a brief discussion of the main developments which have taken place between 1994 and 1997, in addition to basic documentation such as extracts from party manifestos for the 1997 national elections and extracts from the official Report of the Commission of Inquiry for Women released in 1997.

### NATIONAL ELECTIONS 1997

In line with past patterns of political instability in Pakistan, the assemblies were dissolved and the Bhutto government was ousted in November 1996 and fresh elections were called for February 1997.

For the women of Pakistan a high point of the February 1997 elections was the significant increase in the number of female candidates. As many as 55 women contested the polls for the National Assembly and 21 for the four provincial assemblies. But in many instances, women candidates were in fact only covering candidates for senior politicians and few in reality saw any chances of victory. Moreover, when seen in the context of the total number of seats contested by the main parties, the paltry allocation of party tickets to women candidates reflects the lack of women's effective participation in party decision-making - even though in the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) the patron and the chairperson are both women. According to the Report of The Commission of Inquiry for Women, women hold only three out of 21 decision making posts in the Pakistan's People's Party (PPP), while in Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) they hold five out of 47 posts.

Thus, the PPP and its coalition partner PML(Junejo) awarded National Assembly tickets to 9 women out a total of 161 seats contested, while the PML(N) put up six women out



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of a total of 177 candidates. The standard argument from political parties that they cannot risk awarding tickets to women members because of the increased chances of defeat were revealed as particularly hollow in the case of the PML(N) given that all indications were that its candidates stood extremely strong chances of victory, notably in Punjab. Moreover, applications had come from senior women activists from the PML(N).

Of the lesser parties, the splinter PPP (Shaheed Bhutto) group fielded seven women while Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaaf (PTI) initially allocated women members some party tickets but later withdrew them from the contest. There were also 13 independent women candidates in the running. The number of women contesting seats in the four provincial assemblies was similarly negligible.

While the election results produced the highest numbers of directly elected women members of the National Assembly in Pakistan's fifty-year history, the reality was that the total of six women MNAs (three each from the PPP and PML(N)) who took oath of office actually constitute less than 3 percent of the total National Assembly strength of 207 directly elected, general seat (Muslim) Members. In the provincial assemblies the situation is even worse, with the sole directly elected woman MPA constituting a mere 0.4 percent of the total of 460 provincial assemblies seats. (There is also one woman MPA in the Punjab Assembly, Begum Raj Hameed Gill elected on a minority seat). None of the 13 independent female candidates were able to win a seat. Moreover, those women who did win directly contested seats were all from major feudal families with no personal grounding in political or women's activism and a previous record of failing to take a women's rights perspective in the assemblies.

In the 1997 elections, women's lack of political equality as in the past also extended to factors actively hindering women from exercising their right of franchise. The requirement that voters present their national ID card remained in force (see Special Bulletin pages 23 and 43). Meanwhile, socio-cultural norms that restrict women's mobility and decision-making, also deprive women of their right to vote. It is common for political parties particularly in the NWFP, to mutually agree not to let their women supporters come out to vote.

In the 1997 elections, following the caretaker Government's order to enfranchise the Tribal Areas which border Afghanistan, traditional tribal councils (jirgas) announced decisions



## A Colourful Contest

One of the most colourful contests of the 1997 polls was the candidature of reigning Pushto film queen, Mussarat Shaheen who filed her papers as an independent candidate from the conservative area of Dera Ismail Khan, in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), a traditional stronghold of Maulana Fazalur Rahman's right-wing religious party, the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (JUI-F).

She was pitted against the Maulana, cricket hero Imran Khan of the Tehreek-i-Insaaf, and Sardar Umer Farooq Khan of the Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N), who eventually took the seat.

An enraged Maulana, tired of the world focus said "We used to contest against Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and we enjoyed the fight. Now look at our hard luck! Look at the kind of creature which has landed here to challenge us!" Mussarat carried herself with dignity and emphasised her strong religious belief, claiming "I am confident that angels will descend from heaven and vote for me". She was also accused of trying to imitate Benazir Bhutto, to which she answered, "if that is so, I am doing a good job, because of being an actress". Whatever her critics may say, Mussarat Shaheen plans to stay in politics by contesting for a Senate seat from the NWFP.

(Compiled from reports in Herald and  
The News)

which resulted in a massive denial of franchise to the female electorate. Special announcements were made on mosque loudspeakers that voting by women was un-Islamic and any man who allows the women of his house to go to the polling station would do so at the risk of his house being raised to the ground. Although 348,475 women voters were registered in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), in some of the areas, especially in the Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Orakzai and North Waziristan agencies not a single female vote was cast, while no more than 37 women out of i.e. 6,600 women registered in Jamrud Agency voted. Officials did nothing to punish those illegally obstructing women from exercising their right to vote. Subsequently, there were a number of statements from political parties as well as private letters to the Editor urging the Election Commission to declare results null and void in areas where women had been denied the franchise.

## Election Manifestos

During the 1997 campaign, the major political parties highlighted the need to give women their due in the political process. However, across the political spectrum, the 1997 manifestos were notable for the vagueness of their pledges as compared with the detailed statements included in manifestos for the previous national elections of 1993.

The PPP manifestos of 1993 and 1997 contained broadly similar agendas regarding women's issues. It was the only mainstream political party to devote an entire section to women's issues titled Women's Rights and Development Agenda 1997-2002, which contained 11 major subtitles, such as Violence, Water, Contribution from the Government of Pakistan to Organization of Women Parliamentarians from Muslim Countries, and Integration. The manifesto contained a detailed description of women's political rights guaranteeing equal political participation to women and promised to "restore the reserved seats for women in the NA, PAs, Senate and the local bodies", the latter being the lowest tier of elected bodies. The manifesto, however, notably did not discuss the modalities or the

number of seats to be reserved.

The PML(N) manifesto in a section dealing more generally with political reforms, mentioned “that in order to make the national and provincial assemblies more representative of the different sections of society, steps will be considered to increase the number of seats in parliament and the provincial assemblies to give due representation on the principle of proportionate representation to women, minorities and outstanding professional experts”. In contrast, the 1993 PML(N) manifesto specifically stated that measures will be taken to revive the 1973 constitutional provision under Article 51(4) for 20 reserved seats for women.

As to other issues affecting women, both PML(N) manifestos promised hostels for working women, the setting up of government-funded women's cooperatives in the cottage industries sector, priority in greater allocation of resources for mother and child health care, harsher punishment for those responsible for violence against women, and the strengthening of inheritance laws.

Imran Khan's newly-formed Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) which was fighting its first election, included women and related issues under the heading ‘Social Reform’. It strongly advocated the “uplift” of women's status and that women be brought into the mainstream of socio-economic progress by upholding and protecting the rights of women as equal citizens. It gave more manifesto space to women's issues as compared to the PML(N) and pledged to (a) “amend the Political Parties Act (1962) to ensure significant female representation on all committees including the central executive committee, (b) amend electoral rules to ensure that only political parties which allocate a minimum of 10% general seats tickets to women candidates would be allowed to participate in the elections”. It also promised the “establishing of the Pakistan Commission on Women as a permanent autonomous statutory body comprising government representatives, NGOs, human rights organizations and experts in different fields”. However, the manifesto pointedly made no specific commitment regarding women's seats in the Federal Parliament and the provincial assemblies. The manifesto also included a number of other regarding measures to improve women's status.

Illustrating that the issue of women's political participation has become a national political issue which any party seeking office has to address, the rightist Jamiat-e-Islami in an appeal asked women “to take active part in state affairs and make efforts to seek effective representation in the assemblies”. It pointed out that Pakistani women will have to “fight for themselves in order to achieve their ‘usurped’ rights”. The JI, however, made no pledges on its own behalf to increase women's political participation and representation.

## Men Refuse to Enter Women on Electoral Rolls

As many as 50,000 women enrolled in Thatta could lose their right to vote because of the reluctance of their male family members to enter their names on the voter's list. Assistant Commissioner of Thatta, Syed Waryal Shah, said that because of the rigid social set up in the interior of Sindh, the village male folk were opposed to entering the names of their womenfolk in the voter's list. In some cases the names if listed are not legible and therefore create doubt about their legitimacy.

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## PARLIAMENTARY INITIATIVES

Both major political parties, the PPP and the PML(N), the former which was in power in 1994 and the latter currently in office, have in principle agreed that there need to be constitutional provisions promoting women's political representation, specifically the revival of the reserved seats for women. Moreover, since the mechanism for filling the reserved seats (voting by sitting MNAs/MPAs) necessarily strengthens the parliamentary majority of the party in office, the revival of the seats would be to their benefit when in power. However, both the PPP and PML(N) governments have delayed the restoration of the seats giving the excuse that the precise modalities remain to be worked out.

The PPP's Amendment Bill introduced in parliament in 1993 sought to restore 25 seats for women in the National Assembly and 5% reserved seats in the provincial assemblies. It also proposed the introduction of 9 reserved seats for women in the upper house, the Senate. Unlike the original 1973 constitutional provision, the Bill did not prescribe any specified period for the reservation clause to remain operative. However, the opposition PML(N) put forward two alternative proposals: one, increasing the number of women's seats to 40 in the NA, to be filled through direct election by the female electorate; alternatively the filling of such reserved seats through a system of proportional representation based on the total number of votes secured by each party in the 1993 elections. Another suggestion derived from proposals made by activist groups and taken up by the PML(N)'s Mushaid Hussain was that all political parties should give a 10% quota of tickets to women candidates.

In the 1993-96 Parliament, the PML(N) opposition reversed its initial approach and announced that it would not go for a separate amendment regarding women's seats but would push for a package deal on a constitution amendment addressing a broader range of issues. However, it would appear that the PML(N)'s actual objection was to the mode of induction of women in the legislative bodies. The Bill was subsequently defeated.

The 1997 February polls returned Nawaz Sharif's PML(N), this time with an unprecedented majority. Soon after coming into power, the new Prime Minister used his mandate to make major policy changes and repeal provisions brought in by the martial law era 8th Amendment relating to the President's power to dissolve the Assemblies. It was also time for the Nawaz Government to honour its promise of restoring women's seats in the assemblies. Since it enjoyed a massive 2/3rds majority, the question seemed almost settled. However, a Constitutional Amendment Bill introduced by the tiny opposition, seeking the restoration of women's seats in parliament was rejected by a thumping majority (10-70) on 6 May 1997. The Government's claim was that it wanted to introduce a broad constitutional reform package which included provisions for women's seats. Other responses from members of the Treasury included the notable statement from MNA Ibrahim Paracha of the PML that "if you give special seats to women , then tomorrow the members of the 'third sex' will also demand special seats". Another MNA of the ruling party, Chaudry Asad-ur-Rahman, argued that elected members represented both men and women in their constituencies, so there was no need for special seats for women. "Children are also discriminated against and exploited in our society, so tomorrow you would demand separate seats for children in the House," he said to a round of applause. Meanwhile Abida Hussain, Federal Minister for Population Welfare, and Women Development, Education, Environment and Local Government, one of the few women in the National Assembly and who had earlier reiterated the PML(N)'s promise to restore the seats, was quoted in a local paper as saying, following the Treasury's rejection of the opposition's Bill, that "the Government opposed the Bill to settle scores with the PPP, a tit for tat."

## GOVERNMENT MEASURES

In 1996, following pressure from women's rights activists and human rights groups, the then PPP Government fulfilled a long-standing pledge to ratify the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). (The PPP Government had signed - but not ratified - the Convention prior to the Beijing Conference in 1995). The government of Pakistan made a general declaration stating that the accession to the provisions of the UN Convention is subject to the provisions of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. It also noted a reservation regarding Article 29, para 1 of the Convention stating that it does not consider itself bound by the Article. This instrument defines discrimination as "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purposes of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status on the basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedom in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field."

Pakistan's ratification of CEDAW obliges it to ensure women can exercise the right to vote, hold public office, be a part of the decision-making process and the implementation of policies. The Convention also binds governments to ensure women have access to participate in non-governmental organizations and associations, concerned with the political and public life of the country. As a signatory, the member state is obliged to submit an annual report on the progress made towards these goals through legislative, administrative and judicial measures. Pakistan was due to submit its report in March 1997, but it has yet to meet this requirement.

Nevertheless, the Government has moved towards implementing the Beijing Platform for Action and according to the Ministry of Women Division (MoWD) "the MoWD in 1997 initiated the process of developing a National Plan of Action (NPA) for women as per para 297 of the Platform of Action (PFA) adopted at the UN's 4th World Conference of Women held in Beijing in September 1995." (National Plan of Action for Women, Draft, Beijing Follow-up Unit, MoWD, Islamabad, June 1997)

According to the NPA draft, "a set of priority actions were formulated to help achieve the agenda for empowerment of women in Pakistan prepared on the basis of national participation, involving federal and provincial governments, NGOs and other several women's organizations and individual experts. The NPA aims to facilitate women's participation in all spheres of life, besides ensuring protection of women's rights within the family and society. The NPA also outlined strategic objectives for strengthening representation and decision-making of women in the political process."

The relevant sections of the NPA reads as follows:

To strengthen representation and decision-making in the political process:

Action by Government:

- a) Ensure that all women are included in accurate electoral rolls by:
  - i) immediate and pro-active updating of the electoral rolls by the Election Commission with the assistance of the wards in the urban areas and union council in the rural areas before the next local bodies polls or within 1998, whichever is earlier;

- ii) due care be taken to ensure that women's names appear accurately in the lists by involving female personnel;
  - iii) annual updating of rolls to be the responsibility of the union councils and wards, supervised by the Election Commission;
  - iv) a system of electoral cards to be instituted, woman to be identified on cards as 'daughter of', no changes to be instituted subsequent to marriage or divorce;
  - v) special care to be taken to ensure that all women are registered as voters in the tribal areas.
- b) Adopt affirmative action measures to significantly increase women's political representation from the local bodies to the Senate:
- i) 33% seats of local councils to be reserved for women for the next three terms or the year 2020, whichever is later; by the provincial governments in accordance with the lapsed Punjab Local Bodies Ordinance of 1995. Procedures for these would then be worked out by provincial women representatives of provincial local bodies, (past and present) and concerned NGOs.
  - ii) Provide for 33% of general seats being reserved for women in the national and provincial assemblies and Senate for the next three elections or 15 years whichever is later. (Preparatory work to be immediately started for a constitutional amendment in this respect. This should include an Expert Committee coordinated by the National Core Group (NCG), Provincial Core Groups (PCGs) and should include parliamentarians, Ministry of Women Development (MoWD), Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs (MoLPA), NGOs, to recommend women's representation as in other countries, e.g. Nepal, India, Thailand and Germany.
  - iii) In the interim period, until the next elections in the Senate and the National and provincial assemblies, introduce 20% reserved seats for women in these bodies. [In the Punjab National Plan of Action Core Group, it has been agreed that this figure should be 33%.]
  - iv) Initiate appropriate steps to amend the Political Parties Act (1962) and People's Representation Act (1976) to ensure that :
    - any party contesting 30% or more of the seats in the national assembly and/or Senate (including FATA) or 30% or more of the seats in the province must have a 30% female membership and a 10% women representation in the policy-making body,
    - any party contesting 15-29% of the seats in the National Assembly, and/or Senate including (FATA) or 15-29% of the seats in a province, have a 15% female membership and a 5% representation of women in its policy - making body.

By the Government and political parties with NGOs:

- c) Provide training programmes for women active in the political process on the political system, self assertiveness, women issues.

- d) Provide political education and training programmes for women at the community level NGOs, Community Based Organizations (CBOs), media personnel, etc.
- e) active promotion of effective interaction between different catalysts in the social arena, i.e. women's advocacy groups, women politicians, women's development programmes, CBOs, NGOs, trade unions and government departments.

By MoWD, Parliamentarians, NGOs, NCG PCGs and BFU:

- f) Lobby for appropriate changes in the legislation, procedures and monitor progress.

The MoWD is awaiting the drafts from the provinces so as to act upon the proposals as discussed in the plan for the uplift of the women in all the fields of national life.

## ADVOCACY AND LOBBYING INTENSIFIES

Women's rights and human rights advocacy groups have since 1993 consistently demanded greater participation and representation for women in politics. The frivolous attitude of parliamentarians on both sides of the political divide and their procrastination over the women's seats issue has angered many activists, leading greater unity of action among rights advocates. Spurred on the Pakistan's ratification of CEDAW, among others, Shirkat Gah, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Simorgh, Aurat Foundation, ASR, and Women's Action Forum (WAF) have repeatedly called upon successive governments to ensure women's optimum participation in decision-making bodies.

It has been a period of intense lobbying and advocacy activities, with leading NGOs and women's rights organizations conducting workshops, seminars, signature campaigns while pursuing direct contact with the government in order to raise awareness and gain support for the concept of strengthening women's political participation and representation.

The NGOs have in their advocacy and lobbying efforts emphasised the following measures:

- a) the government should reaffirm and widely publicize official policy regarding women's equal participation in the political process;
- b) the mass media should be used to raise awareness regarding the role of women in national politics, and the need to integrate them on a large scale in political processes and to promote in them leadership qualities;
- c) special efforts should be initiated both at the governmental and non-governmental levels to educate the female electorate on political issues and on the need for their political participation in public life.

Developments in neighbouring India have also given further impetus to the campaign in Pakistan. Following the successful broadening of women's political representation through local government reform (Panchayat Raj), the Indian women's activists' campaign to secure one third representation in India's higher legislative bodies gained momentum and has proved a useful reference point for activists in Pakistan. The progress of the government bill to introduce one-third representation for women in the

Lok Sabha (see box on p.90 below) was also watched closely.

While Benazir Bhutto's 1994-1996 PPP Government came under severe criticism for not taking up women's issues, the PML(N) proposal for a separate electorate has been rejected by most groups as entailing the total political segregation of the two sexes. An immediate demand is for the restoration of reserved seats in the legislative bodies, while from a future perspective it has been insisted that political parties allocate 20 percent of party tickets to women and steadily increase the number of tickets awarded to women in subsequent elections.

Meanwhile, in 1996 a petition was filed by Dr. Naila Rahman in the Lahore High Court requesting the court to direct the Election Commission (EC) to restore women's seats as provided in the 1973 Constitution. Dr. Rahman's contention was that the time-bound constitutional provision has actually not lapsed since the period when the Constitution was in abeyance during martial law should not be counted.

## GOVERNMENT-NGO INTERACTION

In 1994, the then PPP Government set up the National Consultative Council chaired by Tahira Mazhar Ali, a well-known women's rights activist closely identified with trade unions and women's organizations. The Council's mandate included working out a PPP-PML(N) consensus proposal on the modalities of restoring the women's seats.

Following intense negotiations, the Council was able to secure a pledge from the opposition PML(N) that the matter of the women's seats would be delinked from any proposed constitutional amendment package. In this connection in 1995 a memorandum was signed at a seminar organized by Aurat Foundation under the banner of the Legislative Watch group with Mushaid Hussain being a signatory from the PML(N) group and Syed Iqbal Haider and Senator Shafqat Mehmood signing on behalf of the PPP. In subsequent meetings on the issue, however, the political parties gave little importance to the memorandum.

A joint statement issued by the Council and Simorgh, Shirkat Gah, and Aurat Foundation in 1995 stated, "we women being half of the country's population have the right to send their representatives to the assembly as per the commitment of the two major political parties PPP and PML(N). We therefore urge the opposition to treat the issue of women seats separately from its issue of contention with the government and to immediately work for the restoration of women seats in the legislature."

Despite the pledges the Council secured, the women's seats issue remained subject to the wider tussle for political power.

Meanwhile, in November 1994 the Government announced the formation of a Commission with the mandate of examining and proposing legislative and procedural reform to improve women's legal status. Its members included representatives of the senior judiciary, activist groups and the Ulema. (Originally titled the Commission of Enquiry on the Status of Women and chaired by Justice Saad Saood Jan, it was subsequently renamed the Commission of Inquiry for Women and was chaired by Justice Nasir Aslam Zahid. According to the Commission's Report, released in late 1997, "it is obvious that there is little hope in the immediate future of women being able to get due

legislative representation without affirmative action measures. Many of the neighbouring countries like Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India and Tanzania are grappling with this issue and affirmative action in this regard has been initiated in these countries. Most Socialist countries had ensured substantial representation for women through conscious policies of allocating more tickets to them by prioritizing their names in lists.”

The Commission of Inquiry, however, goes on to recommend the continuation of reserved seats. “The concept of reservation for parliamentary representation is neither peculiar to Pakistan, nor within Pakistan has it been confined to women. The Senate still reserves seats for technocrats and for the less developed areas of FATA. Even some of the developed nations are considering ways of bridging gender disparity in the decision-making.”

On another front, NGOs have been closely involved in drafting the National and Provincial Plans of Action designed to put the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women’s Beijing Platform for Action into practice. In the Punjab Core Group at least, whose members include both government and NGO representatives, there has been agreement over the need for a one-third representation of women in legislative bodies in the province.

## THE DEBATE OVER MODALITIES

Despite the variety of modalities suggested and various positions taken, women’s and human rights groups are agreed on four basic points:

- women must be mainstreamed in the country’s political decision-making process;
- women must be directly elected;
- modalities for women’s increased political representation must be constituency linked;
- there must be a joint electorate, with no separate electorate for minorities.



Proposed formulae for women’s representation fall into two broad parts: the first dealing with the need to provide immediate relief within the existing assemblies, and the second dealing with the need for sound provisions guaranteeing the long-term strengthening of women’s political participation and representation. The former issue is regarded as politically sensitive in that it would affect current power ratios in the existing assemblies. The only concrete proposal in this regard was put forward in a 1997 meeting of NGOs also attended by politicians. The proposal suggested that an additional one-third of the current national and provincial assembly general seat strength be added as women’s seats, to be directly elected by a joint electorate (i.e., both men and women, including minorities). These seats were to be filled by polls held in tandem with the next Local Bodies elections.

Meanwhile, some activists talking privately to Shirkat Gah are of the view that it may in the long term be more beneficial to forego the immediate restoration of the women’s



reserved seats if this entails a revival of the old, ineffective indirect modality, in favour of sound legislation based on more effective modalities to be enforced in the next general elections.

Whereas most are agreed that women's exclusion from the mainstream has worsened since the lapse of the reserved seats, women's and human rights groups have opposed the 1973 Constitution's indirect mode of induction used to fill the women's reserved seats. A variety of indirect methods of election for women's seats have been tried out since as early as the 1962 National Assembly elections (the first in which seats were reserved for women), all significantly failing to mainstream women in politics. Regarded as perhaps the most undemocratic option, indirect election fails to prepare women for participation in direct elections. It has also worked against women by perpetuating their subordinate status and excluding them from the political mainstream as evidenced by the failure of women members in the assemblies to act in the interests of women.

