



Political and Legislative Participation of Women in Pakistan: Issues and Perspectives

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Contents

Prefacexi
Abbreviationsvii
Forewordix
1. INTRODUCTION	3
2. WOMEN STRIVING TO BE POLITICAL PARTICIPANTS	9
2.1 Women as Voters/Constituents	10
(a) Women’s Share as Registered Voters	10
(b) Women’s Share in the Voting Population	12
(i) Exercise of the Right to Vote	13
(ii) Freedom to Vote by Choice	14
(c) Women as a Constituency	15
(d) Main Findings	15
2.2 Women as Members of Political Parties	16
(a) Share of Women in Membership	17
(b) Composition of Female Members	17
(c) Women’s Wings	18
(i) Structure	18
(ii) Role and Functioning	20
(d) Participation in Decision-Making	24
(e) Main Findings	25
2.3 Women as Election Candidates	26
(a) Women Candidates on General Seats	28
(i) Women Contesting on Party Tickets and as Independents	28
(ii) Main Losers on General Seats Contested by Women	32
(iii) The Independent Women Candidates	33
(b) Women Candidates on Reserved Seats	35
(c) Method of Election on Reserved Seats and Process of Nominations	36
(d) Main Findings	38
3. WOMEN AS PUBLIC REPRESENTATIVES	43
(a) Overall Legislative Representation of Women	43
(b) Women Elected on General Seats	45
(i) Comparison with Previous Elections	45
(c) Women Elected on Reserved Seats	46
(i) Comparison with Previous Elections	47

(d) Women Elected on Seats Reserved for non-Muslims And Technocrats	48
(e) Overall Party Position of Women in All Legislatures	48
(f) Closing Observations	49
4. WOMEN IN POLITICAL AND LEGISLATIVE POSITIONS	53
(a) Share of Women in the Federal Government	53
(b) Share of Women in the Provincial Governments	54
(c) Share of Women in Legislative Positions	55
(d) Main Findings	56
5. WOMEN IN LEGISLATIVE BODIES AND THEIR ACTIVITIES	59
(a) Brief Description of Women Legislators	59
(b) Impact of Women in Legislatures	61
(i) Issues Raised and Legislative Initiatives Undertaken	62
(ii) Impact on Parties	69
(c) Forums, Linkages and Networks	71
(d) Main Findings	76
6. FUTURE DIRECTIONS	81
(a) Constitutional and Legislative	81
(b) Networking and Alliance-Building	83
(c) Learning and Capacity-Building	84
(d) Key Recommendations	84

LIST OF TABLES

Table No.1: Total No. of Voters 18 years and Above. General Elections 2002	10
Table No.2: Voter Turnout in General Elections 2002	13
Table No.3: Number of Seats in National Assembly	27
Table No.4: Number of Seats in Senate	27
Table No.5: Number of Seats in Provincial Assemblies	27
Table No.6: Women Candidates on General Seats. An Election-wise Comparison	28
Table No.7: Women Candidates Contesting General Seats on Party Tickets in 2002	29
Table No.8: Reserved Seats – Party-wise Nominations of Women Candidates	36
Table No.9: Current Legislative Representation of Women 2002-present	43
Table No.10: Women Elected on General Seats. An Election-wise Comparison	46
Table No.11: Women Elected on Reserved Seats in Elections 2002	47
Table No.12: Women Elected on Reserved Seats. An Election-wise Comparison	48
Table No.13: Present Party Position of Women Legislators. Elections 2002-3	48

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AF	Aurat Foundation	NPA	National Platform for Action
ANP	Awami National Party	NP	National Party
ARD	Alliance for Restoration of Democracy	NPPWG	National People's Party Working Group
AQP	Awami Qiadat Party	NWFP	North-West Frontier Province
BNC	Balochistan National Congress	NWP	National Workers Party
BNM	Balochistan National Movement	PAs	Provincial Assembly
BNDP	Balochistan National Democratic Party	PAT	Pakistan Awami Tehreek
BNP	Balochistan National Party	Pattan	Pattan Development Organisation
CRCP	Consumer Rights Commission of Pakistan	PCHR	Parliamentarians Commission for Human Rights
CCHD	Citizens Commission for Human Development	PDP	Pakistan Democratic Party
CBOs	Community Based Organisations	PFA	Beijing Platform for Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discriminations Against Women	PFP	Pakistan Freedom Party
ECP	Election Commission of Pakistan	PILER	Pakistan Institute for Labour Education and Research
FATA	Federal Administered Tribal Area	PML-F	Pakistan Muslim League (Functional)
GDA	Grand Democratic Alliance	PML-J	Pakistan Muslim League (Junejo)
GNA	Grand National Alliance	PML-Jinnah	Pakistan Muslim League (Jinnah)
HRCP	Human Rights Commission of Pakistan	PML-N	Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz)
Ind.	Independent	PML-Q	Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid-e-Azam)
JI	Jamaat-e-Islami	PML-Z	Pakistan Muslim League (Zia-ul-Haq)
JUI-F	Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam (Fazal-ur-Rehman)	PM	Prime Minister
JUI-S	Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam (Sami-ul-Haq)	PPMAP	Pakistan Pakhtoonkhwa Milli Awami Party
JUP-N	Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Pakistan (Noorani)	PPPP	Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians
JWP	Jamhoori Watan Party	PPP-Patriot	Pakistan People's Party (Patriot)
LPP	Labour Party Pakistan	PPP-SB	Pakistan People's Party (Shaheed Bhutto)
MMA	Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal	PPP-Sherpao	Pakistan People's Party (Sherpao)
MNA	Member National Assembly	PTI	Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf
MoWD	Ministry of Women's Development	PWP	Pakistan Wattan Party
MPA	Member Provincial Assembly	QJP	Qaumi Jamhoori Party
MQMP	Mohajir Qaumi Movement Pakistan	SAP-Pk	South-Asia Partnership- Pakistan
MQM	Muttahida Qaumi Movement	SDA	Sindh Democratic Alliance
NA	National Assembly	SDPI	Sustainable Development Policy Institute
NAPP	National Awami Party Pakistan	SURA	Sindh Urban Rural Alliance
NCSW	National Commission on the Status of Women	TI	Tehreek-e-Istaqlal
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation	TPP	Tameer-e-Pakistan Party
NICs	National Identity Cards	UNDP	United Nation Development Programme