As a result of their opposition to the modalities provided in the 1973 Constitution, much of the serious research and analysis of possible modalities for strengthening women's political representation and participation has been led by women's rights and other advocacy groups rather than women politicians or the political parties themselves.

One detailed comment regarding the PML(N) proposal to double the number of National Assembly reserved seats to 40, to be directly elected by a separate female electorate, noted that this "does not appear to be a viable and practical solution. The drawbacks of this system include the huge size and population of each such constituency, problems of logistics and excessive expenditures. Such an arrangement will also weaken the member-constituent relationship, which is an important element of majority/plurality systems of elections. This will happen because these women will not represent the male constituents, and because the population may not be fully covered by one member." (Excerpts from a study by Dr. Faqir Hussein conducted for the HRCP Women's Rights project.)

As far as the number of seats is concerned, there is a growing consensus among activist groups that there should be at least 33 percent quota allocated for women across the board in national and provincial assemblies, a demand also supported by the Commission of Inquiry for Women. This would still leave room for women to enter the NA through general seats. Activist groups are also calling for the same principle of 33 percent to be extended to the Senate, the provincial assemblies and local bodies the basic tier of decision-making.

However, there are mathematical complexities involved in the calculation of precisely how this one-third is to be structured, with each variation having significant implications for women's representation. For example, activist groups have yet to clarify whether their stand is that the quota would be in addition to the existing strength of the relevant legislative body or taken out of the existing strength of the general seats. If the former, the number of women's seats in the National Assembly seats would thus be 69 (33% of 207 general seats) in addition to the existing 217 seats (which include 10 seats reserved for minorities) raising the NA strength to 286 Members. But when calculated in reverse, 69 seats amount to only 24% of the total NA strength, again taking women's representation to under one-third.

It also continues to be debated whether legal provisions for women's representation should be time-bound (either in terms of a certain number of years or a certain number

of elections) or enforced indefinitely.

Despite consensus on the 33% principle, the finer points of the modalities remain disputed. The following are options discussed by advocacy and women's rights groups.

- 1) One option is whereby one-third of existing constituencies for the national and provincial elections be declared double-candidate constituencies. Each of these constituencies would have one representative elected on a general seat and one woman representative elected on the one-third quota. Both men and women would have a double vote. These constituencies would then be rotated after each election, so that the entire country would be covered by the one-third rule after three elections. The advantage of this system would be that women would enjoy a normal-sized constituency and room would be left open for women on the general seats. Since 2/3rds of constituencies would entail weaker female representation, political parties should be encouraged to give tickets to women for general seats.

The drawback to this system is the imbalance of representation for those constituencies having fallen outside the one-third dual-member bracket and this would in turn give greater weightage for that particular term to the one-third of constituencies with dual representation. In the National Assembly, seats are allocated to each province on the basis of their population strength, with Punjab being the most populous province having the lion's share of general NA seats. There are fears that if the dual-member constituencies are allocated along the same lines, the already disproportionate nature of Punjab's strength in the NA would be further intensified to the detriment of the smaller provinces.

Representatives of the political parties and sitting MNAs have registered concern that the dual-member system would thus affect the weightage of certain constituencies and certain provinces in crucial political issues such as the election of the Prime Minister, the President (indirectly elected through Parliament and the provincial assemblies), Chief Ministers in the provincial assemblies, and the allocation of development funds to constituencies.

- 2) Another option being discussed is to divide the whole country into new enlarged constituencies for women's seats, each constituency being made up of three normal-sized general seat constituencies. According to the Commission of Inquiry for Women, in this case the whole electorate would enjoy the dual vote at the same time. The advantage of this system is its extreme simplicity, but its shortcoming is the huge size of the women's constituencies, making the female candidate dependent (for linkages and mobilization) on her party counterparts on the general seats falling within her constituency.
- 3) Proportional representation (PR) is also being discussed as a method to induct women into the country's political mainstream. The PR system generally entails a multi-member constituency (MMC) system with voters choosing parties rather than individual candidates. Parties submit prioritized lists of candidates prior to polling day, with as many candidates being declared elected out of each party's list in accordance with the party's proportion of the vote from that constituency. In this method, there is pressure on the political parties to present a balanced list of candidates, so as to attract a wider vote bank including the female vote. The PR system may facilitate women's entry into the assemblies because since voters choose parties rather than specific candidates, they have no control over whether

## AN INSPIRING EXAMPLE?

While the Indian Lok Sabha currently stands dissolved, and thus the Bill introduced to provide for a one-third quota of seats in the lower house of the Indian Parliament will now have to be reintroduced, developments in neighbouring India regarding women's political representation and participation have been watched keenly in Pakistan. Interest will be revived following the election of a new House through general elections to be held in February 1998.

The following report appeared in *Dawn* of 13th October, 1997.

The Indian Government through a Constitutional Amendment reserved a third of the seats in local councils (Panchayats) for women. The amendment also stipulated that one-third of posts of local council chairpersons be reserved for women. The quota has so far brought an estimated 800,000 women into what had been an overwhelmingly male preserve, a number that is expected to rise to one million by the end of 1998.

The presence of these women has shifted the focus of Indian development to projects of human betterment, like basic health, education, safe drinking water, etc. The positive results of this amendment have been felt most in the rural areas. Now young girls in the rural areas are keen to educate themselves, learn English and strive for election in the Panchayats.

Following the Panchayat experience, Indian women are demanding the implementation of a proposal to reserve one-third of all seats in the Lok Sabha and in the State legislatures. If the Bill is passed, male legislators will have to recognize women's issues as they will be brought up by their female members. Not surprisingly, the male-dominated political parties and legislators are dragging their feet on the issue and are attempting to kill the Bill through delay tactics.

The women of India are using political skill, public relations expertise and help from allies abroad to give a high political profile to their campaign to realize their demand for 33% of the directly-elected seats in parliament. They have widened the issue of women's representation to the larger issue of bringing more women into politics. Indian women's message is that women are needed in politics to clean up the system and introduce a new morality into a predominantly male political set up.

Women's organizations such as Women's Political Watch have launched a campaign to explain the issue to different sections of society. The organization has also harnessed the support of the United Nations and aid agencies for the movement. The Conference on Women and Governance where the issue was discussed was attended by delegates from Bangladesh, Iran, Europe, and the United States. The campaigners are adopting a non-confrontational approach, but are counting on women voters to use their vote intelligently as Veena Nayyar heading the Women's Political Watch said "we have no power to punish recalcitrant politicians, but one thing we can do is affect their political future".

their party has slipped in the odd woman candidate lower down the list. An alternative to an MMC system designed to be open to both male as well as female candidates is a multi-member constituency open only to women candidates.

Some, such as Dr. Faqir Hussein, regard MMC as the most suitable system for enhancing female representation in the legislature. This system allows voters a wider choice too, thereby creating more opportunities for smaller parties and independents. The system's disadvantages are those of a larger constituency, a more complex system of division into larger constituencies and a more complicated system of voting, which may not be easy for a largely illiterate electorate. This system also makes fairly stringent demands, for example it requires a greater degree of party development and organization. Most importantly, the PR system severs the link and personalized relationship between the member and his or her constituents, which is the main feature of plurality/majority systems. This system of election must be preceded by reforming the electoral system, particularly democratization and better organization of the political parties.

One major advantage of the systems discussed above is that they do not require great deal of financial expenditure, one of the main constraints obstructing women from standing as candidates. Moreover, in these methods women will not be directly competing with male candidates who enjoy definite advantages in terms of financial resources, social and physical mobility and other traditional male privileges. These methods will also allow female candidates to share resources with their party's general seat candidates from the same constituencies.

- 4) Another strategy for enhancing female representation is making it legally mandatory for political parties to allot a minimum 33% of tickets to women members. This system would speed up the process of mainstreaming women by integrating them through the general electoral system instead of the reserved or quota system. Many countries have enacted provisions whereby a specified number of women are nominated for election tickets, such as in Argentina where political parties are required to allocate 40% of tickets for elections to the Chamber of Deputies to women. Also in Nepal, political parties are constitutionally bound to ensure that at least 5% of candidates on their lists are women.

To date the performance of the existing parties has not been very encouraging as far as participation of women is concerned and few have any voice in the party decision-making process. Most political parties are run autocratically and internal elections are unheard of. The parties do not impart any political education to their members and there is little hope that things will change unless laws are made to regulate their working.

Affirmative action legislation in this area may spark a debate around the rights of political parties vs. the rights of women. However, the Constitution specifically provides for affirmative action in the case of disadvantaged sections of society, notably in Articles 25 (guarantees of non-discrimination including on the basis of gender) and Article 32 (local government and special provisions for women, workers and peasants). While a constitutional amendment regarding women's political representation was beyond the scope of the Caretaker Government which oversaw the run-up to the 1997 elections, it nevertheless promulgated a series of Ordinances making changes to the People's Representation Act and the Political

Parties Act. These were designed to expand the grounds on which candidates could be disqualified and to strengthen controls over campaign expenditure. And yet no provision was introduced to regulate the number of women candidates fielded by the parties.

In his paper, Dr. Faqir Hussein has suggested that legislation be introduced aimed at achieving the following objectives:

- a) each political party should have its own constitution, providing for periodic elections, at least once every 3 years, for all party posts;
  - b) the nomination of candidates to the different assemblies be decided by the respective central committees and the qualifications, service record of the candidates must be the criteria for nominating the candidate for the constituency;
  - c) each political party must have a minimum number of women as members, and at least 15% of posts in the party hierarchy should be reserved for women members;
  - d) each party should allot a minimum of 20% tickets to women candidates to the various legislative bodies, and the number should increase till it matches the ratio of women in the population (some women activists organizations and activists are demanding 33% of tickets.)
- 5) Some activists have raised the question of forming a women's political party. It is envisaged that the party will open its membership to both men and women but decision-making will be entirely in the hands of the women. However, other activists are of the view that such a structure would simply imply another form of discrimination. Proponents of the women's party such as Dr. Farzana Bari writing in a newspaper article ('Women's Voices in Politics', The News) comments that "the party will develop and promote its alternative vision of politics based on justice for all, irrespective of their gender, creed or ethnicity. [It will] formulate policies to resolve socio-economic and political problems. The party's immediate objective would be to set standards in policies and behaviour."

The activists who support a political party for women feel that it will provide them with a platform for them to air their demands forcefully and effectively. Primarily because the membership of such a party will evolve from women's rights activists and NGOs who have first-hand knowledge of the issue of discrimination against women.

## LOCAL BODIES REFORM AND WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION

There is a growing consensus, confirmed by the recent experience in neighbouring India, that the most effective mode of mainstreaming women in politics is to bring women in at the very lowest tier of the elective bodies, known in Pakistan as the Local Bodies. Two out of the six women elected to the 1997 NA had risen from Local Bodies politics, while another recorded a number of years in Local Bodies politics including being Chairperson of a District Council. The Local Bodies are the best training ground for women as well as men, if they are to play an effective role in the politics of the country; in the LBs, politicians

gain confidence, are trained to take decisions and work out strategies and policies.

Local Body elections were held in 1991 in Punjab province but the Bodies were dissolved in 1993, while there have not been LB polls in the other three provinces since 1987. Until provincial statutes relating to Local Bodies lapsed, there were also legislative safeguards for women's representation via reserved seats in local government. The percentage of women's reserved seats varied for each province and as in the lapsed provision for reserved seats in the assemblies, the LB women representatives were elected indirectly by the elected members of the respective Local Body.

Before the dissolution of the Local Bodies, there were 8,295 female members (10.4%) of the total membership of 79,155 at the national level. Their province-wise ratio was 11% in Punjab, 12% in Sindh, 1.32% in NWFP, 16% in Baluchistan, 0.58% in Northern Areas and 7.8% in Islamabad Capital Territory. While this may seem an unimpressive figure when taken as a ratio of the entire female population, but it was definitely a beginning towards effectively ensuring women's visibility in the political process.

However, the women's participation in the LB's suffered from much the same drawbacks which affected the reserved seats for women in the national and provincial assemblies. The women members lacked awareness, training and information, and faced cultural constraints and discrimination. Since the women were elected indirectly they owed their representation to the male LB members or to the party they belonged to.

Reform is needed ensuring that Local Bodies polls are held regularly after every three years and providing for direct election of women members.

In April 1998 the Federal Government announced that it was doubling existing provisions for women's seats at the local bodies level. But since previously there was only a 10% provision, this fell far below expectations of a positive announcement providing for a one-third representation of women. (Indeed, earlier Local Bodies draft legislation in Punjab had reportedly included a 33% reserved seat provision). Moreover, given the realities of the current legislation affecting local government, women's representation is likely in practice to fall below the 20% margin.

While under the 1979 local bodies provincial Ordinances, the structure and process for electing Local Bodies were broadly similar with only minor variations between the four provinces, new legislation has led the provinces to diverge significantly in their local body structure, with implications for women's representation. The February 3, 1998 Panchayat Ordinance promulgated in the Punjab established a nominated lower tier - *panchayats* - in the rural areas, while Union Councils are to be composed of all the heads (*Sarpanch*) of the *panchayats* falling within each Union Council; members of the District Councils, the next tier in the hierarchy, are however to be directly elected. The number of members of the *panchayat* will depend on the strength of the



local population:

for populations not exceeding 1000 the *panchayat* will consist of 5 members

for populations of 1000 - 1999 the *panchayat* will 'not exceed' 6 members

for populations of 2000 - 3999 the *panchayat* will 'not exceed' 7 members

for populations of 4000 - 6999 the *panchayat* will 'not exceed' 8 members

for populations of 7000 - 9999 the *panchayat* will 'not exceed' 9 members

for populations exceeding 10000 the *panchayat* will 'not exceed' 10 members.

Because there is no clear policy on how the women's seats are to be adjusted in this tier, it is likely that women's representation will suffer because of the complexities of mathematics. Women's representation of 20% of 5 is easily calculated at the round figure of 1 woman member, but for 6 and 7-member *panchayats* (likely to be the most common *panchayat* size) 20% is 1 member plus a fraction less than a half. Inevitably in practice only one seat will be reserved for women and thus women's representation effectively is reduced to below 20%.

Moreover, since the nomination of *panchayat* members is bound to be affected by the extent of their local power base, women are likely to be denied any chance of being nominated other than to the reserved seats. On the other hand, in the urban areas, where the previous local body structures remain in tact, women's representation will be less threatened, although the 20% reserved seat provision is still far from the directly elected 33% women's representation hoped for.

Meanwhile, in the NWFP local body provisions are almost the reverse of the Punjab model, with direct elections to the lowest, Union Council level and a different process for forming District Councils.

In Punjab Local Body elections have been announced for 20 May 1998, although given the previous record of repeated postponement there are fears the even this much-delayed schedule may not in fact go ahead. That the polls are to be held on a non-party basis is another blow to the process of ensuring the democratisation of political parties at the lower level, a process which necessarily should include greater efforts to draw women into active politics.

Appendix 1 Pakistan Peoples Party  
Manifesto Elections 1997

Appendix 2 Pakistan Muslim League  
Manifesto Elections 1997

Appendix 3 Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf  
Manifesto Elections 1997

Appendix 4 Commission of Inquiry for  
Women: extracts

Appendix 5 Women Action Forum's  
Statement of Demands  
(Fourth World Conference  
on Women, Beijing 1995)



# Pakistan Peoples Party Manifesto Elections 1997

## CHAPTER 8 - WOMEN

### A. WOMEN'S RIGHTS & DEVELOPMENT ACHIEVEMENTS 1993-1996

1. Strengthening of Institutional Framework.
  - Strengthened the Ministry of Women Development and Youth Affairs;
  - Set up of Women Development Department in the Provinces;
  - Made women issues a focal point in all Federal Ministries and provincial departments.
  
2. Shifting of emphasis from welfare oriented development to skill development.
  - During the last two years (98 in the Public Sector & 185 in the Private Sector);
  - The Ministry of Women Development funded 283 women development projects establishment of 40 computer training centres under the umbrella project;
  - Expanded the operation and branches of First Women Bank established in 1989 (33 branches by the Peoples Government all over Pakistan);
  - Regional Development Training Institute established in March, 1995. Courses in banking, computers, entrepreneurship started;
  
3. First of Its kind in South Asia:-
  - National Training & Resource Centre for Women in Development Islamabad, Rs. 420.83 million approved.

#### 4. Law, Security & Health

- For the first time induced of women officers in the police service of Pakistan;
- Strengthened the women police force;
- Acquired land in four provinces for modern prisons for women;
- Established a network of women police stations in Karachi, Rawalpindi, Islamabad, Abbottabad and Saidu Sharif;
- Established Commission of Inquiry for Women (October 1994) to review all the existing laws which are discriminatory to women or effect their rights as equal citizens;
- Signed the United Nation Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women in August, 1995;
- Appointed women judges in three of four of the country's High Courts;
- Introduced Rural Health Programme. 100,000 females will be trained as Primary Health Workers to provide maternal Health Care, Child nutrition and population planning services;
- Established burns wards in major hospitals in each Province to especially deal with cases of home accidents and domestic violence. Supported Global Commission on Women's Health Pakistan (WHO) (Pakistan Chapter);
- Coordinated Population Planning Programme "From State and Seminar to Home & Hearth";
- Started Medical Technical Assistants Training Programme for Girls (MTA) in selected Divisional/District Hospitals;
- Established anti T.B. drug bank for women;
- Started housing scheme for destitute women with a Rs. 20 million revolving Fund.

#### 5. Planning & Development Division

- Incorporated the Beijing Plan of Action and the National Report for women into SAP-II and 9th Five Year Plan

## B. WOMEN'S RIGHTS & DEVELOPMENT AGENDA 1997-2002

### 1. POLITICAL PARTICIPATION & REPRESENTATION

To ensure women's political participation and representation, measures will be taken to:

- Restore the reserved seats for women in the National Assembly, Senate and Provincial Assemblies and in the local bodies;
- Establish a Permanent Commission on the Status of Women as an autonomous statutory body comprising government representatives, NGOs, human rights organizations, and experts in different fields to review, recommend, oversee and monitor the implementation of laws, policies and programmes in development, rights and political participation;
- Ensure minimum 20% women's representation and participation in local government institutions and advisory committees established for developmental programmes e.g. the Social Action Programme and the Rural Support Programmes;
- Enhance the minimum quota for women in the civil services to 10% in all sectors and grades including all government, semi-government and autonomous bodies;
- Formulate a well-defined policy for women's development by the Government;
- Include the MoWD as a permanent member of important policy-making fora, like the National Economic Council (NEC), Executive Committee of the NEC (ECNEC), Central Development Working Party (CDWP), Agricultural Credit Advisory Committee (ACAC);
- Ensure equal representation of women in all committees instituted at the local level for maintenance and monitoring of public programmes such as school management committees, rural water supply and sanitation groups;

### 2. EMPLOYMENT

A national employment policy for women will be enunciated immediately for the women workers in the formal and informal sector. Ensuring that laws are implemented regarding 8 hour working days for women workers in the formal sector, measures will be taken to:

- Extend the legal cover of an adequate minimum wage, acceptable working hours, and health and maternity benefits to casual, temporary and piece-rate workers;

- Encourage women's participation in public sector employment through flexibility in regulations pertaining to age;
- Introduce incentives of a reasonable maternity package and day care facilities at larger workplaces;
- Enforce corrective measures for minimising occupational health hazards for women in the industrial sectors;
- Facilitate hostel accommodation for working women in all cities and towns;
- Encourage rural-based industries and enterprises, especially those that absorb women;
- Review the existing employment laws and practice to ensure equality of opportunity and non-discrimination against women, and set up special units in Industrial Relations Boards to redress cases of discrimination, harassment and victimization of women workers;
- Provide training and credit and facilitate marketing procedures for women micro-entrepreneurs through specially designed schemes;
- Create a national data-base on women employment;
- Increase the recruitment of women in Labour Inspectorate to monitor the working conditions of women workers.

### 3. VIOLENCE

To combat all forms of violence against women (including domestic violence, custodial violence, sexual harassment, public humiliations and prostitution and trafficking of women):

- Undertake stronger legislative action to create a safe social and physical environment for women;
- Establish support structures (e.g. legal aid and counseling centres) and shelters all over the country for female victims of violence and forced prostitution.
- Set up citizen-police liaison committees at the mohalla and village level to provide protection for women and register cases of domestic violence as criminal offense.
- Expand and upgrade the women's police force and improve the conditions in women's prisons. Provide state counseling for women prisoners;
- Enact legislation to ensure that doctors in hospitals immediately report female burn cases and alleged/suspected domestic violence cases to the police. Establish special units in hospitals, clinics and dispensaries for medico-legal support to victims of such violence;

- Establish committees at sub-divisional and district levels with women's adequate representation, to perform the following functions:
  - to liaise with patient care societies to arrange for legal, psychiatric and financial help to victims of violence.
  - visit women confined to police lock-ups and prisons.
  - maintain records on the conditions of the victims/prisoners, and collect data on cases of rape.
- Organise training programmes on violence against women for members of law-enforcement agencies, the judiciary and legislatures;
- Strictly monitor and severely deal with violence against women by state agencies.

#### 4. LEGAL RIGHTS

- To ensure the human rights of women and to eradicate all forms of discrimination against them, affirmative action will be taken by:
  - Repealing/amending blatantly discriminatory, and derogatory laws e.g. the Hudood Ordinances, the Citizenship Act, etc.;
  - Reforming the personal laws to meet the demand of current socio-economic realities, and expediting the process of justice in the family courts;
  - Legislating to make sexual harassment specifically a crime;
  - Amending laws on prostitution and trafficking of women to provide harsher punishments to the offender;

#### 5. WATER

Recognizing that the lack of clean water is a denial of the citizen's basic right to life, and is the most important demand of the rural women of Pakistan, high priority will be given to the most important demand of the rural women of Pakistan, high priority will be given to this issue and local communities, especially rural women, will be involved in the planning, management and maintenance of more accessible, safe and reliable water systems.

#### 6. CONTROL AND OWNERSHIP OF RESOURCES

Recognizing that legal ownership of assets and control over incomes is a vital factor in women's economic independence at all levels, steps will be taken to ensure that:

- Female-headed poor households will be given priority in allotment of all

land- sites and housing schemes.

- The property inherited by women, particularly in the rural areas will be registered in their names.
- Increasing women's access to ownership and control of assets, particularly government-distributed land and property through the registration of title- deeds of all state-lands allotted for lease or home sites, jointly in the names of husband and wife, and in case of female-headed households, to the primary earner.

## **7. AGRICULTURE**

Recognizing that peasant women make a major contribution to all agricultural work, steps will be taken to ensure that:

- Their contribution is recognized in national statistics (by developing separate) gender based surveys;
- They are provided extension and training about improved methods of work and new technologies that will increase the output of their work;
- Radio programmes for rural women, especially peasant women, will be broadcast daily to provide them information relevant to their work, health, nutrition and government programmes and services for their benefit.

## **8. NGOS AND EXPERTS IN WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT**

Recognizing the importance of the contribution and expertise of NGOs and other experts in women's development, efforts will be initiated to:

- Involve them in all advisory and programme committees in women's development issues e.g. the Social Action Programme;
- Build up the NGOs financial and operational capacity to enable them to more effectively support Government efforts;

## **9. SPORTS FOR WOMEN**

The Government accepted the Iranian government's proposal in 1993 to stage the Second Islamic Countries Women Sports Solidarity Games in Pakistan in October 1997. Prior to the main event, mini games were held in October 1996 as a dress rehearsal. Invitation to all the Muslim countries have been extended and 25 countries have confirmed their participation. The purpose of hosting the Islamic Women Games in Pakistan was to generate healthy sports activity among women of the country and to promote opportunities for women athletes to participate in inter country competitions.

**10. CONTRIBUTION FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN TO THE ORGANIZATION OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS FROM MUSLIM COUNTRIES (OWPMC)**

Under the direct guidance of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, Pakistan convened the First Conference of Women Parliamentarians from Muslim Countries (OWPMC) in August 1995 and offered to host the Organization's Secretariat in Islamabad which has since been established.

**11. INTEGRATION**

As the over all policy, guideline, gender concerning will be fully integrated into all social, economic and political activities of the nation, with the special emphasis of removing all disparities based on sex.

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Pakistan Muslim League Manifesto 1997**

#### **Political Reforms**

In order to make the National and Provincial Assemblies more representative of the different sections of the society, steps will be considered to increase the number of seats in Parliament and Provincial Assemblies to give due representation on the principles of proportionate representation, to women, minorities and outstanding professional experts.

#### **Women's Uplift**

Increasing female literacy and economic potential is of utmost importance to our social development.

Pakistan Muslim League has a comprehensive plan for bringing about greater social, political and economic participation of women.

- Working Women Hostels and shelters for working women will be provided in urban centres.
- Proportionately greater resources to be allocated for female literacy and education.
- Women's co-operatives to be formed and financed to participate in garments manufacture, handicrafts and such other small and cottage industries.
- Mother and child health care and population welfare to receive priority in allocation of resource.
- Violence against women to be stamped out by harsher punishment through tightening the law and procedures.
- Laws relating to inheritance by females to be strengthened and vigorously enforced.



# Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Manifesto Elections 1997

## SOCIAL REFORMS

### Women's Rights

Since status and involvement in decision making is a critical part of empowerment TI is committed to bring the women of Pakistan into the mainstream of socio-economic progress by upholding and protecting rights of women as equal citizens. It proposes to do this by:

1. Ensuring that the views of women get reflected in policy making and national process.
2. Ratifying the United Nations convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women without reservations.
3. Abolishing all laws that discriminate against women.
4. TI will ensure - participation of women in mainstream politics by:
  - Amending the Political Parties Act (1962) to ensure that all parties have a significant female representation on all committees including the central executive committee
  - Amending electoral rules to ensure that only political parties which allocate a minimum of 10% general seat tickets to women candidates are allowed to participate in the elections.
5. Establish the Pakistan Commission on Women a permanent autonomous statutory body comprising government representatives, NGOs, human rights organizations and experts in different fields.
6. Legislating for a safe social and physical environment for women, and by combating all forms of violence against women-domestic and custodial violence, sexual harassment, etc.

# Commission of Inquiry for Women: extracts

## POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Women of Pakistan remain literally marginalized in respect of a citizen's fundamental right of political participation. It is disingenuous to say that they have an equal right with men in law. It is the equality of a lamb and a lion. Considering all the decades of discrimination, subordination and effacement from public life that women have been subjected to, even when entry into a competition is equally open, it remains for them a handicap race many times over. Women in public life still have low popular acceptability, especially so when eager men are on hand, because of historical and social factors. Redressal of the situation cannot be left to the pace of historical change. Special devices and urgent efforts will be needed both to release women from the factors that still hold them back and to speed their progress.

Equal participation of men and women in decision-making is a prerequisite for effective and genuine democracy. It is unfortunate that primarily male-membership bodies make even major decisions that affect their lives in the form of laws and policies, with virtually no participation by women. This is a major reason why so many of the laws are discriminatory and why most policies marginalize women. While it is vital for women to have a decisive voice on issues of particular concern to them, it is equally critical to have their perspective and views reflected in other decisions in other spheres and at all levels.

There is a perception that as members of a family, class or profession, women's concerns and opinions are the same as of other members of that group and can be articulated equally well by male representatives. A number of studies have proved that to be untrue. When choices have to be made within limited resources, women's concerns and priorities can be very different from men's. And it is this difference that is ordinarily left out in the political arena where women have minimal participation and representation.

Inequity pervades all the aspects of political activity. In the last election there were, for instance, less than 25 million registered female voters against more than 30 million male ones. Even of these, a far smaller percentage actually went and voted compared to men. One of the reasons is the special hurdles women face in the exercise of their franchise.

First, there is the issue of a National Identity Card, which is a requirement for voting. Getting identity cards is generally not considered necessary for women and meets resistance from men. The process of getting an identity card made is a chore in itself, entailing endless delays in an atmosphere not particularly conducive for women. Moreover, a woman's name on the identity card may often not match that on the voter's list, most commonly due to marriage or divorce. Thus, many women are denied their right

of franchise, either because they do not have an identity card or because their names do not match.

Socio-cultural norms that promote female segregation, or do not accept the validity of even marginal political participation of women, have also deprived a substantial number of women of the right to vote. It is common for political parties or rival candidates, particularly in the NWFP, to mutually agree not to let their women supporters come and vote. In the recent election, jirga decisions in the newly enfranchised areas of FATA resulted in a massive denial of franchise to the female electorate. Announcements were made on mosque loudspeakers that voting by women was un-Islamic and a woman going to a polling station would do so at the peril of her house being burnt down. As a result, for instance, no more than 37 women out of 6,600 registered ones voted in Jamrud in the Khyber Agency. Though official efforts were made to press women to vote regardless of the threats, the official agencies were not willing to take action against the offenders of clear penal provisions in the law.

At the level of political parties, the participation of women can be gauged from their numbers at the common membership level, their representation in decision-making bodies of the political parties and the number of tickets given to them in general elections. While parties have no clear records of membership, women's representation in the decision-making bodies, i.e. the central executive committees, of the two major parties in the country is still quite inadequate. According to information received, there are currently 3 women out of a total membership of 21 in the central executive committee of the PPP and 5 out of 47 in the PML (N). In their allocation of tickets to women in the 1997 elections, the PPP and its coalition partner PML(J) fielded 9 women out of a total of 161 candidates for the National Assembly seats, while the PML(N) put up 6 from a total of 177. The proportion was similarly negligible on the seats in the four provincial assemblies. The voters then matched the parties' lack of interest in women by returning just one of them among a total of more than 460 seats in the provincial assemblies.

At the level of representation, in the previous NA women comprised less than 2% of the total membership of the house (4 out of 217); 2.4% in the Senate (2 out of 83); and 1.5% in the Muslim membership of the PAs (7 out of 460). In the current NA, women comprise about 2.76% of the total membership (6 out of 217), and about 0.21% of the total membership of the PAs (1 out of 483), Senate membership remaining the same. Women have no representation in the minority membership of the NA, which consists of 10 seats, nor in the minority membership of the PAs, which consists of 23 seats.

This minimal representation of women at all levels reflects the inadequacy of the commitment of political parties and the ineffectiveness of any attempts to mainstream women in the political arena. One of the main reasons cited by political parties for the near invisibility of women in representative bodies is that women are reluctant to come into the political arena. This claim is belied by the fact that a number of women apply for party tickets thereby indicating their willingness to contest, and a significant number contest elections as independents despite having no organizational support. And when seats are reserved for them, a substantial number of women are willing to fill them. If some seats do not get filled, as in some local council, it is primarily because the more influential male politicians of those areas, subject to the patriarchal cultural and social biases that pervade society, actively discourage women's participation.

The minimal political participation and representation of women was the reason behind the system of reserved seats for women in the legislative assemblies in Pakistan from the very beginning. Indeed, special provisions for women's seats have existed since 1935 in the Sub-continent. Seats were reserved in the 1946 and all the subsequent elections. They were a requirement in the 1956, 1962 and 1973 Constitutions till the provision stood lapsed after the 1988 elections. However, this provision was not extended to the Senate, which was introduced in the 1973 Constitution. The most recent Constitutional provisions for women's representation was for about 10% of the seats in NA and 5% in the PAs. This provision expired before the 1990 elections and has not been revived since then, despite the commitments of both the major political parties in their election manifestos that they would do so. During 1994-95, the National Consultative Committee set up by the government obtained the signatures of 148 sitting MNAs from both the government and the opposition in support of the restoration of reserved seats. In July 1995, at a workshop organized by women's rights organizations, a joint declaration was signed by representatives of the PPP, PML(N) and the ANP for the restoration of reserved seats and extension of this provision to the Senate. Despite all this the seats were not restored, largely because of political polarization, an apprehension on the part of political parties that their rivals may thereby increase their strength within the parliament and because, in any event, this has not been a priority issue for political parties.

In view of the dismal representation of women in the legislative bodies since the concerned constitutional provision has lapsed, there is a general consensus among most women's organizations that the provision of reserved seats needs to be revived. What has become abundantly clear is that there is no hope in the immediate future of women being able to get due legislative representation without this affirmative action measure. Affirmative action in this regard is also in vogue in other countries, and is gaining legitimacy in even more. Bangladesh, Nepal and Tanzania amongst others have reserved seats for women. Most socialist countries had ensured substantial representation for women, through conscious policies of allocating more tickets to them or prioritizing their names in lists. India has set aside 33% seats for women in the local bodies, and is now seriously considering extension of this arrangement to the state and federal legislatures. The concept of reservation for parliamentary representation is thus neither peculiar neither to Pakistan nor, within Pakistan, has it been confined to women. The Senate still reserves seats for technocrats, the Ulema and for the less developed areas of FATA. Even some of the developed nations are considering ways of bridging gender disparity at decision-making ways.

However, while there has been general agreement on the restoration of reserved seats for women among women's organizations, they have simultaneously raised questions about the number of seats that need to be reserved for women, the modality for filling in these seats and the extension of the provision to the Senate.

As far as the number of seats is concerned, there is a growing consensus that there should be at least a 33% representation of women in all-representative bodies. This is reportedly the proportion recommended by the United Nations in all tiers of representation, and is a realistic size. Less than a third does not form the necessary minimum to enable women to play an effective and self-confident enough role in decision-making. Nor can it help speed up the mainstreaming of women so that any special

provision for their representation becomes redundant in foreseeable future. Thus, if the representation cannot for now be proportionate to the size of the female population in the country, it should at least be of a size to enable women to influence thinking and decisions on issues of their concern, which is after all the basic purpose of a special provision to ensure their representation.

Where the mode of filling in these seats is concerned, there has been a difference of opinion even among the main political parties. While various methods have existed over different periods of Pakistan's history, the last mode for filling in reserved seats in the NA and PAs was through indirect election by members of the respective houses. However, when it was in the opposition after the 1993 elections, the PML(N) suggested doubling of the number of seats to 40 and proposed two possible methods for doing so. The first was that of direct elections to these seats by creating larger constituencies and giving women the double right of vote. The second was of filling them in through proportional representation, on the basis of the number of votes received by each party.

It is apparent that the indirect method of election for women's reserved seats has not proved to be sufficiently beneficial. It does not lend credibility to women representatives, since they remain dependent on and accountable to the primarily male legislatures, instead of being genuine representatives of the electorate. There is also a perception that nominations are rarely made on merit or the proven track record of the women party workers. And although a number of them have played a role in initiating and participating in debates on women's rights issues, there is a further perception that their role has not been sufficiently effective.

Mainstreaming of women in the political system has to be the ultimate objective of any method, which is to be adopted for filling in women's reserved seats. As such, the system should be geared towards bringing in capable women who can play an effective role in the House, just as it should return capable candidates through the general electoral system.

The proportional electoral system, which involves the advance publication of a list of candidates who would come in on the basis of priority after the party's share has been calculated, is one which has been discussed at different levels as a method which might increase opportunities for women's representation. However, it may not be an immediately feasible system in a largely illiterate society with insufficient political education and experience. Moreover, it creates no space for independent candidates who still comprise a significant proportion of candidates and representatives in the country.

Yet another issue discussed is whether women representatives should be brought in through the vote of women alone, or both men and women. Being elected by just women may make the representatives feel more obliged to address women's issues, but it may also narrow their focus to just that. If they are voted in by both, they would still recognize their obligation to address women's concerns since they have been brought in on women's reserved seats, but would also find it necessary to inquire into and address other issues since their electorate would comprise both men and women. The latter system appears to be more conducive to the political mainstreaming of women, and also in line with the principle of doing away with separate electorates in any form. The electorate for voting in women representatives should, therefore, ideally be a joint

electorate of men and women, both Muslim and non-Muslim.

Thus, the basic principles for ensuring effective representation of women through reserving seats for them emerges through these various discussions: the system should be geared towards mainstreaming women; the quantum of reservation should be at least 33%; the system of election should be direct and constituency-related; and there should be a joint electorate. A few possible modalities, which fulfill these requirements, have been briefly discussed below, with their respective advantages and disadvantages.

The first possible system is one in which one-third of the existing constituencies for the national and provincial elections (e.g. 69 out of 207 for the NA elections) are declared double-candidate constituencies. Thus, these constituencies would have one representative from the general seat and one-woman representative from the reserved seat. Both men and women would have a double vote. These special constituencies would then be rotated after each election, so that the entire country gets covered after three terms, and from the fourth the rotation starts anew. One advantage of this system is that the women have a normal-sized constituency to deal with. Another is that there is more room left for mainstreaming of women through the general seats. Since two-thirds of the constituencies would not have any reservation for women's seats, political parties may feel more obliged to give tickets to women for general seats in these constituencies, particularly if they have already performed effectively in their constituency on a reserved seat. However, till their turn comes around, this system may leave the other two-third constituencies with a feeling of being un-represented in terms of the special seats. It also gives one-third of the constituencies greater weightage for that term with dual representation, which could be perceived as disturbing the balance of power in the assemblies.

Another method is to divide the whole country into new enlarged constituencies for women's reserved seats, each constituency comprising three normal sized constituencies. In this system, the entire electorate would have a double vote. The major advantage of the system is that it is the most straightforward and uncomplicated of the systems. Its principal drawback is the unwieldy size of the constituency, making the female candidate more dependent on her party counterpart on the general seat. However, in a larger constituency, the candidate is not necessarily expected to maintain constant contact with constituents.

A third mode is to have even larger constituencies for women's reserved seats, comprising six or nine normal constituencies each, but make them into multi-member ones. Under this system, voters from each larger constituency would elect two or three women to the reserved seats allocated to them, while also voting for their candidate to the general seat from their respective constituencies. This system allows voters a wider choice, thereby increasing the chances of more women coming in on merit and creating more opportunities for smaller parties and independents. Often a voter is caught on the horns of a dilemma in having to choose between merit and the dictate of party loyalty. In multi-member voting he will need sacrifice neither. The system's disadvantages are those of a larger constituency, a more complex system of division into larger constituencies and a more complicated system of voting, which may not be easy for a largely illiterate population.

One major advantage of all the three systems discussed above is that they would entail

less financial expenditure by the women. Women in political parties have often expressed the view that very few women own or control sufficient resources to contest elections and that their respective political parties should contribute towards their campaigns. They also feel that it is difficult for women to single-handedly run an election campaign, which requires money, extensive travelling and a lot of public interaction. In these systems, the women will not be contesting against male candidates who usually have the advantage of more financial resources, ability to travel freely and experience in dealing with the public; and their financial outlay will also be significantly less since they can, when general elections are being held, share resources with their party's general candidates from the same constituencies.

Yet another system for enhancing women's political representation is that of making it legally mandatory for political parties to allot a certain minimum percentage of its tickets to women for elections to the national and provincial assemblies. The main advantage of the system is that it would speed up the process of mainstreaming women by bringing them in through the general electoral system, rather than that of reserved seats. However, this system could be perceived by political parties as an infringement of their right to run their affairs without interference. Legally, it would require a constitutional amendment to ensure that it is not challenged. Another disadvantage is that there is no guarantee of women coming in through this system; if parties want to evade the genuine intentions of the system, they could do so by allotting women tickets to losing seats in constituencies where their parties have minimal strength. The system would be more suitable in conjunction with another system.

It is necessary to point out here that none of the systems discussed is without some drawback or problem. There can be no ideal solution to a complex problem in a situation where inequities exist at every level. At best, these are ways of improving upon the current situation and speeding up the process of mainstreaming women's political participation and representation, which can be reviewed and revised as necessary. This should not be used as an excuse to postpone taking measures to effectively ensure meaningful representation of women in all legislative bodies, including the Senate. The modality for the Senate would, obviously, have to be different since the entire electoral process for the Upper House is different. The rule of the one-third representation could apply nevertheless. The importance of the issue cannot be minimized. The women of Pakistan have virtually not been represented in the past. There is no justification for any further delay. In fact, their immediate presence in the assemblies is essential for due attention and action to be initiated on the recommendations of this report. It must also be pointed out that half-hearted efforts will serve no purpose. The sooner strong action is taken, the sooner will it be possible to gradually phase out the system of special reservation, which is only meant as an interim measure till its objectives have been achieved.

One final issue that must be addressed is that of women's representation in local bodies. Local Bodies are a critical tier of government, in which people at the grassroots level can play an effective and meaningful role in developing a democratic culture. For women, this is the political arena most accessible to them and one in which they can participate with greater familiarity and confidence. As in other elective bodies, the principle of 33% reservation of seats and a system of direct elections by both men and women should be instituted. Earlier laws relating to local bodies provided for a 10% quota for women,

through the same indirect system of election by elected members. Punjab briefly passed an ordinance in which the quota was raised to 33%, but the ordinance lapsed without any elections being held under it and the new law has reverted to the earlier quota.

But the local bodies system, as it exists in Pakistan, has several other serious drawbacks, which impact its effectiveness. The system of local bodies is often referred to as local government, although in actual reality its powers are limited and its functions divided between different councils, with minimal coordination and cohesion between them. Moreover, despite being the basic tier of elected representative bodies in government, it remains the least recognized and most vulnerable to political whims and manipulations. Though local government finds mention in the constitutional Principles of Policy, it is not given constitutional recognition as a third tier of government. Without this protection, local bodies are subject to frequent dismissals and protected litigation in the courts, as has been witnessed over the years. The task of conducting election to these institutions is assigned to election authorities appointed by the respective provincial governments. Since the qualifications and mode of appointment of members are quite different from those of the Election Commission of Pakistan, they cannot play their role as independently and impartially. Complaints of misuse of the official machinery during elections are common and the results of elections have rarely been accepted as fair.

As a final word, it must be said that to make any of these systems effective, political parties should also be making efforts to enhance the capabilities of their women workers through political education and training, an area which has been sadly neglected. But the efforts should not stop here. What is even more critical is that male members of their parties, particularly representatives of the legislative assemblies, be made aware of and sensitized to issues of women's concerns and rights. Media must also move forward in playing its due role of educating the public on all these issues. An educated public opinion is essential for the success of any endeavor.

## Recommendations

1. Principle of reservation of 33% of seats for women in an enlarged house of each of the elective bodies, from the local bodies up to the Senate, should be accepted.
2. Necessary amendments in the Constitution and other laws should be initiated as speedily as possible to provide for women's reserved seats in all the elective bodies through any modality meeting the criteria of direct elections and joint electorate.
3. The 33% reserved seats in the Senate should be filled through allocating the following number of seats for female senators:
  - Five additional seats from each province;
  - At least two out of the eight seats of FATA;
  - One out of the three from the federal capital;
  - One or two of the five seats for technocrats.

The five additional seats from each province can be filled through immediate elections; all others should be filled on a priority basis as the seats in those cat



egories fall vacant.

4. Necessary constitutional amendments should be initiated to give local government recognition and protection as a third tier of government.
5. The Election Commission should be authorized to conduct local body elections.
6. Immediate steps should be taken to expedite the above, so that local body elections can be properly conducted.
7. Elections to women's reserved seats in the national and provincial assemblies may also be held along with local bodies elections.
8. Prompt and strong action under the existing penal provisions should be taken against parties, candidates, pseudo-religious and other categories of individuals and bodies acting to restrain women from voting or otherwise creating difficulties in the exercise of their right of franchise.
9. Where the Election Commission finds evidence of large-scale non-participation of women in voting, it should declare the election null and void.
10. Efficient updating of the electoral rolls is a high priority. It should particularly ensure not only that all eligible women are included, but also that the names are exactly the same as on their identity cards.
11. The process of issuance of identity cards should be greatly simplified and made prompt, especially in the rural and remote areas. Photographs of women on identity cards should be made compulsory, as it already is on passports.
12. Cross-party consultation of all parliamentary and elective body groups should be held annually to review the state of women's representation and their political participation. An immediate process for this should be initiated through a dialogue on the modalities for reserved seats.

## **APPENDIX 5**

### **Extracts from Women Action Forum's Statement of Demands prepared for the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995**

#### **Women's Political Participation**

WAF has vigorously campaigned for women's greater participation in the political process at all levels. WAF firmly believes in women's basic right to take part in the governance of their country and to hold the highest offices. It considers the question of a woman's right to be head of government/state (raised by politico - religious parties) to be a non-issue and has taken a strong stand against it.

Given the societal norms, values and practices that impede women's effective participation, WAF calls for affirmative action for women, minorities and other oppressed groups.

WAF has therefore campaigned for women's representation in public offices through direct elections and a 33% reserved seats quota at all levels, from the local bodies to the Senate. WAF has suggested a number of alternative methods for the election of women to reserved seats. This includes an amendment to the Political Parties Act so as to encourage parties to have women members and to field female candidates on general seats.