FOREWORD

The study on Women's Political and Legislative Participation in Pakistan: Issues and Perspectives is a component of a larger project of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Pakistan, for empowering women in legislatures. It is intended to assess the general current situation of women's political participation of Pakistan, as well as to provide some focused analysis of the real challenges being faced by the fairly large number of women who have today entered the formal political and legislative arena in the country. It is only with this knowledge in hand that one can realistically begin to envision some future directions to support and strengthen the process of women's legislative performance.

The study is dedicated to all the women legislators, who have taken the plunge into what is still largely considered a 'male' domain, and the many women who we hope will be encouraged to enter the political arena in the future. Several people tend to ask "So what have women legislators managed to do now that they are there in such large numbers"? We hope this study will show how, despite the formidable odds and several limitations and barriers that they face, a number of women legislators have raised several crucial issues in their respective Houses, which are both of direct concern to women and society generally; and how some of them have made fledgling attempts to address the constraints that they face. It is also important to ask ourselves why we are never as critical of the many male legislators whose legislative performance remains negligible. It is still early days yet. Only two years have passed since the current legislative structure came into existence, and much of this time has been taken up by other constitutional and political issues. It is also the first time that there have been so many women in legislative bodies, many of them for the first time. There is no doubt that several of them are acutely conscious of the expectations of them. However, if we want them to live up to our expectations, we will have to give them time, as well as the support they need to make them more effective.

We would like to thank all those who gave us the time to be interviewed, many of whom were very open and candid in expressing their views. These include women legislators, several political party leaders, and members of women's wings of political parties.

I would like to acknowledge that the bulk of this study was undertaken by several senior members of Aurat Foundation, who conducted both the documentary research and the interviews at their respective stations. They include: Naeem Mirza, who assisted me in every area of work for this study; Anis Haroon, Nuzhat Shireen (Karachi); Sajid Mansoor Qaisrani, Waseem Wagah, Ghazala Ehsan, Shabir Ahmed (Islamabad); Uzma Saeed, Salman Abid (Lahore), Rukhshanda Naz, Uzma Mehboob (Peshawar); and Younas Khalid, Aamir Ali (Quetta).



Shahla Zia
December 2004
Islamabad

PREFACE


Pakistan has achieved remarkable progress in the situation of women's participation in the formal political arena, particularly with the reservation of almost 33% and 17% seats for women in the all three tiers of local government and legislative bodies, respectively. The beginnings of these changes are already visible with more than 55,000 women contesting elections for local government in 2005. Despite the advances made, women continue to face challenges that hinder the full realization of their potential as active interlocutors of policy-making and implementation processes.

“Political and Legislative Participation of Women in Pakistan- Issues and Perspectives” is a valiant attempt to document and analyze the extent and nature of women's political participation as voters, candidates and elected officials. The research study comes at an opportune time with the induction of 28,550 women in local government as a result of elections held in August 2005. We hope that the comprehensive situation analysis will input in both policy dialogue and advocacy for strengthening capacities of women in political and legislative systems of the country.

UNDP Pakistan is privileged to have supported this study with consolidated data and testimonies regarding women's participation, perceptions and contributions to political and legislative systems in Pakistan. We are indebted to the late Ms. Shahla Zia for her invaluable contributions to this study. An untiring and relentless human rights lawyer and activist who worked for women's rights, Ms. Zia made immense contribution to women's legal, political and development issues. This study has been crucial in the design of UNDP interventions to reinforce women's capacities in legislature in Pakistan. We also acknowledge the support that Aurat Foundation has provided with primary data collection and collation.

We hope that the strategies and actions outlined in the chapters ahead will input in shaping demand-oriented capacity-building interventions and advocacy measures, catering to the whole range of women's citizenship as voters, candidates and legislators.

Sincerely,



Jan J. Vandemoortele
Resident Representative, UNDP

1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to assess the current situation of women's participation in the formal political and legislative structures of Pakistan, both with regard to advances that have taken place over recent years, as well as the gaps that remain or new problems that may have arisen. In doing so, it will also attempt to analyse what the impact, if any, of women's increased presence in legislatures and participation in the legislative processes has been, both in terms of their own role, as well as the effect on political parties and legislatures. It will also attempt to identify the major constraints and barriers that women face at all levels of participation in the arena of formal politics. Only then will it be possible to realistically identify some future strategies and actions for strengthening women within the political and legislative structures of the country and maximising on the impact of their increased representation.

The study will address all key aspects of women's political participation (as voters, members of political parties, election candidates, legislators and cabinet members etc.) Its focus will be on women in the federal and provincial legislatures, since these are the forums where women can begin to play a key role as public representatives. Senior members of Aurat Foundation gathered information for this book from a variety of sources. These include: existing NGO and official reports, data (provincial and federal) from legislative body secretariats, political parties, and the Election Commission; interviews with selected women legislators, office-bearers of women's wings, prominent women politicians, election candidates (on general seats) at the federal and provincial levels; and interviews with selected political party leaders/politicians and relevant NGOs at the federal and provincial levels.