#### **Political System**

WAF is a secular organization which upholds the view the religion is a private matter and not the business of the state. Politically, WAF has always stood for a democratic and pluralistic system where people can express themselves freely and where women are involved in all political processes at every level. Changes within the parameters of power-sharing and decision-making are necessary if a democratic and pluralistic system is to be realised.

WAF upholds the right of people to nationality and to equal rights as citizens of the state. The State of Pakistan today follows a discriminatory policy between citizens on the basis of religious and gender based difference which has resulted in discrimination against women and internal conflict within the community.



# WOMEN IN POLITICS

Update 1997-2009

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# Women's Participation and Representation: 1997-2007

The General Elections of 1997 returned Nawaz Sharif's PML(N) with an unprecedented majority. Despite having two-thirds majority, this government was either unable or disinclined to make any changes in two factors that heavily impacted the status of women: no attempt was made to repeal the discriminatory laws that were Zia's legacy, and the restoration of women's reserved seats remained unresolved. The Ministry of Women's Development (MoWD) and NGOs collaborated on consultations on the National Plan of Action<sup>1</sup> (NPA) which was officially launched in 1998. Introduction of the Constitution (15th Amendment) Bill in the NA on 28th August 1998 led to many protests from the civil society and women rights NGOs. The Bill threatened the basic principles of the Constitution, the parliamentary process and the concept of the federation, placing fundamental rights of the people at one man's discretion. The Bill proposed that a Constitutional amendment be possible by simple majority instead of the two-thirds required by the constitution thereby concentrating power in the hands of the Federal Government and giving it full discretion to interpret Shariah as it saw fit. Many women rights activists from various NGOs resigned from government committees including those concerned with the Beijing Platform of Action follow up process in protest against the proposed constitutional amendment. **(See Annex 1).**

On 12th October 1999 Pakistan experienced its fourth military coup. General Pervez Musharraf, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee and Chief of Army Staff deposed the democratically elected government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif after Sharif tried to oust the General, and assumed the office of the Chief Executive. General Musharraf proclaimed Emergency throughout Pakistan and suspended the assemblies.<sup>2</sup>

General Musharraf was quick to reassure the nation that his was not an obscurantist religious agenda and promised to eliminate corruption, revive the economy and restore democracy. Presenting himself as a 'liberal' dictator General Musharraf advocated 'enlightened moderation' an ideology that placed itself between religious extremism and western liberalism. Despite proclaiming to only oversee the transition to democracy, in April 2002 he had himself elected president through a highly controversial referendum – not relinquishing the post of chief of army staff he became all-powerful by assuming position as head of the constitution as well as the military. Though this was a government ruled by a military dictator it can be credited for the establishment of the National Commission on the Status of Women, and the allocation of 17% and 33% reserved seats for women in the parliament and local government respectively.

## Devolution of Power Plan

In 2000, General Musharraf introduced a new local government system called the 'Devolution of Power Plan'. Aimed at strengthening democratic institutions and empowering people at the grassroots level, elections under plan this were held in five phases between

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1. The NPA was devised to give affect to the Beijing Platform for Action and aims to facilitate women's participation in all spheres of life and ensure the protection of women's rights, and outlines strategic objectives to strengthen the representation and decision-making of women in the political process.
  2. In 2000 the Supreme Court of Pakistan upheld the military takeover subject to certain conditions and granted General Musharraf a 3-year period to hold General Elections and restore democracy.



December 2000 and August 2001. The local government system, according to the Local Government Plan, 2000, was based on five basic principles: devolution of political power, decentralization of administrative authority, de-concentration of management functions, diffusion of the power-authority nexus, and distribution of resources at the district level.<sup>3</sup> Most importantly it allotted a 33% quota for women in district, tehsil (municipality) and union councils.

The local government system is composed of three tiers of administration: the union, tehsil and zila (district). Under the Devolution of Power Plan the union council was composed of 21 members: Union Nazim (the Nazim is the chief elected official of a local government), Naib Nazim (Deputy Nazim), one member from the minority communities, twelve Muslim representatives elected to general seats and six elected for peasants and workers. The one-third reservation is applied to the Muslim seats (four women) and the six seats for peasants and workers (two for women), thus six of eighteen general seats were reserved for women. The tehsil council is composed of Naib Nazim from all the union councils and representatives elected from reserved seats for women (one-third of the number of unions), peasants and workers (five percent of the total number of unions), and minority communities (five percent). The highest tier of administration, the Zila Council consists of all Union Nazims in the district and like the tehsil councils, by members elected through quotas: 33 percent women, 5 percent peasants and workers and 5 percent from the minority communities.<sup>4</sup> Modality of elections at the union council level is direct and on the basis of adult franchise. Elected candidates of the Union Councils form the Electoral College which then indirectly elects the tehsil and district councils.

Under the Devolution of Power Plan the number of seats reserved for women as a percentage of the total number of seats was as below:

Type of Council (Total number of councils)	Total seats for women	Seats reserved women's seats	Percentage of
Union(6,022)	126,462	36,066	28.5
Tehsil(305)	8,192	1,749	21.3
Town(30)	773	161	20.8
District(96)	8,806	1,988	22.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>144,233</b>	<b>39,964</b>	<b>27.7</b>

**Source:** Women's Participation in Local Government Elections 2000-2001. Aurat Foundation.

Women contested not only the reserved seats but also the open seats in the union, tehsil and district councils and for the posts of Nazim and Naib Nazim: 11 were elected as union council Nazims, two as union council Naib Nazims, one as tehsil Naib Nazim and two as

3. Naeem Mirza, Women's Participation in Local Government Elections 2000-2001. Islamabad: Aurat Publication and Information Service Foundation (2002) p.9. The local government system has been implemented twice before now; in 1959 and 1979, both times under military rule. However, every time the local government system was installed it was done with no connections or linkages to earlier systems, and the reinstatement of democratic governments always resulted in a loss of autonomy.

4. Socorro L. Reyes, Quotas in Pakistan: A Case Study. International IDEA Regional Workshop on the Implementation of Quotas (2002) p.2.

District Nazim.<sup>5</sup> Ms. Nafisa Shah and Ms. Fariyal Talpur were elected District Nazim of Khairpur and Nawabshah respectively. Ms. Ruqqaya Khanum Soomro was elected Naib Nazim of Tehsil Rato Dero of District Larkana.<sup>6</sup>

The devolution process resulted in an unprecedented number of women participating in the local elections. Problems and opposition however persisted. An inadequate media campaign launched by the Election Commission failed to clear confusion and create awareness about the Local Government Plan, election procedures and the eligibility of women to contest for all seats of a union council. The electoral rolls contained errors and omissions, the polling staff was untrained and there were errors in the printing of the ballot papers.<sup>7</sup>

In some districts of the North Western Frontier Province (renamed Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa in April 2010), similar to earlier elections, social pressures and harassment were employed to prevent women from contesting or voting in the elections by religious groups and political parties resulting in a loss of approximately 650 seats.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, 32 union councils in Lower Dir, 38 in Kohistan, 20 in Battagram, 19 in Upper Dir, 11 in Swabi and 8 in Mardan had neither women representatives nor constituencies. In

Malakund women were not allowed to vote in the local, provincial or national elections held in 2001 and 2002.<sup>9</sup> In the second phase of elections, upon the instigation of religious groups in the districts of Swabi and Mardan, women were again denied their electoral rights in the name of local traditions and customs. The State did not intervene and in collusion with political party representatives, and in some cases the local authorities, these groups grew into an organised anti-woman movement.<sup>10</sup>

## Women's Representation in Local Government

- The Local Government Plan 2000 gave 33% seats representation to women at all levels of the local government system
- In 2001, there were 6022 union councils, 335 towns/tehsils, and 96 districts
- 6 out of 21 seats in a union council were reserved for women; 2 for women peasants and workers and 4 Muslim general seats
- The total number of seats reserved for women in the union councils in 2001 was 36,066
- In 2005, there were 6132 union councils, 389 towns/tehsils, and 110 districts
- Before the 2005 Local Government elections, the number of seats in a union council was reduced from 21 to 13; hence, the number of seats reserved for women was reduced from 6 to 4
- 4 out of 13 seats in a union council were reserved for women; 2 reserved for women peasants and workers and 2 Muslim general seats
- The total number of seats reserved for women in the union councils in 2005 was 24,528

Source: National Consultation on Engendering Democratic Governance, 2010. South Asia Partnership-Pakistan.

5. No quotas are allocated for the nazims or minority seats. Thus, a total of 6 out of 21 seats are reserved for women making the actual quota percentage 29 rather than 33.

6. For a brief profile of the 16 elected women see Naeem Mirza, op. cit. pp. 36-38.

7. Ibid. pp. 32-33.

8. See Socorro L. Reyes, op. cit. p. 2.

9. Mohammed Asif, Violence against Women in Politics, South Asia Partnership-Pakistan (2008) p. 20.

10. See Naeem Mirza, op. cit. pp. 33-35.

## National Elections 2002

The General Elections of 2002 saw an unprecedented increase in the number of reserved seats for women in the NA and the four PAs of Pakistan. In August 2002 General Musharraf promulgated the Legal Framework Order (LFO). This instituted changes to 29 articles of the Constitution some of which were the revival of joint electorates along with reserved seats for women in the NA and PAs; restoration and increase of seats for women in the NA, PAs and the Senate<sup>11</sup>; and an increase in the size of legislatures. The 17% quota of seats for women in the NA, PAs and the Senate under the LFO and the 33% quota of seats for women in legislative councils at the union, tehsil and district levels under the Devolution of Power Plan resulted in a substantial increase in women's political representation. The elected assemblies had the highest ever number of women parliamentarians in Pakistan's parliamentary history.

General Elections were held in October 2002. No single party secured a simple majority; the three parties to win the most seats were PML-Q<sup>12</sup>, PPPP and MMA. PML-Q and MMA formed their provincial governments in Punjab and NWFP, respectively. A coalition government comprising PML-Q, MMA and GNA (Grand National Alliance) was set up in Baluchistan, and PML-Q in alliance with MQM set up government in Sindh. Though under a military dictator,

### Women's Representation in Senate, Provincial and National Assemblies

- Women's participation in parliament had never been more than 8% before 2002. Under the Conduct of General Elections Order 2002 the number of seats in the Senate, National Assembly of Pakistan and the Provincial Assemblies was increased
- The total number of seats in the National Assembly were increased to 342 comprising 272 general seats, 10 for non-Muslims and 60 reserved for women
- 60 out of 342 seats in National Assembly are reserved for women (17.5%)
- 128 out of 728 seats in Provincial Assemblies are reserved for women (17.5%)
- Number of seats reserved for women in the Senate are 17 out of 100 (17%)
- In General Elections of 2002, 141 women legislators were elected to the provincial assemblies out of the total of 728 legislators
- 73 women legislators (60 on reserved seats and 12 on general seats and 1 on non-Muslim) were elected to the 12th National Assembly (2002-2007)
- In General Elections of 2008, 140 women legislators were elected to the provincial assemblies
- 76 women legislators (60 on reserved seats and 16 on general seats) were elected to the 13th National Assembly (2008-2013)
- The voters turn out in General Elections of 2008 was 44.4 % of Pakistan's 80.9 million voters
- The female registered voters in 2008 were 78.6 percent of the male registered voters
- A significant number of women in parliament are party activists from middle and upper middle class with a track record in politics, a number of women are also close relatives of key party leaders without having personal political background
- A majority of women are new entrants without having previous parliamentary experience

Source: National Consultation on Engendering Democratic Governance, 2010. South Asia Partnership-Pakistan.

11. This is the first time women were represented in the Senate through reserved seats. There have been a few women senators including a woman deputy chair person.

12. The PML-Q was born from PML-N defectors in 2001. Initially former Governor Mian Azhar was made head of the party but he lost in 2002 elections and Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain became the parliamentary leader and later the President.

this was the first NA in Pakistan's political history to complete its five year tenure.

Sixty women were elected in the NA on reserved seats, thirteen on general seats, and one on a reserved seat for minorities leading to a significant increase in the percentage of women in the NA as compared to the previous NA (1997-99). Reserved seats were allocated to political parties according to the proportion of their general seats in the Assembly. **(See Annex 2 for a list of women elected on general and reserved seats).**

## **Parliamentary Initiatives**

In 2002 the highest number of women contested and won on general seats leading to a major structural change. What remained unchanged was the modality of elections which was still indirect. Though the resistance to changing the modality of elections remained the quota system did create a broader base for women to be part of the political process, to be involved in policy making at the national and provincial levels, and bring about a shift in discourse. As seen in earlier years<sup>13</sup>, women parliamentarians continued to actively participate in all debates and discussions on the agenda. They not only addressed the concern of women's rights but also made significant interventions on other issues of national importance such as foreign policy, trade policy, health, education, food, agriculture and the environment. **(See Annex 3 for the overall performance of women parliamentarians from 2002- 2007).**

A change was evident in the nature of the issues being raised in the assemblies. For example, not so long ago it was impossible to raise the issue of honour-killing in the parliament. As recently as August 1999, the Senate had outrightly rejected a resolution to condemn 'honour' killings. It was declared that when it was a question of 'honour' there was no room even for discussion. This was in response to an incident occurring in April 1999: a young woman seeking divorce from an abusive husband was shot to death by family members in her lawyer's office in Lahore. At that time, not only was the attack not condemned by political leaders, but members of the Senate demanded the lawyers be punished for trying to help the victim. Women legislators in the 12th National Assembly focussed attention on the repeal or amendments in the Hudood Ordinances and debated about the elimination of honour-killing in their first year in parliament.

In April 2000, General Musharraf vowed to take measures to curb 'honour' killings. After being repeatedly deferred, a resolution on 'honour' killing was moved by Ms. Mehnaz Rafi (PML-Q) in November 2003; the co-mover was a male legislator, Mr. M.P. Bhandara (PML-Q). At the time the resolution was not rejected or carried forward as it had not been formally put forward.

A private bill dealing with the elimination of honour killing – The Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill, 2004 – was moved by Ms. Sherry Rehman (PPPP) in January 2004. The content of this bill was very similar to the draft prepared through consultations by civil society organisations and carried provisions to end exemption of Qisas and compoundability in crimes committed in the name of 'honour.' After persistent requests it was put on the agenda and discussed three times, each time deferred by other women members from the ruling party who claimed that the bill was being exploited for political purposes by the

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13. See Khawar Mumtaz, "Political Participation: Women in National Legislatures in Pakistan" in Farida Shaheed et al. (eds.), *Shaping Women's Lives*. Shirkat Gah (1998) pp.319-369.

opposition. Soon after, an official bill on ending honour killing was moved in the House - this did not have the provisions to repeal Qisas and compensation that were included in the private bill and that constituted the demands of the women's rights activists. Efforts to incorporate these amendments met with resistance from some quarters in the government and on 26th October 2004 the official bill was passed by the NA. Though the enactment of the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2004 was momentous for acknowledging honour related crimes, cross-party rivalry resulted in a lack of unity even over such a crucial issue for all women leaving the Act deficient with respect to basic concerns of impunity and requires further amendments. It must be noted here that this was the first time that the practice of honour killing had been officially acknowledged.

Major violations of women's fundamental rights occurred in 2005. The MMA protested against men and women running together after a mixed-sex government sponsored marathon was held in Lahore. The marathon was to be subsequently organised in other districts. On 3rd April 2005, the MMA violently attacked a marathon organised by the Gujranwala administration. At a later marathon in Lahore women were manhandled by the police. In other incidents of public harassment of women, MNAs from PPPP were harassed by the police on their way to the airport to meet Mr. Asif Ali Zardari and blamed the opposition for the incident. In NWFP a candidate in local government elections, Zubeda Begum, was murdered to prevent her from contesting and women were stopped from casting votes. The increasing militancy and growing wave of Talibanisation curtailed women's political involvement. This was strongly condemned by both female and male legislators. In July 2005, the MMA majority government in NWFP passed the Hasba Bill which mandated the implementation of Shariah. This was, however, not endorsed by the Governor of NWFP on grounds of it being unconstitutional and was blocked by the Supreme Court of Pakistan from being enacted in December 2006.

A large number of private bills moved by women legislators were concerned with women's rights issues. Some of these were: the Prevention of Domestic Violence Bill; the Hudood Laws (Repeal) Bill; the Family Courts (Amendment) Bill; the Offence of Zina Enforcement of Hudood (Amendment) Bill; the Offence of Qazf Enforcement of Hudood (Amendment) Bill; the Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill; and, the Inheritance for Women Bill. In 2006 Ms. Yasmin Rehman (PPPP) raised the issue of discrimination against women in the Citizenship Act. Male legislators also moved bills pertaining to women's issues. Mr. M.P. Bhandara moved two bills, "The Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill, 2005" and "The Prohibition of Marriages with the Holy Quran Bill 2005." Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, President of the ruling PML-Q, introduced in the NA another women's rights bill – the Prevention of Anti-Women Practices (Criminal Law Amendment) Bill , 2006, in 2007.

The Women Action Forum (WAF) comprising of activists, members of several human rights organisations, and scholars has been relentlessly campaigning for the repeal of the Hudood Ordinances. The National Commission on the Status of Women which was established in 2000 under the NPA and the Pakistan People's Party have also advocated for the same cause.

On 15th October 2003, "The Protection and Empowerment of Women Bill, 2003" was submitted to the NA by Ms. Sherry Rehman (PPPP) as a Private Members Bill. It came on the agenda a year later and was referred to the concerned Standing Committee which took another year to present its report to the House. The bill finally lapsed in 2007 when the Assembly completed its tenure. This bill "heralded a new era of 'pro-active legislative

measures' for women in the National Assembly and its latter years saw dedicated efforts by the newly-elected women parliamentarians in this area."<sup>14</sup>

The official bill, 'The Protection of Women (Criminal Laws Amendment) Bill, 2006,' was moved by the government in August 2006 and passed by the NA in November. The bill carried 29 amendments in two of the Hudood Ordinances (Zina and Qazf) and separated the offences of Hadd and Tazir. Rape was also separated from fornication/adultery and moved to the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC). However, the offence of fornication was included in a separate section of the PPC. The reform in the discriminatory Zina Ordinance revealed a split over the issue amongst women. A member of the PPPP raised the issue that they had submitted a similar bill three years earlier which was never put on the agenda and that the current bill had not been circulated for reviews. A Select Committee was formed to discuss the two bills to reach a consensus; the Select Committee presented their report in two weeks. Meanwhile, women parliamentarians from the MMA vociferously rejected the bill saying it contravened the Quranic understanding of fornication/adultery. They withdrew their support from the campaign to repeal the law and actively opposed it in public and in parliament. The MMA threatened to resign from the Assemblies if the bill was passed. An 'ulema committee' was formed to negotiate with the MMA over the bill; the committee offered suggestions to be incorporated in the bill. Members of the PPPP and MQM were in favour of the bill and objected to the formation of the 'ulema committee' on the grounds that it violated the constitutional privilege of the Select Committee. The bill presented by the Select Committee did not meet the demands for a total repeal of the ordinances. However, being accepted as a first step, civil society organisations accepted the bill while making known their reservations. Later, Ms. Samia Raheel Qazi moved a private bill – the "Criminal Law (Amendment) (Protection of Women) (Repeal) Bill, 2007 - in an attempt to repeal the Protection of Women Act, 2006.

Another bill that faced much criticism on the pretext that it violated the principles of Islam was the one on domestic violence. This was however opposed by male parliamentarians. Women parliamentarians stood together in favour of it; even right-wing parliamentarians who had earlier vehemently opposed 'The Protection of Women (Criminal Laws Amendment) Bill favoured the bill on domestic violence and urged against the misinterpretation of the Quran by the men who opposed it.<sup>15</sup>

The 12th National Assembly witnessed a very active participation by women legislators providing legitimacy to the view that the implementation of the quota system has created a broader base for women to be part of the political process. Their interventions were not confined to women's issues but also involved matters of national importance such as foreign policy, trade policy, health, education, food, agriculture and the environment. In instances where they were held back by party-affiliated constraints, they used the option of private member bills.

The issue of the modality of elections however is pertinent. Despite active campaigning by women activists political parties have never made any attempt to change the mode of elections for women's seats making questionable their commitment to women's

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14. Naeem Mirza and Wasim Wagha, *Performance of Women Parliamentarians in the 12th National Assembly (2002-2007)*. Islamabad: Aurat Publication and Information Service Foundation (2009) p. 26.

15. For a comprehensive study of the performance of women parliamentarians in the 12th National Assembly see Naeem Mirza and Wasim Wagha, *Performance of Women Parliamentarians in the 12th National Assembly (2002-2007)*. Islamabad: Aurat Publication and Information Service Foundation (2009).

empowerment. An indirect mode of election impedes the entry of women into mainstream politics. It deprives them of a geographical constituency - not being able to represent a section of the electorate future possibilities of winning a general seat become limited. It also serves to further strengthen the patriarchal nature of political parties as selection depends upon party leaders and encourage nepotism and dynastic succession. However, an overview of the performance of women parliamentarians leaves no doubt of their level of commitment and their resourcefulness at overcoming obstacles.

While interventions by women during the first four years of term especially with regard to women's rights issues were significant, the last year was however wrought with unrest and political instability in the country. Beginning with the Lal Masjid fiasco in the capital which led to an ill-advised and tragic armed operation further uncertainty was created when the Chief Justice of Pakistan was suspended and asked to either resign or face charges of misconduct. In October 2007 President General Musharraf was re-elected for a five-year term by the Electoral College amidst great controversy. The situation rapidly deteriorated leading to the proclamation of emergency in November. The constitution was held in abeyance and fundamental rights were suspended. The year came to an end with the tragic assassination of Ms. Benazir Bhutto. The impending elections which had been scheduled for January were postponed till February 2008.

# Conclusions

Entering the political mainstream has always been an uphill task for the women of Pakistan. The turbulent and unstable political history, the intermittent hijacking of the democratic process by the military, corrupt establishments and the whims and self-serving agendas of male-dominated political parties have continually set back the process of women establishing themselves in the political sphere. Furthermore, socio-cultural barriers such as the prevalent patriarchal structure of the society, discriminatory customs and traditions and the blatant exploitation of religion to establish authority, as well as the reluctance of those in power to take meaningful affirmative action to encourage women and ensure their fullest participation make the situation even more difficult.