The significance of women's presence and participation in legislative bodies lies in the potential they offer to change the nature of politics in Pakistan. "Equal participation of men and women in decision-making is a prerequisite for effective and genuine democracy," argues the Inquiry Commission Report (1997). The potential of their effective political participation has steadily gained recognition over recent decades at both the international and national levels.

At the international level, this is reflected both in the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), as well as the Beijing Platform For Action (PFA)¹. At the national level, the issue has been addressed in the 1998 National Plan of Action for Women (NPA), as well as the 2002 National Policy for Development & Empowerment of Women². It has also been addressed in the reports of every official commission set up to review women's rights issues, the most recent being

¹ Article 7 of CEDAW on women in political and public life and paragraphs 187 & 189 of the PFA relating to women in power and decision-making.

² Chapter G of the NPA and Section 6 of the National Policy.

the 1997 Report of the Commission of Inquiry for Women, and the 2002 Second Annual Report of the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW)³.

Women's effective political participation is considered critical not only in terms of contributing significantly towards improving their status, but also in ensuring that women's views and concerns are reflected in all public policy. This requires not only the 'formal' right to participate in all political processes and structures, but actual participation in reality. To ensure this, affirmative action measures have to be undertaken at several levels, and with the involvement of all key stakeholders – government, political parties, civil society organisations and women in politics. In Pakistan, where there are significant disparities between the status of women and men at all levels (socio-cultural, economic, legal and political), the development of strategies and measures to ensure the effective participation of women at the political and decision-making levels assumes even more importance.

Some effects of their presence can be immediately felt. In a country where women are largely perceived as belonging to the domestic sphere, their visibility at the highest levels can by itself lead to a greater social acceptance of their role in the public sphere and enhancement of their status. Moreover, as is already becoming apparent, their presence helps to revive and re-energise debates on issues of women's empowerment both within and outside legislature. However, the more important and longer-term significance of their presence lies in the role they can begin to play as members of these forums. That is, as legislators they can play a key role in law-making and approval of budgets. As members of standing committees, they can participate in more intensive discussions on specific issues and interact more closely with the executive/administrative arm of government. As ministers, they can directly influence policies and programmes and, as members of these bodies, they can also be called upon to participate in development planning. All of these processes, apart from creating the space for the reflection of women's views and concerns in public policy, generally, also provide the opportunity for working more specifically on issues of women's rights and empowerment.

In Pakistan, the issue assumes even greater relevance because of some significant advances in recent years in the situation of women's participation in the formal political arena. These include the reservation of almost 33% seats for women at all three tiers of local government (district, tehsil and union) in 2000 and about 17% reservation of seats in the legislative bodies (the Senate, National and Provincial Assemblies) just prior to the general elections of 2002. This has been a substantial enhancement from the previous quota reserved for women at the local government⁴, provincial and national level⁵. In addition, in the 2002 elections, the largest ever number of women also contested and won

³ *Report of the Commission of Inquiry for Women (1997): chapter 2; Section 2.1.3 of the NCSW report*

⁴ *In the 1998-99 urban and district council elections in the Punjab, 12.7% seats were reserved for women; and 25.8% overall in Balochistan. In NWFP and Sindh (where elections were not held), the proportion reserved for women was 2.9% and 23% respectively.*

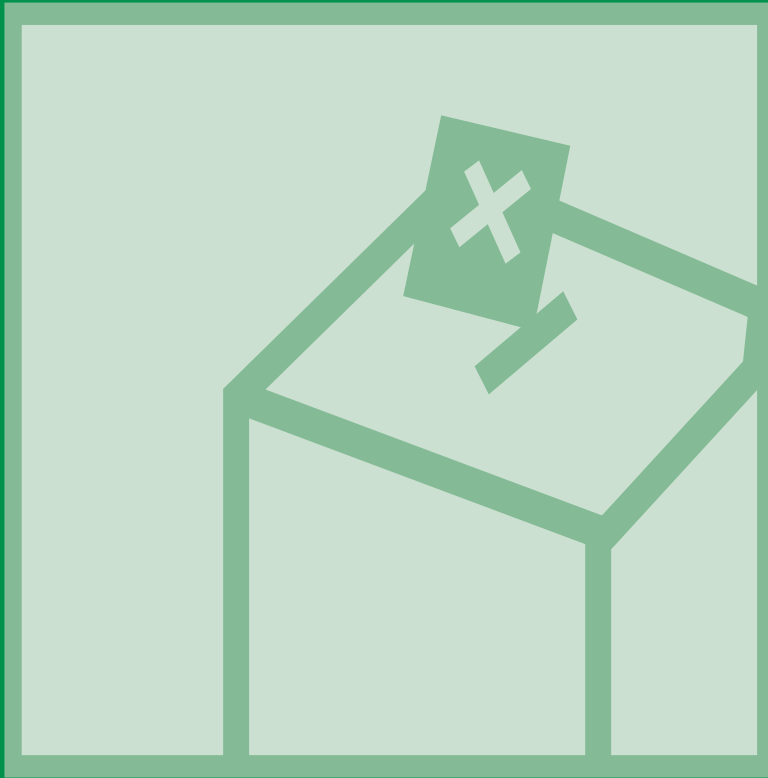
⁵ *The previous Constitutional provision for about 10% reserved seats for women in the National Assembly and 5% in the four Provincial Assemblies (none in the Senate) had expired after the 1988 general elections, thus there were no women on reserved seats in these assemblies till the enhanced reservation provision incorporated in 2002.*

general seats, and political parties also gave more tickets to women to contest general seats than ever before⁶.

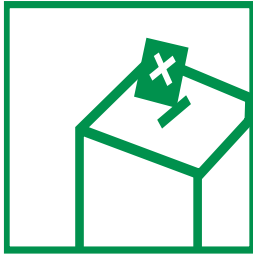
Some of these advances can be directly attributed to affirmative action measures undertaken by the government in terms of reserving a fairly substantial number of seats for women at all tiers of government. But there are also several other reasons for these changes: the continuing advocacy undertaken by civil society organisations, particularly women's rights groups, for the restoration and enhancement of women's seats; the changing climate, once again primarily due to work of civil society organisations over the last two decades, which has encouraged women at all levels to come more actively into formal politics; the increased interaction and advocacy by women's rights organisations with political parties, which have created relatively greater acceptance within their leadership of the role of women in politics; and the enhanced interest and awareness amongst women themselves, which gave them the courage to take advantage of the political opportunities opening up for them.

The increased presence and participation of women in legislative bodies has also led to more debates on women's rights issues in these bodies, as well as the introduction of some bills and resolutions on areas of key concern to women. And after the election of Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz in September 2004, more women have been inducted into ministerial posts at the federal level. However, despite the progress made, several gaps still remain and some new challenges also seem to be emerging. There continue to be significant disparities between women and men in terms of their share as voters, members and office-bearers of political parties, election candidates and public representatives. Moreover, while several of the women legislators are conscious of the expectations and demands on them to perform more effectively on women's rights issues, they appear to be handicapped in their endeavours in several ways. Some possible reasons for this may be: the indirect nomination system of election to reserved seats, which makes them more dependent on political party leadership and prevents them from taking strong independent positions; their own limited knowledge and experience both with regard to legislative processes, as well as issues of concern; the lack of effective forums within their own parties, where they can debate and strategise on these issues; and the extreme polarisation between political parties, which prevents them from being able to come together on issues of common concern. Finally, with the induction of more women in legislative bodies, the role of women's wings in political parties, which was limited in the first place, also appears to be somewhat on the wane. Nor does there seem to be any structured interaction between women legislators and women's wings, which could have been one means of developing a support base. All of these are serious concerns that need to be studied and addressed.

³ *In the 2002 general elections, 188 women contested general seats, 101 of them on tickets given by political parties, and 25 of them won. This is significantly higher than the 1997 elections, during which 56 women contested general seats, 39 on tickets given by political parties, and 7 of them won.*



2. Women Striving to be Political Participants



The general situation of women in Pakistan is one in which they still lag behind men in terms of their ratio in population, literacy rates, school enrolment rates, life expectancy, access to basic health services and labour force participation and their totally unequal legal status. In stark contrast is the one area in which Pakistan has made significant strides in recent years -- that of women's representation in legislative bodies.

Under the Devolution of Power Plan in 2000, and the local government ordinances that followed, the government reserved 33% seats at all tiers of local government, the highest proportion ever reserved for women in any elective body. Equally important was the fact that the reserved seats at the union council level were contested by a joint electorate of men and women through direct elections, though the method for the tehsil and district levels remained indirect. The overwhelming presence of nearly 40,000 women in local councils since 2000 contributed enormously to mainstreaming women into politics. Women's enthusiastic participation in local government elections in 2000-2001, in fact, provided the impetus for women's effective participation in general elections 2002.

The Legal Framework Order (LFO) promulgated before the elections 2002, did carry some positive provisions. These included: revival of the system of joint electorates, reservation of seats for non-Muslims in the National Assembly (NA) and Provincial Assemblies (PAs); lowering the voting age to 18; increase in the size of legislatures; and the reservation of about 17.5% seats for women in the legislative bodies (Senate, National and Provincial Assemblies), the highest proportion of reservation ever made for women in legislative bodies, and for the first time ever in the Senate.

But what was even more significant from the perspective of qualitative political change was the fact that, despite the substantial increase in reserved seats, the highest-ever number of women contested and won elections 2002 on general seats, taking women's overall legislative representation to almost 20%. This aspect of women's political participation has shattered the myth that women are not ready or willing to come into mainstream politics, or are not yet able to engage in electoral politics at the constituency-level. It has also demonstrated the growing acceptance, among both political parties and the public, of women's role in politics.

This has been one of the most positive steps taken towards women's political empowerment, and had some immediate effects. In the discussion that follows in this book we will see that women's rights issues are getting more attention and visibility on the political agenda. Today, political parties are giving more tickets to women and devoting larger sections on women's empowerment in their manifestos. An astonishingly higher number of women are coming up as independent candidates in elections. The media is offering more space to women's issues, with more discussions and reporting,

particularly highlighting the cases of violence against women. The government is regularly initiating projects and schemes on women's empowerment and holding conventions on women's days, and so on.

However, there some serious constraints still remain. The reservation for women was less than the 33% demanded by women's rights groups (and also in governmental reports and plans). Moreover, the system of indirect election of women to reserved seats in the legislative bodies has been unfortunate, preventing their mainstreaming in the political system (since they have no geographical constituencies) and leaving them dependent on the primarily male membership/leadership of political parties (who nominate them to the lists). It has also led to allegations of nepotism in the selection process. Moreover, despite the substantial increase of women legislators, this has not been matched by an increase of women in cabinets, where their representation remains nominal.

Still a fewer number of women occupy positions in the decision-making bodies of political parties; women's wings exist and operate more like appendages to main party structures; political parties continue to view women as passive vote bank and treat them largely as followers to be strategically used for election campaigns and public meetings; and the violations of women's fundamental right to vote and contest election in certain parts of the country are continuously being committed with impunity.