The socially disadvantaged position of women and the myriad economic, social and legal obstacles to their full participation in the country's political and economic life are widely recognized and reflected in the provisions for women's reserved seats in parliament of Pakistan's various constitutions from 1956 to 1973. While women's physical inclusion within political parties has been ascertained through the growth of women's wings, in reality this did not provide them any autonomy; they lacked decision-making power, promoted party agendas and were primarily used to mobilize women voters during elections.

The year 2002 was a watershed in women's political representation in Pakistan. For the first time, they got 17% representation in both the national and provincial assemblies based on nominations by their parties and 33% in the local government. The uninterrupted five-year term has been important to women in public offices to establish themselves, familiarise themselves with the 'Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business' and contribute to positive outcomes. They also played a key role in raising issues of violence, health, education and the environment.

While the quota system has been essential in helping women gain a foothold in the government it does not facilitate a sustainable representation of their representation in parliament. With constituencies noticeably missing they are unable to develop a base of supporters for the future. Additionally, the marginalisation of women legislators on reserved seats, even by other women legislators elected on general seats, hinders their active involvement in the parliament. It has also been argued that women on reserved seats are used as proxies for their defeated male contestants. That said the role the quota system has played in increasing women's access to decision-making bodies cannot be understated. However, to counter any doubts about the efficacy of women elected on reserved seats the modality of elections should be direct.

The last few years of uninterrupted political participation have shown a steady progress in the performance of women legislators and proven them capable. Despite always being a minority in parliament they have been pioneering, persistent and quick to learn the ropes. They have boldly and successfully taken up women's issues in the assemblies.

To further establish the representation and participation of women not only is it necessary to remove existing barriers, it is also essential that training centres be set up for the development of their leadership potentials and skills. Building their capacity by imparting to them knowledge of the political process and policy-making and training them to



participate in electoral campaigns would make them more effective.

A large scale gender-sensitisation campaign through the media should be launched to counter gender based hostility at the workplace and to bring about an attitudinal change in society with regard to the status of women and their fundamental human rights.

A cross-party practical forum be created - such as the Women's Parliament Caucus initiative – where women can unite with the sole agenda of women's development and empowerment. Such a platform, if utilized effectively, would bring women legislators who are always in minority together to constitute a larger and much more powerful political force thus enhancing the effectiveness of women politicians in bringing about policy change.

The role of civil society organisations is also of the utmost significance. They need to persevere in highlighting issues, increase their advocacy activities, and work as pressure groups whenever required. Their vigilant monitoring of international treaties and commitments made by the government is also crucial.

## **Extracts from the Constitution (Fifteenth Amendment) Act, 1998**

"Whereas sovereignty over the entire universe belongs to Almighty Allah alone and the authority which He has delegated to the State of Pakistan through its people for being exercised through their chosen representatives within the limits prescribed by Him is a sacred trust;

And whereas Islam is the State religion of Pakistan and it is the obligation of the State to enable the Muslims of Pakistan, individually and collectively, to order their lives in accordance with the fundamental principles and basic concepts of Islam as set out in the Holy Quran and Sunnah;

And whereas Islam enjoins the establishment of a social order based on Islamic values, of prescribing what is right and forbidding what is wrong (*amr bil ma'roof wa nahi anil munkar*);

And whereas in order to achieve the aforesaid objective and goal, it is expedient further to amend the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan; now therefore, it is hereby enacted as follows:-

1. Short title and commencement:- (1) This Act may be called the Constitution (Fifteenth Amendment) Act, 1998. (2) It shall come into force at once.
2. Addition of new Article 2B in the Constitution: In the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, hereinafter referred to as the said Constitution, after Article 2A, the following new Article shall be inserted, namely 2B Supremacy of the Quran and Sunnah (1) The Holy Quran and Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) shall be the supreme law of Pakistan.

Explanation: In the application of this clause to the personal law of any Muslim sect, the expression "Quran and Sunnah" shall mean the Quran and Sunnah as interpreted by that sect.

- (2) The Federal Government shall be under an obligation to take steps to enforce the Shariah, to establish salat, to administer zakat, to promote *amr bil ma'roof and nahi anil munkar* (to prescribe what is right and to forbid what is wrong), to eradicate corruption at all levels and to provide substantial socio-economic justice, in accordance with the principles of Islam, as laid down in the Holy Quran and Sunnah.
- (3) The Federal Government may issue directives for the implementation of the provisions set out in clauses (1) and (2) and may take the necessary action against any state functionary for non-compliance of the said directives.
- (4) Nothing contained in this Article shall affect the personal law, religious freedom, traditions or customs of non-Muslims and their status as citizens.

## Annex 2

### Women Elected on General, Seats to the 12th NA (2002-2007)

Sr. No	Name and Constituency	Party	Vote
1	Ms. Eman Wasim (NA-59 Attock-III)*	PML-Q	65,762
2	Ms. Sumera Malik (NA-69 Khushab-I)	PML-Q	71,925
3	Ms. Ghulam Bibi Bharwana (NA-87 Jhang-H)	PML-Q	55,851
4	Ms. Rubina Shaheen Watoo (NA-147 Okara-V)	PML-Q	70,774
5	Ms. Riffat Javed (NA-117 Narowal-III)	PML-Q	49,367
6	Ms. Hina Rubbani Khar (NA-177 Muzaffargarh-II)	PML-Q	46,752
7	Ms. Zubaida Jalal (NA-272 Kech-Cum-Gwader)	PML-Q	44,177
8	Ms. Samina Khalid Ghurki (NA-130 Lahore-XIII)	PPPP	46,095
9	Ms. Khalida Mohsin Ali Qureshi (NA-176 Muzaffargarh-I)	PPPP	58,947
10	Dr. Azra Fazal (NA-213 Nawabshah-I)	PPPP	75,237
11	Ms. Shamshad Sattar Bachani (NA-223 Hyderabad-VI)	PPPP	50,624
12	Dr. Fehmida Mirza (NA-225 Badin-II)	PPPP	71,537
13	Ms. Saima Akhter Bharwana (NA-90 Jhang-V)	Ind.	56,647

\*Vacated her seat later for by-election

## Members Elected against Seats Reserved For Women to the 12th NA (2002-2007)

Sr. No.		Sr. No.	
	<b>PML (QA)</b>		<b>PPPP</b>
1.	Ms. Mehnaz Rafi	30.	Ms. Naheed Khan
2.	Dr. Hajra Tariq Aziz	31.	Mrs. Beelum Hasnain
3.	Ms. Tanzila Amir Cheema	32.	Mrs. Shakeela Khanam Rashid
4.	Dr. Donya Aziz	33.	Ms. Fauzia Habib
5.	Ms. Kashmala Tariq	34.	Ms. Mehreen Anwar Raja
6.	Dr. Saira Tariq	35.	Mrs. Yasmeen Rehman
7.	Ms. Riffat Amjad	36.	Begum Shehnaz Sheikh
8.	Dr. Attiya Inayatullah	37.	Ms. Rukhsana Bangish
9.	Ms. Bushra Rehman	38.	Mrs. Nasim Akhter Chaudhry
10.	Ms. Farzeen Ahmad	39.	Ms. Sherry Rehman
11.	Ms. Shahzadi Umar Zadi Taiwana	40.	Mrs. Rukia Khanum
12.	Ms. Rahila Yahya	41.	Ms. Fauzia Wahab
13.	Ms. Aasia Azeem	42.	Ms. Rubina Saadat Qaimkhwani
14.	Dr. Firdous Aashiq	43.	Ms. Nafeesa Munawar Raja
15.	Begum Tehmina Dastee	44.	Ms. Shagufta Jumani
16.	Ms. Onaza Ehsan		
17.	Ms. Buhsra Nazir Hazeen		<b>MMAP</b>
18.	Ms. Rozina Tufail	45.	Ms. Samia Raheel Qazi
19.	Mrs. Tahira Asif	46.	Ms. Kaniz Ayesha
20.	Ms. K. Fiza Junejo	47.	Dr. Farida Ahmad
21.	Mrs. Zaib Goher Ayub	48.	Ms. Sayyeda Farhana Khalid
22.	*Ms. Noor Khan Panezai	49.	Ms. Nayyer Sultana
		50.	Ms. Razia Aziz
	<b>PML (N)</b>	51.	Ms. Ambareen
23.	Ms. Maimoona Hashmi	52.	Ms. Jamila Ahmad
24.	Begum Ishrat Ashraf	53.	Ms. Inayat Begum
25.	Ms. Tehmina Daultana	54.	Ms. Shahida Begunri
		55.	Ms. Imrana Khawar
	<b>PML (J)</b>	56.	Ms. Bilqees Saif
26.	Begum Rehana Aleem Mashahidi		
			<b>PML (F)</b>
	<b>National Alliance</b>	57.	Ms. Khurshid Afghan
27.	Ms. Ayela Malik		
28.	**Ms. Meena Laghari		<b>MQM</b>
29.	Ms. Gule Farkhanda	58.	Ms. Shamim Akhter
		59.	Ms. Shabina Talat
		60.	Mrs. Afser Begum

\*Vice Zubeda Jalal \*\*Vice Sumera Malik

**Source:** *A Five-Year Report on: Performance of Women Parliamentarians in the 12th National Assembly (2002-2007)*. Aurat Publication and Information Service Foundation (2009).

# Overall Performance of Women Parliamentarians in the 12th National Assembly (2002- 2007)

### Level of Participation

- There have been 3698 interventions by 58 women legislators during five year tenure, 2724 questions were asked (which came on the agenda), 306 Points of Orders, 101 Private Members Bills moved, 99 Calling Attention Notices and 14 Resolutions. Women parliamentarians participated in debates on 380 occasions

### Issue Raised on Women Rights

- Elimination of honour killing and Haddood Ordinances, discriminatory obligation of women in army medical college to remain unmarried during education, posting of husband and wife in the same city, promotion of women's work/handicraft in international market by the Export Bureau, number of women staff in ministry of foreign affairs, children's education with special focus on girl child, hostels for working women, questioning jirga ban on women's participation and contesting elections in Dir, increasing women's literacy rate in rural areas, issue of acid throwing on women, women's social, political and legal rights, political schooling of women parliamentarians, Islamabad police refusal to register an FIR against the government employee who misbehaved with a woman journalist, removing condition for women's photo on NIC, PTV's non-coverage of discussion on women's rights in House, doing away with scarf from the uniform of PIA airhostesses, allocation of specific time for women parliamentarians on important issues, discrimination against women in the public sector, private and daily life, sexual harassment against women at the work place, violence against women (harassment of women MNAs from opposition by police and a number of other cases), women's rights to have their foreign spouse registered as Pakistani citizens, projects for women development

### Issues Raised of National Importance

- Earthquake and rehabilitation issues, the military operation in Balochistan, national foreign policy, privatization, environment, poverty

## Resolutions and Bills Moved

- 14 Resolutions out of 66 moved in National Assembly by women legislators
- Women and citizens, honour killing, implications of WTO agreements, legislation for women's economic, political and legal rights, provision of justice for Mukhtara Mai and Dr. Shazia Khalid, supporting government's Kashmir policy, creation of relief fund by MNAs for earthquake affectees, calling for a mandatory three months rescue training for male and female students in all educational institutions, condemning the attack on women during a marathon race in Gujranwala 11 April 2005, condemning the brutal killing of Ms. Zil-e-Huma, condemning terrorism in Bajaur and Waziristan resulting in killing of women, calling upon the government to commemorate struggles of Ms. Fatima Jinnah in connection with freedom of Muslims of India on her 114th anniversary, on inexpensive and speedy justice to citizens, on eradication of poverty in the country
- 13 were private members resolutions and 1 was a government resolution
- 11 were passed and 3 could not be carried out by the house
- Women parliamentarians moved 100 private members bills out of total 240 bills during five years, 60 were dropped, 40 were introduced before the house
- Women MNAs of PPP moved 43 bills, MMA moved 30 bills and PML-Q moved 25 bills. (Ms. Sherry Rehman, Ms. Samia Raheel, Ms. Kashmala Tariq moved the highest number of private member bills – they moved 11 bills each)
- Hudood Laws (Repeal) Bill 2005, Pakistan Environment Protection (Amendment) Bill 2005, Protection of Serving Women Bill 2005, The Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill 2005, The Uplift and Welfare of Women Bill 2005, The Prevention of Domestic Violence Bill 2005
- 3 laws have been made concerning women's rights: a bill on the elimination of 'honour' killing, amendments in the Hadood Ordinances i.e. the offences of Zina and Qazf Ordinance and the Bill on Protection against Sexual Harassment of women

**Source:** *National Consultation on Engendering Democratic Governance*, 2010. South Asia Partnership - Pakistan, and *A Five-Year Report on: Performance of Women Parliamentarians in the 12th National Assembly (2002-2007)*. Aurat Publication and Information Service Foundation (2009).



# Women's Political Representation and Participation in Pakistan

Extract from "Women's Representation, Effectiveness and Leadership in South Asia" by Khawar Mumtaz in *Key Gender Issues in South Asia: A Resource Package*. (UNIFEM: 2005), 59-81.<sup>1</sup>

This paper sets out to review women's political participation and its effectiveness. It will attempt to examine:

- the context of women's political participation,
- the factors promoting women's participation and the facilitation of women's entry in the electoral process,
- the role of different institutions, non-government actors including men as enabling agents and the efficacy of tools and processes developed by them,
- the impact of women's reserved seats on gender sensitive governance and their agency,
- the challenges to women's participation, and
- the way forward.

## The context

The context that defines women's political participation is the endemic nature of patriarchal structures and the resultant gender inequality and gender discrimination. Gender relations are rooted in the ideology of relationship whereby women are seen as subordinate to men. Women are consistently denied inheritance rights, adequate food, freedom of expression and mobility, participation in community activities and say in personal choices and preferences (from education, to spouse, number of children, to profession, etc.) They are thus denied a meaningful role in decision-making, and are not in a position to access educational and health care facilities, or political and financial institutions nor own assets and resources. Women's place in the family hierarchy and relationships within the home combine with the socially prescribed gendered division of roles to determine their levels of exclusion in both the private (household) and public spheres. Class, caste, religion, ethnicity and location are additional factors that mediate gendered social relations in varying degrees.

## Determinants of women's political participation

Women's political participation in South Asia has been promoted and facilitated by a complex set of forces. The process to date has neither been smooth nor rapid, has been

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1. The paper covers political participation up to 2004.



impacted by internal and external developments, has suffered setbacks, and the goal of women's substantial and equal participation is still not fully achieved. Women's entry into representative politics has been shaped by:

- the experience of colonialism,
- the independence struggles,
- the different courses and routes that political development has taken in each country and the nature of the state within them,
- women's own agency for pushing for social and political rights,
- the foundational principle of equality of all citizens adopted by each state in the region regardless of their form of governance, and
- the external pressure generated by the UN Conventions like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequently other instruments (CEDAW) and declarations (Cairo, Beijing) that the countries signed up on.

## **Women's representation: the current situation**

Women's representation in the South Asia region is at two levels, in national and provincial/state legislatures and in local governments. In the former they can play a role as law and policy makers and in the latter in development related implementation. The experience of respective states reveals that collectively the number of women in legislatures has been lower than 9 percent over the last five years. This despite Beijing Platform for Action's goal of adequate representation of women in all decision making bodies and the recommendation of creating a "critical mass" and "gender balance" in political decision making.

In the case of Pakistan the time bound affirmative action of reserved seats lapsed after the election of 1988 and women were reduced to four and six respectively in the elections of 1993 and 1997.

On the other hand, space has opened for the entry of large numbers of women in public decision making through local government institutions in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. That this space is threatened and faced with hurdles and obstacles emanating from the deep rooted patriarchal structures can also not be denied. Nevertheless, it is a window of opportunity to be grabbed for further mobilization of women.

## **Pakistan**

The history of women's representation in legislative bodies and in local government is a checkered one. Women's representation in the legislature was inherited from the colonial times but not always continued. From 1962 to 1988 women sat in national and provincial legislatures, when they existed, on reserved seats. The 1973 Constitution provided for 10 reserved seats for women in the National Assembly (lower house) for a period of ten years or two general elections with no reservation for the upper house (Senate.) This number was doubled to 20 out of a house of 237 in 1985 by General Zia ul Haq. The National Assembly of 1988–1990 saw the largest number of women up to that point in the country's legislative

history i.e. 24, four having come through direct election. 1990 onward the provision for reserved seats having lapsed the number of women parliamentarians dropped dramatically. The years from 1990-1999 may be termed “barren” from the point of view of women’s representation in the assemblies (see table below). Needless to say, almost all directly elected women belonged to entrenched political and /or feudal families.

### Women in Pakistan’s National Assembly

Year (Tenure of Assembly)	NUMBER OF WOMEN LEGISLATORS		
	Reserved seats	General Seats	Total
1955-58	0	0	0
1956	♣		
1962-1965	6 + 2*	0*	6
1965-69	6	0	6
1972	6	0	6
March 1977-July 1977	10	01	11
1985-88	20	2	22
1988-90	20	4	24
1990-93	0	2	2
1993-96	0	4	4
1997-99	0	6	6
2002-2004	60	14 †	74

♣ Article 44(2) (i) of 1956 constitution provided 10 reserved seats for women members for the period of 10 years. 5 from East Pakistan, 5 from West Pakistan. Women’s territorial constituencies were delimited for this, giving a double vote to women in these constituencies - one for a general seat candidate and one for the women’s seats. However, no elections were held under this Constitution.

\* 8 women sat in the assembly, one expired and was replaced by another in East Pakistan.

† Including 1 woman, elected on reserved seats for non-Muslims

**Source:** Adapted from: Farida Shaheed, Asma Zia and Sohail Warraich, Women in Politics: Participation and Representation in Pakistan. Lahore: Shirkat Gah (1998).

Important to note is that since the 1988 elections the number of women receiving tickets from political parties for national and provincial assemblies increased. The number after decreasing in 1990 (from 9 to 4) experienced a major rise (to 10 in 1993 and 24 in 1997).<sup>2</sup> Equally important to remember is that women contesting general elections have been more successful at the national level (in Balochistan not a single woman had ever been elected directly till 1997) than at the provincial level, and women with party tickets had greater success than those standing as independents.<sup>3</sup>

The experience of women in Pakistan’s national legislatures shows that women, even when first time entrants in politics, not only participated fully in debates but their quality of interventions was in some instances higher than that of their male colleagues. They

2. Shahla Zia and Farzana Bari, Baseline Report on Women’s Participation in Political and Public Life in Pakistan. Islamabad: Aurat Public & Information Service Foundation (1999) p.39.

3. Ibid. p.39.

undoubtedly felt constrained and beholden because of the indirect manner of their election. But that did not prevent them from articulating opinions on issues of concern to them as women as well as other national matters. The impact of women legislators was reduced primarily due to their limited numbers and the intransigence of their male colleagues.<sup>4</sup>

The issue of critical mass was resolved to a point by the restoration of reserved seats by the Government of Pakistan in 2000. The quota was raised to 60 women (17.5 percent) out of an enhanced 342-member National Assembly and similar quota (17.5 percent) for the provincial assemblies. The seats are allocated to political parties according to the proportion of their general seats in the assemblies. The quota while lower than women advocacy groups' demand of 33 percent was still three times the number of the previous (lapsed) one. More problematic from the women's organisations' point of view was the indirect mode of election which translated in majority of reserved seats being given to close relatives (wives, daughters, sisters, etc.) of political leaders/powerful persons, many of whom were disqualified due to the educational requirement (BA degree) for legislative contestants.

The religious parties, though opposed to women's representation, did not forego their share of the quota and followed the practice of nominating women relatives of leaders.

Significantly, the election of 2002 showed a greater level of success for women standing on general seats. In all 14 women came in directly, raising the number of women in the National Assembly to 74.

For the first time seats were also reserved for women in the Senate in the same proportion as the assemblies. Thus 17 seats are allocated for women in the 100 member body (an additional woman was returned on the technocrat seat). Each provincial assembly nominates four women and the Federal Capital Territory one. While a detailed analysis of the performance of the women in assemblies may be outside the scope of this paper it would be sufficient to say that some of the women have become active both in their constituencies and the parliament. A fair number have crossed political boundaries to come together on women's issues. A recent example was the amendment to the honor killing legislation tabled by a woman member belonging to the ruling party. She also had the support of women across party lines.

Impediments for women are not only in contesting. While independents find themselves at a disadvantage because of the volume of resources required and the absence of a network of political workers for canvassing and support, those given party tickets are handicapped by the award of tickets to weak and losing seats. Not surprisingly, except for one or two women leaders with financial resources, the ones that have returned to assemblies on direct elections like Benazir Bhutto and her mother Nusrat Bhutto; Begum Nasim Wali Khan (head of Awami National Party), Abida Hussain and Tehmina Daultana, belong to leading feudal families of Pakistan.

The experience of local governments in Pakistan reveals a fractured picture with the law undergoing change in the provinces from time to time following the dismantling of the local bodies system introduced in 1959 (which did not have reservation for women). Local governments, although a provincial subject, were directed to reserve seats for women in 1979, ironically by a military government, which was responsible for introducing legislation

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4. Khawar Mumtaz, "Women in National Legislatures in Pakistan" in Farida Shaheed et al. (eds.), *Shaping Women's Lives*. Lahore: Shirkat Gah (1998) pp.319-369.

that is discriminatory to women.<sup>5</sup> Thus all provinces provided for two indirectly elected women's seats in union councils and ten percent of the seats of district councils, except in NWFP where there was no reservation at all for union councils. That this did not have great impact on women's political participation goes without saying. In 1992, the last time that the local bodies elections were held across the country (till the ones in 2000) female members constituted 10.4 percent of the total number of membership.<sup>6</sup>

The major turnaround for local government came through legislatures in 2000. The Local Government Ordinance, 2000 provides for the reservation of 33 percent seats for women in all tiers of local government. At the lowest tier, i.e. the union council, the provision is for the direct election of women by all registered voters, while at the other two tiers (tehsil and zilla) the election is to be indirect. Out of a total of 40,049 seats collectively in union, tehsil, town (for urban areas) and district (zilla) councils a total of 36,049 were elected (90 percent) belying the fear expressed from many quarters that enough women would not be found to contest elections.

Always approached in the past for their vote women were now being pursued as possible candidates as local alliances began to be forged. They were also being encouraged by family and friends to contest. Many reportedly contested on their own initiative. Eleven women were returned as union council nazims/naib nazims (chair/vice-chair) and two parties participated fully and the nazims have party affiliations despite the elections being non-party based. Both women nazims belong to the opposition Pakistan Peoples Party.