2.1. WOMEN AS VOTERS/CONSTITUENTS

(a) Women's Share as Registered Voters

Though almost half the eligible voters in the country are women, there still continues to be a significant disparity between the number of men and women registered as voters on the electoral rolls. Of the total number of registered voters (71.9 million) in the last general elections of 2002, about 53.9% (38.8 million) were men, while 46.1% (33.2 million) were women. Thus, there were about 5.6 million fewer women than men registered as voters, or a difference of about 7.6%. However, this does indicate some

Table No. 1:		Total No. of Voters 18 Years and Above: General Elections 2002				
S. #	Province/ Area	Male	%age	Female	%age	Total
1.	Islamabad	203900	(53.1%)	180170	(46.9%)	384070
2.	Punjab	21874446	(53.0%)	19379412	(47.0%)	41253858
3.	Sindh	8765729	(54.3%)	7375837	(45.7%)	16141566
4.	NWFP	4971778	(55.7%)	3954030	(44.3%)	8925808
5.	FATA	813863	(63.5%)	467842	(36.5%)	1281705
6.	Balochistan	2124021	(54.1%)	1802822	(45.9%)	3926843
	Total	38753737	(53.9%)	33160113	(46.1%)	71913850
	(total in millions)	(38.8)		(33.2)		(71.9)

Source: General Elections 2002 Report, Election Commission of Pakistan

improvement over the previous elections of 1997, in which 55.4% of the registered voters were men, as compared to 44.6% women, a difference of about 11% (or 6.1 million). The highest proportion of women was registered in the Punjab (47.0%), followed by Islamabad (46.9%), while the lowest proportion was in FATA (36.5%).⁷

There was an overall increase in the number of voters registered for the 2002 elections (71.9 million as compared to 56.6 million in the 1997 elections). While revision and updating of the electoral rolls contributed towards this increase, another reason for the substantial increase was due to the registration of new voters aged 18-20 years (5.2 million), who had become eligible with the lowering of the voting age. Even in the registration of these new voters (18-20 years), there was a significant disparity between the number of males and females i.e. about 2.9 million men (54.8%) as compared to 2.4 million women (45.2%), i.e. a difference of 0.5 million or 9.6% . The highest proportion of new women voters (46.9%) were registered in Islamabad, followed by the Punjab (46.7%), while the lowest proportion (32.5%) were registered in FATA.⁸

Interestingly, FATA and the NWFP have shown the most significant increase in women's registration as voters of age 18 and above. In FATA 36.5% women were registered in 2002 as compared to 25.2% in 1997, an increase of 11.3%, narrowing the 49.6% gap between men and women voters in 1997 to 27% in 2002. In NWFP, 44.3% women were registered in 2002 as compared to 40.3% in 1997, an increase of 4%, narrowing the 19.4% gap between men and women voters in 1997 to 11.4% in 2002). In rest of the provinces and Islamabad, the increase in women's registered votes was slightly higher in 2002 than in 1997 (1.7% increase in Sindh; 1.5% in Islamabad; 0.8% in Punjab; 0.7% in Balochistan).

The reasons for fewer women than men being registered as voters remain largely the same as before. In a culture where politics is generally perceived to be the domain of men, women's registration as voters is often considered neither necessary nor appropriate; and this perception translates into active resistance to or prohibition in areas where patriarchal tribal values and customary practices hold sway, or where religious/spiritual leaders play an active role in discouraging women from getting registered. Women's own lack of knowledge about the electoral system, and its procedures, and lack of literacy in many areas are also factors that contribute to their under-registration. Another reason for the under-registration of women is that the mostly male enumerators usually contact male members of the family to compile the lists. And since males are often reluctant to reveal the names of their female family members in front of strange men, many women do not get registered at all, especially those from the NWFP and Balochistan. It has also been reported that local leaders who provide information to enumerators sometimes leave out the names of women belonging to rival groups.

Several studies conducted recently under a joint Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP)-UNDP project called "Strengthening Democratic Electoral Process in Pakistan" (SDEPP) have assessed the electoral behaviour of citizens, particularly those of women, and identified almost the same reasons for their under-registration. A baseline report on women's participation in electoral process in NWFP, carried out under the SDEPP project, pointed out women's exclusion through male decisions about registration, women's low

⁷ *General Elections 2002 Report Volume-I, Election Commission of Pakistan (converted into %).*

⁸ *ibid*

awareness about electoral process, lack of female enumerators, cultural restrictions on women's mobility, and dispossession of women's identity cards, as the main reasons for their under-registration. A similar report on Punjab held additional factors like illiteracy, male chauvinism and ineffective media campaigns on registration process, as main reasons. The Sindh SDEPP report, focusing on community responses at the grassroots level, described the lack of awareness about the importance of vote, lack of facilities and strong feudal and tribal hold on politics, as reasons for the marginalisation of women in electoral and political processes. The Balochistan report, while listing a number of reasons for low registration of voters, pointed out the complex and lengthy registration process, mobility restrictions and unavailability of female staff at the district ECP offices, and the exclusion of women from the decision-making process in tribal structures as among the main causes.

Therefore, despite some improvements in certain areas, no major change took place in the situation of vote registration of women, at least, not enough to make any significant difference. No concrete measures were undertaken by the ECP to enroll women as voters, except for its occasional media advertisements that were also not women-specific. The ECP nevertheless rendered some support to initiatives by civil society organizations to get women registered in the local government elections 2000-2001, which may have resulted in making some impact in certain areas.

Election Commission authorities in Karachi, when asked by a women's rights organisation why gender-disaggregated data of votes polled was not released in elections 2002, responded by saying that they did not receive any such instruction. The authorities said that though women polling stations were separate, the ballot papers were counted jointly. The bags containing women ballot papers were kept separately and they were still lying with the Election Commission after the counting, they claimed.

(b) Women's Share in the Voting Population

Though women vote separately from men in general elections, the Election Commission has never released gender-disaggregated data on the votes polled. In elections 2002, despite consistent demands by women's rights groups, the authorities did not make any arrangements to compile and release data on the percentage of votes polled by women. This makes it difficult to gauge the level of women's participation as actual constituents and voters which is crucial for any long-term planning to mobilize women voters and transform the women's vote bank into an effective constituency.

The overall voter turnout for the elections 2002 (both for the NA and PAs, as elections were held simultaneously on a single date) released by the Election Commission, was 41.68%. The highest was in Islamabad (51.28%), followed by Punjab (46.03%), and the lowest in FATA (25.48%). The voter turnout in 2002 went up again after a downward trend witnessed in previous elections (35.42% in 1997; 40.28% in 1993; 45.46% in 1990, and 43.07 in 1988).

It is generally believed that women vote less in numbers than men, due to restrictions on their mobility and other socio-political and cultural factors, including security problems and election-related violence. Also, fewer women than men have national identity cards,

which have been made a mandatory requirement for voting, particularly in rural areas where it is generally not considered necessary. Yet other women, due to cultural norms, have no photographs on their identity

Table No. 2: Voter Turnout in General Elections 2002			
Province/ Area	Total No. of Registered Voters	Total Number of Votes Polled	Percentage
Islamabad	384070	196719	51.28
Punjab	41253850	18996880	46.03
Sindh	16141566	6179416	38.17
NWFP	8925808	3107153	35.09
FATA	1281705	327211	25.48
Balochistan	3926843	1164970	29.67
Total (in million)	71913850	29972353	41.68
<i>Source: General Elections 2002 Report, Election Commission of Pakistan</i>			

cards (NICs). There is also often a discrepancy between names, family information and addresses which have been entered on the electoral rolls and those on the identity cards, which fall under the jurisdiction of different departments, either because of change in marital status, or because of the casualness attached to giving names and addresses for official documentation. This becomes even more of a problem when there are no photographs on NICs to confirm identity.

Several votes during elections are discarded because of wrong marking, and several are cast erroneously. It has been estimated that women cast the majority of erroneous votes, by a ratio of two to one. Moreover, the fact that many women do not know voting procedures leads to situations where polling agents get to mark the ballot papers of women who do not know where to stamp them.

Several smaller studies and data-collection exercises conducted in the 1990 and 1993 elections supported the notion that women vote less than men.⁹ However, while these are not conclusive studies, it was suggested in several circles, including among the Election Commission authorities, that the ratio of women's polled votes is growing in each election. The huge mobilization of women's ranks in the local government elections 2000-01, due to 33% reservation of women's seats and election of over 36,000 women councilors, as well as the advocacy interventions made by NGOs in recent years for women's political participation and voter education may also have contributed in bringing more women to the polling stations in certain areas.

i) Exercise of the Right to Vote

While the Constitution provides equal political rights to women and penalties do exist in the law for those who prevent or attempts to stop women from exercising their electoral rights, there have been a few clear instances of violation of these rights in certain parts of the country in 2002, when they were prevented from casting their votes through coercive methods.

⁹ *Baseline Report on Women's Participation in Political and Public Life in Pakistan; Shahla Zia & Fatima Bari, October 1999 (hereafter referred to as 'Baseline Report')*

In the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), active resistance to women's electoral participation has existed since the right of universal franchise was granted in 1997. In the 2002 general elections, a tribal jirga in the Bajur-Mohmand and Khyber Agency decided that women would not be allowed to vote and permitted people to demolish their houses if the edict was disobeyed. A similar decision was taken by the jirga in Dara Adamkhail FR Peshawar, which declared that a penalty of Rs. 500,000 would be imposed on those persuading women to vote, while families of women who voted would be fined Rs. 50,000.

Source: Legislative Watch Newsletter – Aurat Foundation (AF): February 2003

2

WOMEN STRIVING TO BE POLITICAL PARTICIPANTS

However, the ratio of such incidents reduced drastically in 2002, as compared to their occurrence in local government elections 2000-01, when women were forcibly stopped from voting through mutual agreements between candidates, jirga decisions, issuance of fatwas and threatening announcements from mosques, in a number districts in NWFP and Balochistan. The situation in 2002 may have improved due to the protest by women's rights organisations over these violations in local government elections, cautioning the perpetrators of these offences not to commit them so brazenly. The stance taken by a few political parties, on the initiative of their women members, may also have contributed in minimizing the incidents through public agreements and announcements.

However, the passive resistance to women's political participation continues, in several other ways. They are often denied the right to cast their vote by male members of their families, clans, tribes and spiritual leaders especially in Balochistan and NWFP. In areas where purdah is more strictly observed, men do not allow women of their families to go out of their houses, particularly to public places like polling stations. The problem becomes particularly acute in rural and some other areas where there are no separate polling stations for women, or the staff of the polling station is male only.

ii) Freedom to Vote by Choice

There are several broad indicators to confirm the viewpoint that women's interest in exercising their right of franchise, and even sometimes of voting for a candidate of their own choice is increasing by each election held, although no formal research findings subscribe to the notion, except for a few sample surveys of small groups of women voters conducted during the last decade. However, the increase in women's literacy levels, their increased participation in local government elections 2000-01, and their strong showing as candidates in elections 2002, indicates some change in women's voter behavior and preference in accordance to their own choice.