Operationally also women have been confronted with barriers. These span lack of public experience, information and knowledge of the various governance structures, male attitudes, and family restrictions. These were further compounded by the initial confusion over the relationship and coordination between the new governance structure and the administrative system. From the women's perspective the most disturbing was the attitude of male councillors including nazims towards them. Men, reportedly have been condescending and dismissive, women are not always consulted in decisions, relegated to the back seats, not given the opportunity to speak, not provided agenda of the meeting and copies of budgets, not appointed to union committees and denied funds. There was also the feeling that women should deal only with women's issues and there were instances of male family members attending meetings instead of the elected councillor.<sup>7</sup> Despite this, women councillors have remained enthusiastic and have protested against their marginalisation.

The women's movement and women's organisations see the opening of space in representative bodies as an outcome of their relentless campaigning. The creation of Women's Action Forum in 1981 marked the beginning of women's renewed efforts to resist discriminatory laws and get women's issues on the national agenda. It had demanded increased seats for women (20 percent) with a double vote for women as part of its charter of demands (1983)<sup>8</sup> but the lapsing of reserved seats in 1988 gave urgency to the issue.

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5. General Zia ul Haq, after gaining power through a military coup in 1977 introduced a series of so-called Islamic laws that have had far reaching consequences for women. These include the Hudood Ordinances, 1979, and the laws of Qisas and Diyat, Evidence, etc.

6. Zia and Bari, op. cit. p.47.

7. Asian Development Bank, Gender and Governance. Issues in Local Government. Philippines (2004) p.23.

8. 20 percent reserved seats for women to be elected by women voters, and mandatory for political parties to give 10 percent tickets to women in the first stage; abolition of women's seats but 20 percent tickets by political parties to women and increased by 10 percent at each elections till equality is reached; reservation of 10 percent of seats for women in the Senate; reservation of 1/3 seats in local bodies for women to be elected directly by female electorate. Farida Shaheed, Sohail Waraich and Asma Zia, *Women in Politics: Participation and Representation in Pakistan*. Lahore: Shirkat Gah (1998), Appendix IV.

Women's and human rights organizations initiated a debate to arrive at a consensual position regarding the number and modality. It was agreed that there should be 33 percent reserved seats for women at all levels through direct constituency based elections by a joint electorate of men and women. This was reflected in WAF's position in its statement for the Beijing Conference.<sup>9</sup>

### **A successful campaign**

A sustained decade long campaign formed the back drop to the reservation of women's seats in Pakistan. With Aurat Foundation a women's NGO, taking the lead and joined by leading women's and human rights groups it reached a wide ranging spectrum of political persons, community based organizations, trade unions, professional organizations and concerned citizens. Relevant information was communicated through specially developed material, seminars, conferences, media, and active lobbying and advocacy. Various strategies ("quiet" and "public") were devised and used to lobby with key members of parliament and others in sensitive and/or public positions. Thousands including representatives of nineteen political parties, professional organizations and professionals, public representatives including two Speakers, endorsed the principle through a massive signature campaign. Between 1998 and 1999 all four provincial assemblies had passed unanimous resolutions for the restoration of reserved seats and enhanced quotas. Balochistan, legislated an increased quota for women (26 percent) for local government in 1999, and in the partially held local government elections in Punjab in 1998, 12.5 percent seats were reserved for women. The Senate appointed Commission of Inquiry reaffirmed the women's demand for directly elected reserved seats for women as urgent affirmative action by the government in its report of 1997.<sup>10</sup>

Women's and other NGOs were also instrumental in mobilising women, including in the conservative provinces of NWFP and Balochistan, for contesting local government elections. They facilitated the process of registration in electoral rolls, helped in filing papers, carried out voter education and initiated debate and discourse at the local level on a wide range of local and national issues across the country. The massive mobilization of women was in large measure due to their effort especially in the absence of political parties' involvement in elections at the grassroots level (the parties in fact had actively prevented women for both contesting and voting in the elections). It is therefore not surprising that a sizable number of women from community based organizations were successfully elected. After elections NGOs continued their involvement with elected women representatives through various capacity building programmes. A number of networks of women councillors have also emerged facilitated by these organisations.

As the first term of local government ends and the next elections approach the provision of women's seats has received a setback. The overall size of the union council has been reduced from 21 to 13 and with it the number of women's seats has been halved though the percentage remains the same (from 8 to 4 women in each union council).

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9. Ibid.

10. Shahla Zia, "Women's Movement: Strategies for Success" in Farida Shaheed et al (eds.), *Shaping Women's Lives*. Lahore: Shirkat Gah (1998) pp. 392-395.

# Local Government System and Women in Pakistan

By Salman Abid. “*Muqami haqoomatain aur Pakistani aurat*” in *Pakistan ka naya siyasi nizam aur muqami haqoomaton ka kirdar*. (Lahore: 2007 4th ed.), 77-113. Translated by Amjad Mehmood.

## **A critical review of objections to women’s political representation**

Opinion on the political representation of women in Pakistan has always been divided. While certain sections of society are in favour of the political representation of women, there is certainly no dearth of people who are opposed to it. In Pakistan, religious and conservative elements are particularly disapproving of the participation of women in the political sphere.

A prominent feature of the Local Government Plan of 2000 was that women were to be given 50 percent representation. While women’s rights’ activists celebrated this announcement, religious elements not only protested but also threatened to launch a campaign against it. Unfortunately, these religious elements were not alone in opposing women’s political representation – some political parties, and particularly feudal landlords, were vociferous in condemning the government’s decision. Opposition to seats reserved for women in local councils began with rhetoric and culminated in media campaigns, especially in Urdu language newspapers. Most of the religious leaders and groups called on Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf to demand a review of the decision. Consequently, the government was forced to reconsider its decision and women’s reserved seats were reduced from 50 percent to 33 percent. However, this decision also faced severe criticism – especially from Jamaat-i-Islami and Jamiat Ulema Islam (Fazlur Rehman faction) who continued voicing their opposition through vigorous media campaigns and mass contact drives.

The question is why did these various elements rally against the political representation of women. The religious groups’ views on the freedom and advancement of women are that women should be confined to the home and only be concerned with household affairs. They believe that women’s involvement in the public sphere would not only disrupt domestic life but also jeopardize the societal family system. The Jamaat-i-Islami equated women’s representation with the destruction of the family system and its leaders and activists, through their press conferences, public meetings, rallies, protest demonstrations, resolutions and literature, mobilized the public against the government’s decision. Similarly, Maulana Fazlur Rehman, the leader of Jamiat Ulema Islam, proclaimed the proposed local government plan to be an international agenda of exploitation and declared that women’s representation was a “satanic conspiracy” and would promote a culture of immorality and vulgarity. In some press statements, Maulana Fazlur Rehman threatened to use force to stop women from taking part in the elections. This created an environment of fear amongst women especially in the North Western Frontier Province (NWFP).

An objective analysis of the objections raised by religious groups reveals that their

arguments are not sound. For instance, the statement that women's representation will destroy the family system is unfounded as women today are working in all professions and in some fields they eclipse their male counterparts. They are employed in the medical, engineering, pharmaceutical, information technology, banking and commerce, administration, media, education and health sectors and working in these areas has not negatively impacted the family system. Similarly, women's participation in local governments would make them equal partners in decision-making and allow them to contribute to the development process.

As far as domestic responsibilities are concerned, women in our society perform a dual role: they work to earn a living and they take care of their children and household chores. Therefore, it is unreasonable to claim that their political representation in local councils will result in the neglect of domestic duties. Moreover, household chores are not solely the responsibility of women. The argument that women's participation in local council activities will promote immorality and vulgarity is not only an insult to women but also reflects the negative mindset of these so-called religious groups. Interestingly, these religious groups actively contested the reserved seats in the local government elections – particularly the Jamaat-i-Islami. A large number of women members of Jamaat-i-Islami and Awami Tehreek contested the local body polls and according to Party reports were also elected councilors thus exposing their double standards.

Other than the religiously-oriented parties, certain political parties, feudal lords and local influentials were also opposed to women's representation. However, they were not opposed to the reservation of seats, they just questioned the availability of such a large number of women and believed that the government's decision was irrational. Many noted politicians were of the view that 33 percent representation of women would be impossible. Their concern was understandable – this was the first time women had such a large percentage of reserved seats in direct elections and it was a new experience for them.

In a predominantly patriarchal society like ours, men find it extremely difficult to accept women in the role of political representatives. Even though there have been women representatives in the past, their number has been minimal and their presence has mostly been a formality. The direct elections of such a large number of women was perceived as a threat to the societal hegemony of men. Men have resisted granting women an equal social status for fear that women's better social position would translate into a decline of their own authority. Women would become self-reliant and be able to solve their own problems and hence no longer be dependent on men. What both these groups – religious and political – fail to realize is that in our society women's problems are a lot more serious than those of men, and as yet our male elected representatives have failed to effectively address these concerns. The representation of women at the local level may help in solving these problems.

A review of the first phase of polls held on 31 December, 2000, makes it clear that both the religious and political groups were wrong as far as their fears and objections to women's representation was concerned. To the disappointment of both groups, a large number of women took part in the first phase of elections. In the 18 districts selected for the first phase, women occupied 82 percent of the reserved seats. Important to note is that the districts selected for the first phase of polls were those where a feudal culture and mindset prevailed and where the social status of women was lower than in other areas of the country. The emergence of women representatives in such districts heralded the beginning

of a new political culture. This precedent played an important role in making possible the representation of women in subsequent phases. The level of participation in the fifth phase of local body elections proved that the elements biased against women lacked popular support.

### **Reducing representation from 50 to 33 percent**

When the plan for devolution of power and the establishment of local government was put to public debate on 23 March, 2000, it was announced that women would have 50 percent direct representation at the union council level. The intent was to enhance the participation of women in the decision-making process at the local level, allowing them to address their concerns.

Not only were the pros and cons of women's representation widely debated, but the supporters and opponents of the decision, respectively launched campaigns to build public opinion in their favour. Religious parties alongwith some other groups in the country vehemently demanded an immediate withdrawal of the government's decision, claiming it was a plot to destroy the social system. It was also argued that as women's literacy rate, especially in rural areas, was extremely low, such a large number of women could not take part in the electoral process; the decision was impractical.

These groups launched a powerful campaign against women's representation through the mass media, particularly the Urdu language media. Pressure was exerted on the government through press statements, columns, articles, features and press conferences. A section of the press also jumped on the bandwagon. Delegations from various religious parties called on higher authorities to convey their apprehensions; Jamaat-i-Islami, Jamiat Ulema Islam and Tanzeem-i-Islami were in the forefront. Similarly, other political and social groups attempted to convince the government that 50 percent representation was simply not a viable decision.

Campaigns in favour of women's representation were also in full swing with civil society organisations (CSOs) playing a prominent role. These organizations lobbied for women's electoral rights at the provincial and district levels through rallies, press conferences, press statements and articles. They also conducted a signature campaign to persuade senior government officials to stand by the government in its decision and to create an environment conducive to women's political participation and representation.

There was a positive side to the clash between the two opposing groups: prompted a debate on the representation of women in political institutions for the first time in the country. The anti-women's representation camp was much more adept in using the media to further its cause and exert public pressure on the government. As a result, the originally proposed 50 percent reservation of seats for women was reduced to 33 percent. However, on a positive note, the revised plan assigned a 33 percent quota for women in all three tiers of local government—union, tehsil and district councils, whereas the earlier plan had proposed 50 percent reserved seats at only the union council level.

The decision of 33 percent reserved seats for women is commendable as a minimum 33 percent quota for women in all decision-making institutions had been a long-held demand of CSOs. Therefore, the government decision in fact met this outstanding demand. Had



CSOs advocated for 50 percent representation in a more effective way, the government may have found it difficult to review its decision.

## Women vs. women and direct elections

The devolution of power plan not only ensured 33 percent representation of women, but also provided women with the opportunity to contest against other women. The electorate, however, comprised both sexes as the elected candidates would represent the entire union council and not just the female constituency. The decision to increase the quota of reserved seats for women will doubtless have a positive impact on the social status of women. This was the first time in Pakistan's electoral history such a large number of women were



contesting direct elections. That their opponents were also women bolstered their confidence as women in our society are still new to electoral politics, especially in comparison to their male counterparts.

Reservations about the actual availability of such a large number of women willing to come forward to stand for direct elections remained. In earlier years, women were elected through a process of nomination for reserved seats rather than through direct elections. This indirect mode of elections fulfilled the provision of seats for women but deprived them of actual representation and prevented them from firmly establishing themselves in the

political system. To preserve their own interests, elected male members particularly in rural areas, would nominate their female domestics to the seats and thus control the resources allocated for women members. The local government records clearly indicate that the women nominated to reserved seats in rural areas never attended council meetings nor were they given the opportunity to do so. Women nominated as councillors in urban centres were also dependent on their male counterparts. Lacking an electorate, their performance went unnoticed. The two percent budget allocated to them for development purposes was also appropriated by the male representatives. In effect, these women councillors were mere token representatives with no actual authority.

CSOs have long demanded for direct elections on women's seats. Having a geographical constituency and an opportunity to adequately represent their voters would facilitate women's entry into mainstream politics and potentially lead to their future political involvement at the provincial and national levels. A direct mode of election for both men and women would ensure equal power for women and would discourage discrimination on the basis of sex. Being independent of men and having the support of their respective constituencies would empower women to play an active role in their local councils. Direct elections on women's seats would be a prelude to a positive change. In the past, the

demand for direct elections on women's seats has been dismissed as being unrealistic in the social conditions prevalent in Pakistan. Considering the status quo ante, the initiative to hold direct elections on women's seats by the incumbent government is laudable.

## Panel system and women's representation

Under the new local body system, nazims and naib nazims were to be pitched as joint candidates in a panel under a common election symbol. No panel system was required for the remaining 19 seats of the council. However, the procedure adopted by the contestants at the local level was quite different: elections to all the seats in a union council were held on the panel system basis. Different caste-based and political groups fielded their panels for all 21 seats of the union council. These panels were not only formed jointly by candidates for nazim and naib nazim at the union council level, but also by aspiring tehsil and district nazim and naib nazim candidates in a bid to strengthen their respective positions. This was because the elected candidates of the union councils would form the Electoral College to indirectly elect the nazims and naib nazims of the tehsil and district councils.

The panel system introduced by local caste-based and political groups played an important role in ensuring women's representation at the local level. While announcing the joint candidates in a panel, political parties ensured that one candidate was a woman in order to secure votes in the upper tiers of local government. Hence, parties not only nominated women candidates and ran election campaigns in their support, they also filed the nomination papers and election fees of their respective candidates. The contending tehsil and district council nazims recognised that the election of the woman on their panel would pave the way for their own success and that not forwarding a candidate for the women's seats would only benefit the opposition. It is for this reason that the men made a concerted effort to search for suitable female candidates and even offered to bear their campaign costs. Therefore, it would not be incorrect to say that the introduction of joint candidature

in a panel was one of the many reasons contributing to bringing forth such a large number of women councillors and had the panel system not been introduced the proportion of women councillors might have been significantly lower.



Poster in Urdu encouraging women to vote

## Women's interest and an environment of fear

The affirmative action for women's reserved seats taken by the government was welcomed by women political and social activists across the country. They were further encouraged to learn of the positive steps taken by the government to ensure women's representation.

Encouraging and strengthening the political determination of ordinary women portends the

dawn of a new era. The government used mass media, especially the electronic media, to encourage women to take part in the political process and ensure its support. Albeit this piqued women's interest in politics, they also experienced an unfamiliar anxiety—how would this be possible without the consent of the local men? And why would the local caste-based and political groups and especially their own elders support them? For, they had never been encouraged by their families and communities to step into the political arena.

The joy with which women received the news that they could be elected councillors was somewhat marred by a sense of fear at the realisation of the hurdles they faced in the prevalent patriarchal and prejudicial socio-political environment. How would they contest an election in a society where they are not even permitted to vote? They appreciated the government's initiative but feared resistance from their families and local influential elements, well aware of the socio-cultural attitudes imposed on them.

The districts selected for the first phase of local body polls were the most backward regions of Pakistan where a deep-rooted feudal mindset and a tribal value system existed. A hostile and threatening environment was created in these districts and women were hesitant to come forward as contenders. However, as the elections neared, and with the introduction of the nomination of women as joint candidates in panels, the tension eased. The election of more than 84 percent women as councillors in the first phase alleviated the fear amongst women in other districts and increased their level of interest in the electoral process.

## **Women as Nazims**

A large number of women contested the polls at the union, tehsil and district council levels and approximately 37,000 were elected as councillors. Unfortunately, the number of women elected as nazims and naib nazims was insignificant; in the local government system the offices of nazims and naib nazims are vital as they enjoy the status of the head of the respective union, tehsil and district council.

Only 13 women were elected as nazims or naib nazims of union, tehsil or district councils. A major reason for this was that women did not compete for these seats. This was because the local caste-based and political groups neither encouraged them nor provided them an opportunity to compete for these seats. They were of the view that because real authority lay with the nazims, only men were entitled to these positions. The local groups restricted women to general and peasant/worker seats at the union council level, and as councillors at the tehsil and district levels. Another significant factor was that this was the first time more than 90% women at the local level were involved in the political process; for them just contesting and being elected councillors was a great honour and achievement.

Aware that local influential and majority groups would never accept them as nazims, they were content that local groups, particularly men, supported them as councillors, even though the support these groups extended to women candidates was necessary to strengthen their own positions. Thus, it is not surprising that very few women were elected nazims. However, the women who ran for these important offices and returned successful are commendable as they directly challenged men and succeeded notwithstanding the difficulties they had to face. Their success proved that if provided a suitable and conducive

environment, they too could compete for these positions and were capable of administering local bodies as nazims. It is hoped that this small number of women nazims will prove to be efficient leaders and that a larger number of women will come forward to contest these seats in the future.

### **Elected women nazims/naib nazims at union, tehsil and district council levels**

1	Nafisa Shah	District Nazim	Khairpur	Sindh
2	Faryal Talpur	District Nazim	Nawabshah	Sindh
3	Ruqayya Khanum Soomro	Tehsil Naib Nazim	Larkana	Sindh
4	Begum Rana Ahmed Raza Khan	Union Naib Nazim	Sargodha	Punjab
5	Rubina Aziz Jatoi	Union Nazim	Muzaffargarh	Punjab
6	Sajida Nayyar Abidi	Union Nazim	Sialkot	Punjab
7	Shazia Sethi	Union Nazim	Sialkot	Punjab
8	Hameeda Waheeduddin	Union Nazim	Mandi Bahauddin	Punjab
9	Ghulam Sughra	Union Nazim	Gujranwala	Punjab
10	Azra Mahmood Shaikh	Union Nazim	Bahawalpur	Punjab
11	Syeda Irshad Jilani	Union Nazim	Khairpur	Sindh
12	Noor Jehan Abbasi	Union Nazim	Khairpur	Sindh
13	Begum Shafqat-un-Nisa	Union Nazim	Lahore	Punjab
14	Bilquees Begum	Union Nazim	Lahore	Punjab
15	Rubina Perveen	Union Nazim	Jhelum	Punjab
16	Kausar Muneer Chaudhry	Union Naib Nazim	Lahore	Punjab

### **First phase and women's representation**

One of the main contentions in the discourse against the reservation of 33% seats for women was the unavailability of the of number of women necessary to participate in the electoral process. The first phase of local body polls was of immense importance because the 20 districts selected by the government for the electoral exercise were some of the most backward areas of the country in terms of the social conditions of women.

The government's commitment to ensuring women's representation was also questioned when districts steeped in feudal and tribal cultures were selected for the first phase. It was suspected that the government might use the expected low turnout of women in these districts as an excuse to reduce their representation in the subsequent phases.

An analysis of the first phase reveals that there was sign of women in the early stages of

the election campaigns. This situation gave credence to the fear that women's reserved seats would remain vacant. Nevertheless, CSOs actively working in support of the issue assertively claimed that women would definitely take part in the electoral process provided the government and society offered them a conducive and peaceful atmosphere. In their opinion, the greatest obstacle to women's participation was the fear instilled in them, which it was essential to allay. The degree of women's participation as candidates in the first phase was also of the utmost importance as this would set the precedent for subsequent phases.

Thus, the first phase of local polls was critical for women because failure at this stage would provide future governments an excuse to close the chapter on women's representation ending all possibilities of women playing a political role. The absence of women in the first three days of filing nominations renewed apprehensions that women were not available to contest polls. It was thought that not more than 40 to 50% seats reserved for women would be filled. However, a large number of women filed papers in the last two days with the result that an impressive 82% of the reserved seats were occupied. The 18% seats that remained vacant were mostly the peasant/worker seats reserved for women, and this was largely because nomination papers were rejected on technical grounds.

Women's success in the first phase vindicated the CSOs stance that women's representation was possible given a favourable environment. Women's successes in the first phase facilitated their participation in the subsequent phases. The bold initiative taken by the women participating in the first phase of local body polls is commendable as this paved the way for women in the following phases.

## **Women's potential**

When the government announced a 33% quota for women in the local bodies, there were many who believed that in light of their political inexperience and low literacy rate, especially in the rural areas, women would prove unsuccessful office-bearers. As the results of the local body polls were revealed the argument that the majority of elected women councillors were illiterate and ignorant intensified. Amid the rising polemics against the devolution of power to women it was also said that most of the women were household employees of local political and social personalities being used to increase the support base of the respective parties.

The women who emerged victorious against all odds must be considered. Who are they? What were they doing before participating in electoral politics? What obstacles did they need to face and overcome? The claim that the majority of elected women are illiterate is inaccurate. A review of all the stages of local body polls reveals that the number of highly educated women councillors is greater than those lacking in formal education. A significant number of them are matriculate, intermediate, graduate or post-graduate degree holders. Though educated women councillors were in majority in urban centres, literate women were elected in rural areas too.

Although the ratio of educated women councillors in rural areas is lower, we should keep in consideration two points: firstly, the overall literacy rate among rural women is lower than that of urban women, and secondly, the trend to educate girls' in rural areas is steadily on

the rise. However, the majority of literate girls in rural areas are as yet below the age of 25, which is also the minimum age limit set for contesting polls. Many educated women, both in rural and urban areas, desirous of taking part in the elections were restricted by the age limit. In the capacity of an observer, I encountered many women during electioneering who were later elected councillors. A good number of them were educated which is auspicious; these women hailed from backward areas like Rajanpur, Dera Ghazi Khan, Layyah, Bhakkar, Mianwali, Khushab and Sargodha.