By and large, it is believed and seen that women are constrained by traditions, loyalties and identities of tribe, clan or class. Being economically dependent, socially excluded and politically marginalized, they often vote subject to the consent of male members of their families, and are also told who to vote for. Many of them, in any case, do not have any knowledge about political parties or their agendas, nor the confidence or autonomy to make their own decisions. Several also neither feel voting is important enough, nor do they have any interest in politics. And those who are beginning to become more politically aware face conflicting pressures.

(c) Women as a Constituency

There are several indicators that a women's constituency is gradually emerging in the country, and there have been several breaks in the pattern mostly over recent years, which may begin to herald change e.g. more women are being registered as voters than before; the increased participation of women in electoral and political processes; more women coming forward as candidates and securing votes in local government as well as general elections; and increased mobilization of women voters by political parties. However, women's own limited autonomy, lack of knowledge of political or gender issues, and isolation from active women's groups, have so far prevented them from becoming a strong enough constituency. While political parties have started making efforts to woo women voters through their election manifestos, this is still largely directed towards a select few, since they are aware that the vast majority still votes according to the dictates of their male family members.

Women Candidates Secured 1,782,076 votes

All 202 women candidates, including winners and losers, who contested elections 2002 on 163 general seats, secured 1,782,076 votes. These are almost half the number of votes secured by the MMA (3,181,483) and the PML-N (3,292,659) and more than the overall vote secured by MQM (920,381) and the NA (126,268). Though this huge number of votes does not specifically signify that the constituents have essentially voted for women's issues because bulk of this includes the votes secured by different parties (except the MMA), primarily cast on party lines, this at least indicates one thing -- that 1,782,076 voters in the country (6.8% of the total cast vote) had no reservations in voting for women and male-preference in their voting behavior was not a key factor. This also indicates that a substantial number of these voters, even while voting for their parties, must have borrowed the idea that women can also be accepted in leadership roles, particularly in situations where, as experiences have also shown, male opponents of women candidates do not hesitate to target and malign women on the basis of gender.

Source: General Elections 2002 Report Vol. II, ECP (figures calculated and interpreted by AF Islamabad research team)

(d) Main Findings

- No major change took place in the pattern of voter registration of women. The disparity between the number of male and female voters continued to exist with only a slight improvement, not enough to make any significant difference. No concrete measures were undertaken by the ECP to enroll women as voters, except for occasional media advertisements, which were also not women-specific, neither any institutional mechanisms were provided to improve the situation.
- The unavailability of gender-disaggregated data of votes polled, despite persistent demands by women's rights groups, remains a crucial problem. This makes it difficult to ascertain the voter turnout of women in elections, and gauge the actual level of their participation in the electoral process, as voters, as well to assess their voting behavior and political choices.
- As suggested by several circles, including the Election Commission authorities, the ratio of women's polled votes is growing in each election held. Huge mobilization of women's ranks in local government elections 2000-01, due to 33% reservation of women's seats and election of over 36,000 women councilors, as well as advocacy interventions made by NGOs in recent years for women's political participation and voter education may have contributed in bringing more

- women to the polling stations in certain areas.
- The resistance to women's right to vote remains a problem in certain areas of the NWFP and Balochistan. There were some reported instances where women were barred from exercising their right to vote. However, general awareness among mainstream political parties, government, ECP, civil society and media, about the disenfranchisement of women is increasing, and there is growing realization that measures are needed to address the issue.
- A women's constituency is developing in the country as their participation in the political process has shown significant improvements with more women coming forward as voters, candidates and public representatives. However, women's constituencies are fragile and less tangible as their capacity to influence the electorate and political parties is still constrained by several factors.

2.2. WOMEN AS MEMBERS OF POLITICAL PARTIES

There are altogether 94 political parties, including a few alliances, registered with the Election Commission. Of these, around 30 are mass-based parties active in mainstream or regional politics; the rest are either religious, class or ethnic-based parties with scattered mass support in different areas of the country, and several are small personality-based groups. Before the general elections 2002, through changes in the Political Parties Act, 1962, party heads earlier sentenced by court of law were barred from participating in general elections, a provision clearly seen as an effort to oust key opposition leaders. Consequently, to evade any attempt to prevent the PPP from contesting, a new party, the Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians (PPPP), headed by Makhdoom Amin Fahim, was created in early August 2002. Similarly, The PML (N) changed its leadership from Nawaz Sharif to Shahbaz Sharif. The major contenders in the elections 2002, were PML-Q, PPPP, MMA ¹⁰, PML-N, MQM, National Alliance ¹¹, PTI, PAT, PPP-Sherpao, ANP, PML-F, PML-Jinnah, PML-Z, BNM, JWP and PPMAP.

Soon after the elections, when defection clauses in the Constitution were being held in abeyance, a group of ten PPPP MNAs formed a forward block with the name of PPPP-Patriots, to facilitate the formation of a PML-Q government in the centre. Several political mergers have also taken place during 2004. These include, the merger of various PML factions and the National Alliance with the PML-Q; the merger between PPP-Sherpao and PPPP-Patriots under the name of PPP; the merger between BNM and BNDP in Balochistan creating the NP; and the merger of the NAPP into ANP.

The political parties, by and large, do not adhere to democratic norms in internal processes. Major policy decisions are taken in a non-transparent manner, mostly on an ad hoc basis. The systems of monitoring and accountability do not exist and institution-building is a lowest priority. This has resulted in centralisation of decision-making processes in parties and has promoted a culture of political expediency, opportunism and lackeyism. The lack of democratisation in political institutions is generally attributed to repeated military interventions in the civilian set-up. However, it can be argued that there

¹⁰ An alliance of six religious parties: JI, JUI-F, JUP-N, JUI-S, Jamiat Ahle Hadith Pakistan, Islami Tehreek Pakistan.