Before criticizing women's representation on the basis of their education, we should also question the qualifications and capabilities of the men who have been elected representatives in the past. Records verify that most of the male representatives were illiterate; however, their lack of education was not subjected to as much censure as is being done with women. It must also be remembered that a major reason for women's illiteracy is the societal attitude of not giving importance to the education of girls.

As far as the potential and capability of women is concerned, it is true that they are inexperienced and have almost no political experience. However, allowances can be made on the grounds that they have never before been given such a political opportunity. This is their first appearance as elected representatives. In the past women representatives were usually from the upper class and came from political families. Now, having a role in decision-making process will surely add to their experience and prepare them to be effective leaders.

It is therefore crucial to realise the importance of this initial step forward in the area of women's representation. Undoubtedly, men too when first elected go through a learning process. Women are now going through this phase and they need to come forward and participate in electoral politics irrespective of their level of education or experience rather than being held back on the pretexts of education, experience or potential. The problem is not the education or capacity of women but the prejudices we have against them; ridding ourselves of these would bring an end to this debate and enable us to move forward together.

## **Women's representation in NWFP**

The harshest criticism on 33% reservation for women in local bodies came from NWFP. The religious and political parties in NWFP protested against the decision and vowed to launch a movement of resistance despite warnings from the government and the Election Commission of immediate legal action in the form of fines and harsh punishments against those who forcibly prevented women from taking part in the electoral process. Unfortunately, though the government and the Election Commission issued warnings, they failed to take action in some areas of NWFP where women were being stopped from exercising their constitutional right.

Baton-wielding workers from political and religious parties barred women from contesting the polls declaring the idea of women's representation immoral and vulgar. Fatwas (religious decrees) were issued proclaiming that the marriages of women participating in elections would be annulled and that the Ulema (religious scholars) would not lead their funeral prayers. The public was urged to socially boycott these women and their families. Jamiat Ulema Islam (Fazlur Rehman faction) and Jamaat-i-Islami were at the forefront of

# NWFP women victims of political discrimination

By Shaheen Buner

PESHAWAR: Apart from social and economic problems, women in the NWFP are also the victims of political discrimination.

dom and encouragement to women in social activities is neither against the Islamic practices nor the Pakhtun code of honour, but still the so-called upholders of morality prevent them from taking

Our society has been the victim of many contradictions. It is a reality that in the urban areas we have given freedom to women and they can participate in many social activities to a great extent, but

## No vote cast by women in 20 NWFP union councils

From Quraysh Khattak

PESHAWAR: The hold of clergy and traditionalists was felt even in the comparatively educated and developed parts of Malakand division during the fourth phase of local govern-

Batkhela were also deserted but a candidate said that female relatives of some of the candidates had voted in the morning. A lady presiding officer at Musa Mina, Meherdey union council, said: "We know women will not be allowed to come out but the

Except two reserved seats for women workers and peasants in Khar union council, not a single female seat was left open in the 27 union councils of the agency.

Our correspondent adds from Swabi: Female voters of

956 women file papers in Nowshera

Our correspondent

NOWSHERA: A total of 2,559 candidates including 956 women have filed nomination papers for local government elections in 47 union councils of Nowshera district to be held on July 2.

Women take back nominations  
30-5-2001 P3  
By Our Correspondent

HANGU, May 29: Four women candidates for the local government elections in the Hangu district withdrew their nomination papers on the appeal of Ulema on Tuesday.

Religious leaders and elders of the district have joined hands against the participation of women in the polls scheduled for Thursday.

After filing of nominations, the Ulema contacted women candidates, their families and elders of the concerned union councils to force the women to withdraw.

## Women not allowed to file papers in Upper Dir

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR, July 10: To pressure women candidates to withdraw their nomination papers in the Upper Dir district, different religious and Jihadi groups staged a sit-in on the Dir-Chitral Road on Tuesday.

Witnesses said that the vehicular traffic remained suspended on the road for hours because of the demonstration.

Officials claim that although

maximum participation of women in the electoral process, told Dawn that on July 9 they had visited the office of the assistant commissioner and submitted some nomination papers, but the staff concerned informed them that they would face law and order situation if they entertained these papers.

They said that one of their members, Mohammad Aslam

this campaign; they also threatened civil society organisations working to promote women's political representation. Some ulema went so far as saying that women working in these organisations should be forcibly married.

These anti-women campaigns were led by religious parties and the common perception was that only religious parties were opposed to women stepping in the political arena. However, what is significant is that political and liberal parties in NWFP were also a part of this movement. These included Pakistan People's Party, Muslim League-Nawaz, Muslim League-Junejo, Tehrik-i-Insaaf and Awami National Party. In Marghaz, District Swabi, leaders belonging to various political and religious parties reached a written agreement to bar women's participation. Muslim League's Fazal Karim, People's Party's Rifaqat Ali, JUI's Mufti Muhammad Irshad, Jamaat-i-Islami's Sultan Arif, Awami National Party's Haji Deen Muhammad, Swabi Qaumi Mahaz's Noorul Islam, Maulana Zakirullah, Maulana Ghulam Sarwar, Maulana Waqar and Maulana Abrarul Haq were the signatories to the agreement. They were all local leaders of their respective parties. Similar alliances against women's representation and their right to vote were formed in Kaskarona in District Mardan, and Malabut, Bam Khel, Al-Sharqi Topi and other union councils in District Swabi. It was announced that violators of the agreements would be fined Rs. 100,000 each.

The State and the Election Commission turned a blind eye to these agreements and failed to act upon their own directives according to which elections in those constituencies where women were prevented from participating be declared null and void and fresh polls be conducted. Despite repeated written complaints by civil society organisations highlighting this issue the government and the Election Commission failed to respond.

Had the Election Commission taken due action, repeat incidences in the fourth and fifth phases could have been prevented. The government's inertia encouraged these elements to use force against women. Even during the fifth phase women candidates in Kohistan and Batagram Districts of NWFP were threatened and forcibly disenfranchised.

These violations of women's electoral rights revealed the prejudices held against women by religious and political parties in NWFP. They used religion to further their cause even though religion does not condone their actions; their behaviour was neither Islamic nor ethical. Their exploitation of religion to prevent women's representation is highly condemnable and should be recognised as such in order to end gender discrimination and allow men and women to work together for the progress of the country.

## **A review of the citizens' campaign**

Social organizations in Pakistan have been actively campaigning for women's electoral rights' for many years. Their activities have in fact taken the form of a movement, which is not just confined to the major cities of Lahore, Islamabad and Karachi, but also reaches the district and tehsil levels via urban and rural social organizations working there. They have always demanded the government take effective measures, including legislation, to ensure 33% representation of women in local institutions.

Women's representation has been almost negligible in the past. For instance, in 1997 there were only seven women members in the National Assembly and just one MPA in all the four provincial assemblies. The responsibility for this lies not only with political parties and their





incapable leaders, but also with so-called democratic governments who were unable to take concrete steps to ensure women's representation. Though the new local body system has both positive and negative aspects, what cannot be denied is that the longstanding demand for 33% reservation women through direct elections at the union council level was accepted. The enthusiastic campaigning of social organizations played a major role in convincing the military government to approve 33% representation for women in the local governments. This is a welcome step and it is hoped that the measure will go a long way in enhancing women's future political participation and representation.

For CSOs, the opposition of religious and conservative elements was a challenge. It remained to be seen whether women would be able to take part in the electoral process or if their reserved seats would remain vacant. It was feared that the women's movement would be adversely affected if a sufficient number of women did not make it through to the local bodies and future governments would use this failure as an excuse to ignore further demands. In this context, civil society organisations particularly Aurat Foundation, South Asia Partnership, Pakistan (SAP-PK), Strengthening Participatory Organisation (SPO) and Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (PILER), with the help of other organizations and networks launched a nationwide initiative called the 'Citizens' Campaign for Women's Representation in Local Government' (CCWR). This initiative was coordinated in all four provinces by Aurat Foundation. The objectives of the campaign were:

- to mobilize women in union councils across the country to participate in the elections;
- to create public acceptability about women in the role of public representatives;
- to create a conducive and non-threatening environment at the local level for prospective candidates; and,
- to arrange training programmes for women candidates to educate them about the local government system and the electoral process.

To run this nationwide movement in an effective way, consultative committees were formed at the national and provincial levels and people from all walks of life were given representation in them. Coordination committees were formed at the district and tehsil levels. The district and tehsil coordination committees, comprising 25 to 30 members from CSOs, motivated women and political and social groups at the local level. Local organizations designed work plans at the union council level and selected volunteers from each union council. These volunteers worked to maximise the number of women involved

in the electoral process. The coordination bodies formed at the district and tehsil levels included sub-committees on mobilization, finance, legal affairs and mass media. A conscious attempt was made to ensure that these committees would not become 'NGO-only' forums, and individuals, groups and organizations from all walks of life were encouraged to join. They included representatives from mass media, political parties, labour organizations, youth groups, doctors, government institutions, minorities and women's organizations. The district coordination committees organized forums, seminars, debates, dialogues and meetings on the structure of the new local council system and particularly on the importance of women's participation in these institutions.



Cassette cover of election songs

These committees also used press conferences, articles and advertisements to mobilize women. The larger percentage of volunteers in this citizens' initiative was men thus dispelling the perception that men were against women's representation. In fact, achieving the goal of women's representation would have been a lot more difficult without the involvement of men. This indicates that women's representation is being considered an issue of national importance which bodes well for women's development. Advocacy material including posters, stickers, pamphlets, handbills, booklets, and cassettes containing election songs were widely

distributed throughout the campaign. District coordination committees organized information camps at the district and tehsil levels to guide candidates filing nomination papers. Lawyers offered free services at these camps for the benefit of both female and male candidates. Similarly, Citizens Commission for Human Development, Lahore (CCHD), Sarsabz Foundation, Faisalabad, and AWARD, Peshawar, undertook independent initiatives to ensure maximum representation of women.

The results of the elections indicate that if provided a chance to take part in the political exercise, particularly if the circumstances are favourable, they too can contribute to problem-solving and developmental work at the local level. Another positive aspect of this process was that the parties initially against women's representation in the first phase, reviewed their policies and pitched their own women candidates in the next phases of the election process. An obvious example of this is the Jamaat-i-Islami whose women members enthusiastically joined the electoral exercise.

The CCWR provided a favourable atmosphere for women to contest polls. They provided information and legal help to women and had in place an efficient mechanism to address any problem. Women were in fact eager to take part in the elections but feared they would fail to get the support of their families, local influentials and society. This campaign allayed their fears. The active involvement of men was particularly encouraging. All local influential groups whose support was essential to guarantee women's representation were approached through this campaign. These included key people from political parties, local caste-based groups and religious groups. Without the help of these individuals and groups the immediate representation of women would have been impossible. District and tehsil representatives focussed on facilitating the provision of identity cards and registering women in electoral rolls. Male candidates were also

extended help during this campaign. Local organizations also assisted in the campaigns launched by government institutions.

Even though the responsibility to hold elections and facilitate candidates lies with government institutions and political parties, CSOs were at the forefront not just in educating and mobilising the public, but also in assisting government institutions. These organizations came together and launched another campaign called 'Voter's Education.' SAP-PK, Sungi Development Foundation, PILER, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) and Asia Foundation were prominent in this respect. District level networks were created and this campaign concentrated on the problems of the marginalised, particularly women, labourers, peasants and minorities. Seminars and street theatres were used for awareness-raising. SAP-PK coordinated this campaign at the national level. The active and positive role played by CSOs has gained them credibility among the masses.

It is hoped that the effects of the discourse on women's representation in local governments initiated by CSOs at the national level will also reach provincial and national level political institutions. This will promote the viewpoint that women's issues are of national concern and addressing them will enable would to contribute to national progress.

# National Elections 2008

## Political Participation and Representation

Changes in the political landscape brought about by the Legal Framework Order 2002 opened opportunities for women's political participation and representation. Amendments pertaining to increase in the size of legislatures and 17% allocation of seats reserved for women in the Legal Framework Order 2002 enhanced political space for women. Reserved seats for women increased from 20 to 60 in the National Assembly and from 23 to 128 in the Provincial Assemblies. For the first time ever, reserved seats for women were introduced in the Senate. Of 100 seats in the Senate, 17 seats were allocated to women - four to be elected from each provincial assembly and one from the Federal Capital. Women could also contest general seats in the Assemblies and the Senate.

A majority of seats in the General Elections of February 2008 were won by Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N), followed by Pakistan Muslim League Quaid-e-Azam (PML-Q). PPP formed the new coalition government with Yousaf Raza Gilani as Prime Minister and Asif Ali Zardari was subsequently elected President of Pakistan in September by the Electoral College.

A total of 76 women legislators (22.2% of the total composition) were elected to the 13th National Assembly (2008-2013). Of these, 16 were elected on general seats – the highest number of women elected on general seats to the National Assembly to date.<sup>1</sup> The number of women in the Senate in 2009 stood at 17<sup>2</sup> and the four Provincial Assemblies had a combined strength of 140 women. A large number of these women returned to the Assemblies for another term. The country elected its first female Speaker of the National Assembly, Ms. Fahmida Mirza, in March. Ms. Shahla Raza – though not the first woman to be in this position - was elected Deputy Speaker of the Sindh Assembly. Women's participation in the elections, the increase in the number of women on general seats, and the appointment of women to key positions led to strengthening the presence of women in the political arena and gave credence to their abilities.

On 29 August 2009 the Parliament passed the Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self-Governance Order 2009, which was later signed by the President granting self-rule to people and creating an elected legislative assembly. Elections for the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly consisting of 33 members<sup>3</sup> were held in November 2009; the six seats reserved for women were filled, two women contested general seats but were unable to win.<sup>4</sup>

## Women's Representation and Political Party Manifestos

The manifesto of a political party is a public declaration of its policies, principles and

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1. In the 12th National Assembly (2002-2007) 14 women were elected on general seats - one woman parliamentarian vacated her seat to enable Mr. Shaukat Aziz to contest for it, thereby reducing the strength of women legislators to 73.
  2. It was previously 18. In 2006, half the House was retired, including one woman reducing the strength of women to 17.
  3. This includes 24 members elected directly on general seats, six reserved seats for women, and three seats for technocrats.
  4. Legislative Watch, Issue No. 30, October-December 2009. Aurat Publication and Information Service Foundation.

objectives. It outlines the party position on issues and sets its future strategic direction. The two leading parties in the 2008 elections were the PPP and PML-N. Other notable parties were the PML-Q, Awami National Party (ANP), Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam Fazl-ur-Rehman (JUI-F) and Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM).

According to reviews<sup>5</sup> comparing the manifestos of key political parties contending in the 2008 election, from a gender perspective PPP's manifesto is the most explicit in terms of women's empowerment: committing itself to gender equality the PPP manifesto pledges to bring about positive legislation on employment for women, to appoint women judges in Family Courts and in the superior judiciary; to prevent crimes against women, to give priority to reproductive health and to ensure the involvement of the Ministry of Women's Development in policy-making bodies. However, the manifesto lacks a clear standpoint on the matters of reviewing and repealing discriminatory laws. The PPP manifesto is also unclear about the proportion of women's political representation: it states that provisions for reserved seats will be retained but does not specify the percentage. Similarly, the manifesto promises to increase the seats in Parliament but does not indicate if women's seats will also be increased. The PML-N manifesto promises to ensure respect, dignity and protection to women as granted by Islam but does not specify what this framework is; similarly it makes a general commitment to women's political equality but fails to address concerns about women's political representation at the local level.

The MQM manifesto also advocates women's rights: in the section "Eradication of Socio Cultural, Religious and Economic Injustices" the manifesto addresses issues of women's concern that are not touched upon by other parties such as marriage to the Quran, child marriages and public humiliation of women. The MQM manifesto vows to repeal discriminatory laws and address the issue of gender discrimination. It is, however, silent on the issue of women's political participation. In their manifesto, the PML-Q also commits to eradicating unjust social practices but fails to mention discriminatory laws against women.

The ANP issued very progressive statements with regard to the fundamental rights of all citizens; the manifesto emphasises protecting human rights and providing equal opportunities to all citizens. With regard to women's rights and empowerment the ANP manifesto pledges to repeal discriminatory laws and policies against women; to ensure a minimum of 33% quota for women in political, policy and decision-making positions; to ensure direct mode of elections for women; and, to raise awareness among the public on gender equality.<sup>6</sup>

Effective political participation and representation of women is essential to achieving Pakistan's national and international commitments. The State is committed to bolster women's political participation at the international level through the platforms of CEDAW, Beijing Platform of Action and the SAARC Social Charter; and nationally through the National Plan of Action and National Policy for Development & Empowerment of Women. Shirkat Gah's Research Unit has mapped Pakistan's current commitments towards women's development with respect to the pledges made in the manifestos of key political parties. The results of PPP, PML-N, PML-Q, MQM, and ANP are as follows:

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5. Naheed Aziz, *A Gender-Based Critique of 2008 Election Manifestos of Key Political Parties*. Aurat Publication and Information Service Foundation: 2008. *Election 2008. A Comparative Analysis of Election 2008 Manifestos of Major Political Parties*. Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency: 2007.

6. An earlier draft of the ANP manifesto contained a clause specifying that 'no law shall be passed which is against Quran and Sunnah,' a proviso that puts the practicality of the positive avowals in doubt.

## Awami National Party

ANP Chapter 2.3 Women's Rights and Empowerment	Pakistan Plan of Action to implement SAARC* Social Charter	CEDAW** Committee concluding remarks 2007	Other instruments/commitments
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Repeal all discriminatory laws and policies that infringe on the equal rights of women and their participation in decision making within the family, community and society.</li> <li>2. Promulgate legislation on domestic violence, honour killings, and trafficking of women, sexual harassment and assault.</li> <li>3. Comply with existing international conventions/instruments ratified by Pakistan addressing violence against women and ratify the Optional Protocol of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other relevant instruments relating to trafficking of women and children and violence against women.</li> <li>4. Ensure a minimum of 33% quota for women at all levels of political, policy and decision-making positions and provide meaningful and necessary technical and financial support to enable them to participate.</li> <li>5. Ensure direct elections for women in all elected positions including reserved seats/quota, as the party believes that there is no substitute for direct elections.</li> <li>6. Ensure that no Laws, Regulations, Policy and Code of conduct prescribed and adopted by the state exclude and/or discriminate against women.</li> <li>7. Review and revise identification policies to ensure that citizens are identified by parentage and not spouse so that their national identity cards do not change with a change in marital status. Remove the need for a male guardian for adult women when applying for National Identity Cards.</li> <li>8. Awareness will be created about the importance of gender equality through education and media.</li> <li>9. ANP will work for improving access to employment opportunities for women at all levels.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure their active participation at all levels on the basis of equity with men and to serve as an agent of change in society. (pg 28) Legal and social action to encourage female participation in all areas increasing the platforms for women's rights. (pg 29) Enhancement of the status of women. (pg 28)</li> <li>2. –</li> <li>3. –</li> <li>4. –</li> <li>5. –</li> <li>6. –</li> <li>7. –</li> <li>8. –</li> <li>9. –</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Paras 44, 45</b> Amend Dissolution of Muslim Marriage Act 1939 to eliminate all discriminatory provisions.</li> <li>2. <b>Para 23</b> Adopt comprehensive approach to address violence against women</li> <li>3. <b>Para 16</b> Incorporation of CEDAW into domestic legislation</li> <li>4. <b>Para 33</b> Increased representation in public and political life</li> <li>5. –</li> <li>6. –</li> <li>7. –</li> <li>8. <b>Para 29</b> Awareness raising programmes for better understanding of and support for equality</li> <li>9. <b>Paras 38, 39</b> Higher and equal employment opportunities</li> </ol>	

\* South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

\*\* Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women

ANP Chapter 2.3 Women's Rights and Empowerment	CEDAW	National Policy for Development and Empowerment of Women	National Plan of Action for Women
<p>1. Repeal all discriminatory laws and policies that infringe on the equal rights of women and their participation in decision making within the family, community and society.</p> <p>2. Promulgate legislation on domestic violence, honor killings, and trafficking of women, sexual harassment and assault.</p> <p>3. Comply with existing international conventions/instruments ratified by Pakistan addressing violence against women and ratify the Optional Protocol of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other relevant instruments relating to trafficking of women and children and violence against women.</p> <p>4. Ensure a minimum of 33% quota for women at all levels of political, policy and decision-making positions and provide meaningful and necessary technical and financial support to enable them to participate.</p> <p>5. Ensure direct elections for women in all elected positions including reserved seats/quota, as the party believes that there is no substitute for direct elections.</p> <p>6. Ensure that no Laws, Regulations, Policy and Code of conduct prescribed and adopted by the state exclude and/or discriminate against women.</p> <p>7. Review and revise identification policies to ensure that citizens are identified by parentage and not spouse so that their national identity cards do not change with a change in marital status. Remove the need for a male guardian for adult women when applying for National Identity Cards.</p> <p>8. Awareness will be created about the importance of gender equality through education and media.</p> <p>9. ANP will work for improving access to employment opportunities for women at all levels.</p>	<p>1. Article 2(g) To repeal all national penal provisions which constitute discrimination against women.</p> <p>2. Article 2(f) To take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women.</p> <p>3. Article 6 State Parties shall take all appropriate measures to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation or prostitution of women.</p> <p>4. Article 7(b) To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government.</p> <p>5. –</p> <p>6. Article 2(d) To refrain from engaging in any act or practice of discrimination against women and to ensure that public authorities and institutions shall act in conformity with this obligation.</p> <p>7. –</p> <p>8. Article 5(a) To modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women.</p> <p>9. –</p>	<p>1. 4.3c – Removing discrimination through legal reforms.</p> <p>2. 4.4d – Introducing positive legislation on domestic violence and reform.</p> <p>3. –</p> <p>4. 6.1d – Mandating the inclusion of women through merit in all decision-making bodies of the state at the federal, provincial and local levels.</p> <p>5. –</p> <p>6. –</p> <p>7. –</p> <p>8. 4.5e – Initiating awareness campaigns, especially in the media and schools to promote an equal sharing of responsibilities, decision-making and power between women and men in the family structure.</p> <p>9. 5.3a – Access to sources of livelihood.</p>	<p>1. –</p> <p>2. –</p> <p>3. –</p> <p>4. G.2/Action 2 – Adopt affirmative action measures to significantly increase women's political representation from the local bodies to the Senate.</p> <p>G.2/Action 3 – Strengthen and promote effective participation of women in the political process.</p> <p>5. –</p> <p>6. –</p> <p>7. –</p> <p>8. –</p> <p>9. –</p>

## Muttahida Qaumi Movement

MQM Eradication of Socio-Cultural, Religious and Economic Injustices	Pakistan Plan of Action to implement SAARC Social Charter	CEDAW Committee concluding remarks 2007	Other instruments/commitments
<p>1. Social ailments like gender discrimination, sexual harassment, domestic violence, child abuse, rape in vengeance and forcing the opponent's womenfolk to march on public streets naked, honour killings, child marriage, Karo Kari, Vinee, Marriage to the Holy Quran, Bonded Labour and Child Labour will have to be dealt with by public awareness campaign in collaboration with community participation and stringent legislative measures.</p> <p>2. All the discriminatory laws against women and religious minorities would be repealed.</p> <p>3. Rampant gender discrimination both in urban and rural areas, the discouragement of female education and their full participation in society as equal citizen would be addressed through persistent teaching, public awareness and appropriate administrative and legislative measures.</p> <p>4. Religion should not obstruct the exercise of the inherent right of a citizen of Pakistan to participate in any matter; socio economic and or political.</p> <p>5. The religious minorities would be treated as equal citizens of Pakistan and be given state protection for their lives, property and freedom to practice their religion freely.</p> <p>6. To provide representation to minorities at least 5 % reserve seats be earmarked for them in Legislative Bodies.</p>	<p>1. –</p> <p>2. –</p> <p>3. Enhancement of the status of women. (pg 28)</p> <p>Gender equality is achieved in both enrolment and completion of primary education. (pg 15)</p> <p>Promoting greater gender equity. (pg 17)</p> <p>4. –</p> <p>5. –</p> <p>6. Ensure their active participation at all levels on the basis of equity with men and to serve as an agent of change in society. (pg 28)</p>	<p>1. <b>Para23</b> Adopt comprehensive approach to address violence against women.</p> <p>2. –</p> <p>3. <b>Para29</b> Awareness raising programmes for better understanding of and support for equality.</p> <p>4. –</p> <p>5. –</p> <p>6. <b>Para33</b> Increased representation in public and political life.</p>	



MQM Eradication of Socio-Cultural, Religious and Economic Injustices	CEDAW	National Policy for Development and Empowerment of Women	National Plan of Action for Women
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Social ailments like gender discrimination, sexual harassment, domestic violence, child abuse, rape in vengeance and forcing the opponent's womenfolk to march on public streets naked, honour killings, child marriage, Karo Kari, Vinee, Marriage to the Holy Quran, Bonded Labour and Child Labour will have to be dealt with by public awareness campaign in collaboration with community participation and stringent legislative measures.</li> <li>2. All the discriminatory laws against women and religious minorities would be repealed.</li> <li>3. Rampant gender discrimination both in urban and rural areas, the discouragement of female education and their full participation in society as equal citizen would be addressed through persistent teaching, public awareness and appropriate administrative and legislative measures.</li> <li>4. Religion should not obstruct the exercise of the inherent right of a citizen of Pakistan to participate in any matter, socio economic and or political.</li> <li>5. The religious minorities would be treated as equal citizens of Pakistan and be given state protection for their lives, property and freedom to practice their religion freely.</li> <li>6. To provide representation to minorities at least 5 % reserve seats be earmarked for them in Legislative Bodies.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Article 2(f)</i> To take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women.</li> <li>2. <i>Article 2(g)</i> To repeal all national penal provisions which constitute discrimination against women.</li> <li>3. <i>Article 5(a)</i> To modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women.</li> <li>4. –</li> <li>5. <i>Article 2(a)</i> To embody the principle of equality of men and women in their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation if not yet incorporated therein and to ensure, through law and other appropriate means, the practical realization of this principle.</li> <li>6. <i>Article 7(b)</i> To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 4.4d – Introducing positive legislation on domestic violence and reform.</li> <li>2. 4.3c – Removing discrimination through legal reforms.</li> <li>3. –</li> <li>4. –</li> <li>5. 2.1 – The Constitutional guarantees and accession to international instruments on human rights, as the reiteration of the Islamic principles of justice and equality.</li> <li>6. 6.1d – Mandating the inclusion of women through merit in all decision-making bodies of the state at the federal, provincial and local levels.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. –</li> <li>2. 1.1/ Action 1 – Review and revise the existing provisions of the 1973 Constitution to identify provisions which are in contradiction with Articles 25 and 27 and the provisions elaborated in the principles of policy, especially in Articles 34 and 35.</li> <li>3. B.1/ Action 10 – Design an awareness campaign on the benefits of educating girls and women.</li> <li>J.3/ Action 1 – Create awareness among media policy makers and staff members about gender issues.</li> <li>4. –</li> <li>5. –</li> <li>6. G.2/ Action 2 – Adopt affirmative action measures to significantly increase women's political representation from the local bodies to the Senate.</li> </ol>

## Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz)

PML-N Chapter 17	Pakistan Plan of Action to implement SAARC Social Charter	CEDAW Committee concluding remarks 2007	Other instruments/commitments
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure respect, dignity, and protection granted by Islam to women.</li> <li>2. Promote participation of women in national development and their social, political and economic empowerment.</li> <li>3. Give preference to women teachers in primary education.</li> <li>4. Promote female education and health care programs to overcome gender gaps.</li> <li>5. Effective representation of women in all key policy/decision making bodies shall be ensured.</li> <li>6. Special legislation on violence against women and child abuse shall be enacted.</li> <li>7. Micro credit for female borrowers will be expanded substantially as a part of the process of their empowerment.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Enhancement of the status of women. (pg 28)</li> <li>2. Ensure their active participation at all levels on the basis of equity with men and to serve as an agent of change in society. (pg 28)</li> <li>3. Gender equality is achieved in both enrolment and completion of primary education. (pg 15)</li> <li>4. Promoting greater gender equity. (pg 17)</li> <li>5. Legal and social action to encourage female participation in all areas increasing the platforms for women's rights. (pg 29)</li> <li>6. –</li> <li>7. A stress on savings and credit and rural development rather than only agriculture, will be the policy goal for meeting the heterogeneous demand for rural finance services. (pg 12)</li> </ol> <p>The business judgment of CBs on their portfolio exposure will be respected. (pg 13)</p> <p>SBP will phase out the mandatory credit quotas on agriculture credit for CBs. (pg 13)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. –</li> <li>2. <b>Para29</b> Awareness raising programmes for better understanding of and support for equality.</li> <li>3. –</li> <li>4. <b>Para29</b> Awareness raising programmes for better understanding of and support for equality.</li> <li>5. <b>Para33</b> Increased representation in public and political life.</li> <li>6. <b>Para23</b> Adopt comprehensive approach to address violence against women.</li> <li>7. –</li> </ol>	<p><b>MDG 3</b> Women's empowerment <b>Target 1:</b> increase enrolment.</p>

PML-N Chapter 17	CEDAW	National Policy for Development and Empowerment of Women	National Plan of Action for Women
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure respect, dignity, and protection granted by Islam to women.</li> <li>2. Promote participation of women in national development and their social, political and economic empowerment.</li> <li>3. Give preference to women teachers in primary education.</li> <li>4. Promote female education and health care programs to overcome gender gaps.</li> <li>5. Effective representation of women in all key policy/decision making bodies shall be ensured.</li> <li>6. Special legislation on violence against women and child abuse shall be enacted.</li> <li>7. Micro credit for female borrowers will be expanded substantially as a part of the process of their empowerment.</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>CEDAW</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Article 2(a)</i> To embody the principle of the equality of men and women in their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation if not yet incorporated therein and to ensure, through law and other appropriate means, the practical realization of this principle.</li> <li>2. <i>Article 7</i> To promote participation in elections and public referenda and the formulation of government policy; to hold public office; and, to participate in non-governmental organisations and associations.</li> <li>3. –</li> <li>4. <i>Article 10</i> To ensure equal rights in the field of education.</li> <li>5. <i>Article 7(b)</i> To participate in the formation of government policy and hold public office.</li> <li>6. <i>Article 2(b)</i> To adopt legislation prohibiting all discrimination against women.</li> <li>7. <i>Article 13(b)</i> The right to financial credit. Article 14.2(g) Access to agricultural credit and loans.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 2.1 – The Constitutional guarantees and accession to international instruments on human rights, as the reiteration of the Islamic principles of justice and equality.</li> <li>2. 1.2 – To ensure the participation of women as equal partners in national development and decision-making processes in the community and society.</li> <li>3. 4.1a – Placing emphasis on primary school enrolment.</li> <li>4. –</li> <li>5. 6.1d – Mandating the inclusion of women through merit in all decision-making bodies of the state at the federal, provincial and local levels.</li> <li>6. 4.4d – Introducing positive legislation on domestic violence and reform.</li> <li>7. 5.2a – Providing women easy access to micro-credit.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. –</li> <li>2. A.1/ Action 2 – Mainstream women in the productive sectors and ensure their equitable application.</li> <li>3. –</li> <li>4. C.3/ Action 1 – Improve knowledge on women health issues to strengthen women's participation in decision making regarding their health/reproductive choices.</li> <li>5. G.2/ Action 2 – Adopt affirmative action measures to significantly increase women's political representation from the local bodies to the Senate.</li> <li>6. –</li> <li>7. –</li> </ol>

## Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid-i-Azam)

PML-Q IV-Diversity	Pakistan Plan of Action to implement SAARC Social Charter	CEDAW Committee concluding remarks 2007	Other instruments/commitments
<p>1. Empowerment of women will be pursued with vigour since no country can progress unless and until it gives over 50% of its population equal rights in the country's political, social economic and cultural life.</p> <p>2. The Pakistan movement would not have been a success had there not been contributions by women, especially the sister of the Quaid-i-Azam, Madar-i-Millat Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah. The PML will promote the Madar-i-Millat as a role model for Pakistani women, so that they can be inspired to contribute to society equally with men.</p> <p>3. Women's rights would be protected, restored, strengthened and promoted on every level. The PML strongly believes that no meaningful national development can be achieved without the full participation of women in nation building. Empowerment of women has a multiplier effect on the family and the whole nation.</p> <p>4. Fundamental human rights and dignity of women would be guaranteed and justice provided, including legal prosecution against acts of physical and domestic violence and honour killings.</p> <p>5. The Pakistan Muslim League will also ensure the end of such unjust and unacceptable practices like Wannai, Karokari, honour killings, marriage with Quran, etc. and ensure that women are not deprived of their due property rights by their more powerful male relatives.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To promote Women's rights. (pg 28)</li> <li>2. Enhancement of the status of women. (pg 28)</li> <li>3. Ensure their active participation at all levels on the basis of equity with men and to serve as an agent of change in society. (pg 28)</li> <li>4. Legal and social action to encourage female participation in all areas increasing the platforms for women's rights. (pg 29)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. –</li> <li>2. <b>Para29</b> Awareness raising programmes for better understanding of and support for equality.</li> <li>3. <b>Para18</b> Effective implementation of laws including access to redress mechanisms.</li> <li>4. <b>Para18</b> Effective implementation of laws including access to redress mechanisms.</li> <li>5. <b>Para 23</b> Adopt comprehensive approach to address violence against women.</li> </ol>	

PML-Q IV-Diversity	CEDAW	National Policy for Development and Empowerment of Women	National Plan of Action for Women
<p>1. Empowerment of women will be pursued with vigour since no country can progress unless and until it gives over 50% of its population equal rights in the country's political, social economic and cultural life.</p> <p>2. The Pakistan movement would not have been a success had there not been contributions by women, especially the sister of the Quaid-i-Azam, Madar-i-Millat Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah. The PML will promote the Madar-i-Millat as a role model for Pakistani women, so that they can be inspired to contribute to society equally with men.</p> <p>3. Women's rights would be protected, restored, strengthened and promoted on every level. The PML strongly believes that no meaningful national development can be achieved without the full participation of women in nation building. Empowerment of women has a multiplier effect on the family and the whole nation.</p> <p>4. Fundamental human rights and dignity of women would be guaranteed and justice provided, including legal prosecution against acts of physical and domestic violence and honour killings.</p> <p>5. The Pakistan Muslim League will also ensure the end of such unjust and unacceptable practices like Wann, Karokari, honour killings, marriage with Quran, etc. and ensure that women are not deprived of their due property rights by their more powerful male relatives.</p>	<p>1. <i>Article 2(a)</i> To embody the principle of the equality of men and women in their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation if not yet incorporated therein and to ensure, through law and other appropriate means, the practical realization of this principle.</p> <p>2. –</p> <p>3. <i>Article 2(e)</i> To take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organization or enterprise.</p> <p>4. <i>Article 2(c)</i> To establish legal protection of the rights of women on an equal basis with men and to ensure through competent national tribunals and other public institutions the effective protection of women against any act of discrimination.</p> <p>5. <i>Article 2(f)</i> To take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women.</p>	<p>1. –</p> <p>2. –</p> <p>3. –</p> <p>4. 4.3c – Removing discrimination through legal reforms.</p> <p>5. 4.4d – Introducing positive legislation on domestic violence and reform.</p> <p>4.5c – Upholding and ensuring women's right to inheritance.</p>	<p>1. –</p> <p>2. –</p> <p>3. –</p> <p>4. I.1/Action 2 – Strengthen constitutional guarantees for women's human rights and ensure that all constitutional amendments are carried out.</p> <p>5. –</p>

## Pakistan Peoples Party

PPP Part III-Empowerment of Women	Pakistan Plan of Action to implement SAARC Social Charter	CEDAW Committee concluding remarks 2007	Other instruments/commitments
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Party shall enunciate a national employment policy for Women, facilitating job creation and Women's participation in the economy. The 10% affirmative action job quota for Women in public service initiated by Mourtarma Benazir Bhutto's government will be increased to 20%.</li> <li>2. Effective legislation to enable legal ownership of assets and resources for Women will be enacted to facilitate their financial independence.</li> <li>3. The Party will take institutional initiatives to prevent crimes against Women in the name of tribalism, such as honour-killings and forced marriages.</li> <li>4. Family Courts will be presided by Women Judges to hear Family Law Cases. Right of Maintenance and child custody according to law will be implemented.</li> <li>5. Women will be appointed to the superior judiciary.</li> <li>6. Ministry of Women Development will be part of important policy-making bodies to ensure that gender priorities are reflected in all policy initiatives.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Achieving employment oriented pro-poor economic growth and maintaining high growth rates of the economy. (pg 10)</li> <li>2. Providing access to capital and skills. (pg 10)</li> <li>3. –</li> <li>4. –</li> <li>5. –</li> <li>6. Ensure their active participation at all levels on the basis of equity with men and to serve as an agent of change in society. (pg 28)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Paras 38, 39</b> Higher and equal employment opportunities. <b>Para 21</b> Strengthen national machinery through provision of adequate human and financial resources.</li> <li>2. <b>Para 18</b> Effective implementation of laws including access to redress mechanisms.</li> <li>3. <b>Para 23</b> Adopt comprehensive approach to address violence against women</li> <li>4. –</li> <li>5. –</li> <li>6. <b>Para 33</b> Increased representation in public and political life.</li> </ol>	

PPP Part III-Empowerment of Women	CEDAW	National Policy for Development and Empowerment of Women	National Plan of Action for Women
<p>1. The Party shall enunciate a national employment policy for Women, facilitating job creation and Women's participation in the economy. The 10% affirmative action job quota for Women in public service initiated by Mottarma Benazir Bhutto's government will be increased to 20%.</p> <p>2. Effective legislation to enable legal ownership of assets and resources for Women will be enacted to facilitate their financial independence.</p> <p>3. The Party will take institutional initiatives to prevent crimes against Women in the name of tribalism, such as honour-killings and forced marriages.</p> <p>4. Family Courts will be presided by Women Judges to hear Family Law Cases. Right of Maintenance and child custody according to law will be implemented.</p> <p>5. Women will be appointed to the superior judiciary.</p> <p>6. Ministry of Women Development will be part of important policy-making bodies to ensure that gender priorities are reflected in all policy initiatives.</p>	<p>1. <i>Article 7(b)</i> To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government.</p> <p>2. <i>Article 15.2</i> States Parties shall accord to women, in civil matters, a legal capacity identical to that of men and the same opportunities to exercise that capacity. In particular, they shall give women equal rights to conclude contracts and to administer property and shall treat them equally in all stages of procedure in courts and tribunals.</p> <p>3. <i>Article 2(f)</i> To take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women.</p> <p>4. <i>Article 16(d)</i> The same rights and responsibilities as parents, irrespective of their marital status, in matters relating to their children.</p> <p>5. –</p> <p>6. –</p>	<p>1. 6.1d – Mandating the inclusion of women through merit in all decision-making bodies of the state at the federal, provincial and local levels.</p> <p>4.5a – Enabling women's access to resources.</p> <p>2. –</p> <p>3. 4.4b – Declaring 'honour killings' as murder.</p> <p>4. –</p> <p>5. –</p> <p>6. –</p>	<p>1. G.2/ Action 2 – Adopt affirmative action measures to significantly increase women's political representation from the local bodies to the Senate.</p> <p>A.3/ Action 1 – Adopt participatory approach that involves women for all government development programs and schemes.</p> <p>2. A.4/ Action 2 – Introduce and strengthen legislation for equitable distribution of productive assets.</p> <p>3. –</p> <p>4. –</p> <p>5. –</p> <p>6. –</p>

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**Women Elected on General Seats to the  
13th National Assembly (2008-2013)**

<b>Sr. No</b>	<b>Name and Constituency</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Vote</b>
1	Ms. Rahela Baloch (NA-78 Faisalabad-IV)	PPP	79,127
2	Dr. Firdous Ashiq Awan (NA-111 Sialkot-II)	PPP	78,925
3	Ms. Samina Khalid Ghurki (NA-130 Lahore-XIII)	PPP	44,692
4	Ms. Hina Rabbani Khar (NA-177 Muzaffargarh-II)	PPP	84,914
5	Ms. Faryal Talpur NA-207 Larkana-cum-Shikarpur-cum-Kamber Shahdadt (Old Larkana-IV)	PPP	Uncontested
6	Dr. Azra Fazal Pechuho (NA-213 Nawabshah-I)	PPP	108,404
7	Ms. Shamshad Sattar Bachani (NA-223 Hyderabad-VI)	PPP	84,669
8	Dr. Fehmida Mirza <i>Speaker National Assembly</i> (NA-225 Badin-II)	PPP	88,983
9	Ms. Tehmina Daultana (NA-169 Vehari-III)	PML-N	48,999
10	Ms. Saira Afzal Tarar (NA-102 Hafizabad-I)	PML-N	56,313
11	Ms. Sumaira Yasir Rasheed (NA-115 Narowal-I)	PML-N	59,688
12	Ms. Farkhanda Amjad (NA-92 T.T.Singh-I)	PML	69,827
13	Ms. Ghulam Bibi Bharwana (NA-87 Jhang-II)	PML	63,515
14	Ms. Sumera Malik (NA-69 Khushab-I)	PML	61,076
15	Ms. Khush Bakht Shujaat (NA-250 Karachi-XII)	MQM	52,045
16	Ms. Saima Akhtar Bharwana (NA-90 Jhang-V)	Ind.	64,759

## Members Elected against Seats Reserved for Women to the 13th National Assembly (2008-2013)

Sr. No		Sr. No	
	<b>PPP</b>	33.	Ms. Sabeen Rizvi
1.	Ms. Rukhsana Bangash	34.	Ms. Shireen Arshad Khan
2.	Ms. Shahnaz Wazir Ali	35.	Ms. Surriya Ashgar
3.	Ms. Palwasha Khan	36.	Ms. Tasneem Siddiqui
4.	Ms. Belum Hasnain	37.	Ms. Nisar Tanveer
5.	Ms. Mehreen Anwar Raja	38.	Ms. Shaheen Ashfaq
6.	Ms. Farzana Raja	39.	Ms. Anusha Rahman Khan
7.	Justice (R) Fakhar-un-Nisa Khokhar	40.	Dr. Imtiaz Sultan Bukhari
8.	Ms. Fouzia Habib	41.	Ms. Nosheen Saeed
9.	Ms. Shakeela Khanam Rashid	42.	Ms. Kashmala Tariq
10.	Ms. Yasmeen Rehman	43.	Begum Shahnaz Sheikh
11.	Ms. Samina Mushtaq Pagganwala	44.	Dr. Donya Aziz
12.	Ms. Nasim Akhtar Chaudhry	45.	Dr. Attiya Inayatullah
13.	Ms. Farah Naz Ispahani	46.	Ms. Bushra Rehman
14.	Ms. Sherry Rehman	47.	Ms. Marvi Memon
15.	Dr. Mehreen Razaque Bhutto	48.	Ms. Fiza Junejo
16.	Ms. Fauzia Wahab	49.	Ms. Farzana Mushtaq Ghani
17.	Ms. Rubina Saadat Qaim Khani	50.	Ms. Zubaida Jalal
18.	Ms. Nafisa Shah		<b>MQM</b>
19.	Ms. Shagufta Jumani	51.	Dr. Nahid Shahid Ali
20.	Ms. Asma Arbab Alamgir	52.	Ms. Kishwar Zehra
21.	Ms. Malik Mehrunnisa Afridi	53.	Ms. Fouzia Ejaz Khan
22.	Ms. Farhat Khan	54.	Ms. Imrana Saeed Jamil
23.	Dr. Zil-e-Huma	55.	Ms. Shagufta Sadiq
	<b>PML (N)</b>		<b>ANP</b>
24.	Begum Ishrat Ashraf	56.	Ms. Bushra Gohar
25.	Ms. Maimoona Hashmi	57.	Ms. Jamila Gillani
26.	Ms. Qudsia Arshad	58.	Ms. Khurshid Begum
27.	Ms. Tahira Aurangzeb		<b>PML (F)</b>
28.	Ms. Nuzhat Sadiq	59.	Ms. Reena Kumari
29.	Ms. Nighat Parveen Mir		<b>MMA</b>
30.	Ms. Khalida Mansoor	60.	Ms. Asiya Nasir
31.	Ms. Shahnaz Saleem		
32.	Ms. Parveen Masood Bhatti		

Source: www.na.gov.pk, Election Commission of Pakistan



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**Shirkat Gah**  
WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTRE

**Lahore:** [pubs@sgah.org.pk](mailto:pubs@sgah.org.pk)  
**Karachi:** [shirkat@cyber.net.pk](mailto:shirkat@cyber.net.pk)  
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