¹¹ An alliance of four parties: Millat Party, SDA, NAPP, BNC.

have also been no sincere efforts to improve the political culture within the parties. Meanwhile within the country existing social, cultural and political divides have further deepened due to an ongoing process of political polarisation.

(a) Share of Women in Membership

The share of women in membership of major political parties could not be obtained as most of the parties, when contacted for this information, responded by saying that the records were being updated. The PML-Q has launched a country-wide membership drive, and according to media reports, it is targeting five million members in the first phase. It is not clear how many of these would be women. The PPPP said it is updating its lists. The JI women's wing, according to the information provided by the wing, has 800,000 women members (general members) and 1,500 Ruqan members (hard-core members). According to a senior official of the MQM, there are 10,000 active women party workers out of a total of 50,000 male party workers in Karachi, excluding the office-bearers, general members and sympathisers. In Balochistan, the regional parties gave some details, according to which the BNP has 4,000 women members out of 50,000, the NP has 4,000 to 5,000 women members, and the JWP about 2,500. The Sindhiani Tehrik holds an all-women membership of 25,000, only in Sindh.

Women's wings of major parties have also not maintained the record of women members, however, some of them have hinted recently that they were going to organize their lists. In the absence of any reliable information, it is difficult to assess the real proportion of women's share as members of political parties. The vote percentage secured by parties in the elections 2002 could only throw broad hints about their strength in the constituencies, without establishing any reliable base for measuring the size of its members, particularly the number of women members. According to a liberal guess, the female share in parties would be around five to seven percent of their total members. Some studies on women's political participation in the recent past have also held that women's membership in parties has increased with the passage of time as more women are showing interest in politics or being mobilized for a role in politics.

(b) Composition of Female Members

There are three broad categories of women's cadres in parties. First, there are ordinary women party workers, who are loyal to parties due to their strong political or ideological bonds with the parties or personal liking for the leadership. This cadre remains with them in all crises and difficult times, and is always taken for granted by party leaders for faithful participation in election campaigns, protest rallies and public meetings. These committed women workers are usually ignored at the time of reward and most of them are bypassed in nominations for party positions and tickets for elections. Some prominent party activists from this category, however, sometime get the opportunity to secure party positions and even party tickets or nominations for reserved seats.

Second, there are those prominent women politicians and leaders, who have inherited political power and constituency from their families and have continued to play their role as key players in politics, both at the party and constituency level. Almost all of them come from upper class and feudal backgrounds. Their main preferences, however, emanate from the priorities of power with political expediency as a major factor behind

their decision-making. They are quite often very dismissive of gender issues while dealing with predominantly male-dominated party structures and governance institutions, which are deeply entrenched in patriarchal standards and values.

Third, there are women members who are relatives of prominent or active male members of parties, mostly with an affluent background. Most of these women are not directly involved in politics, even with the activities of their parties. Ironically, they reap most of the fortunes of party politics and get maximum share in top party positions, and secure tickets as well as high positions in the government, if the party comes to power.

(c) Women's Wings

Almost all the major political parties in Pakistan have had specified women's wings for the last several decades. The two main exceptions to this have been the ANP and the JUI-F (the latter till the recent 2002 general elections had no major electoral strength at the federal level). However, both these parties established their women's wings in 2004.

At the same time, there have been, for various reasons, some significant changes in the situation of women's wings in almost all the main political parties over recent years. The ban on political party activities and action against their leadership during almost the entire period of military rule (except towards the end when elections were imminent) left women's wings almost rudderless with no direction, disillusioned with the political situation and their leadership, and uncertain about the future of their political parties. The official strategy of trying to break up the main parties to diminish their electoral strength and to create new political party alliances as possible support for the government, as well as the emergence or re-emergence of a few small parties caused further disarray among several women's wings. And the reservation of the largest ever number of seats for women in the national and provincial legislatures also had its own impact.

On the one hand, this has led to parties like the ANP and JUI-F establishing women's wings, so as to have a cadre ready for the next elections. But within existing wings there have been other repercussions. The nomination of a large number of women to reserved seats often resulted either in many of the newly nominated/elected women, who had previously been active members, losing interest in the women's wings; or caused disillusionment within women's wings (which were not consulted when nominations were made) and among the more active women who were not given seats.

i) Structure

Women's wings have their own hierarchy, with presidents, vice-presidents, general secretaries and other office-bearers in different regions, districts and cities, depending on the outreach and strength of the party.¹² Almost all positions are filled through nomination by party leadership, sometimes in consultation with important women party leaders, who have held top positions in the women's wings of their respective parties for a long time. There has been some change in the pattern of nominations recently, mostly in PML-Q and PPPP, where an active women cadre was involved in the selection or the so-called election process of office-bearers. The structural formation of women's wings of some mainstream

¹² *Baseline Report*

as well as regional parties is discussed below, in the backdrop of the post-election developments and recent changes.

Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid-e-Azam) (PML-Q): The women's wing of the party went through reformation and re-organization during the latter half of 2004, after the merger of different PML factions and a few other alliances into PML-Q. The wing is structured at central, provincial and district level. The central and provincial heads of the wing become ex-officio members of the CEC. Ms. Nilofar Bakhtiar, who is advisor to the Prime Minister on Women's Development, was 'formally' elected president of the women's wing by the women members, though there were no other candidates. She has held the position since the birth of PML-Q, after its split from PML-N. There is no separate allocation of budget for the wing. The wing has also set up several committees in different areas while involving the women legislators.

Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians (PPPP): The party inherited the women's wing of the PPP with the same office-bearers present before the elections. The wing does not have a hierarchy in the centre. The wing has recently been re-organized and re-activated with the involvement of women parliamentarians and party workers across the country, under the supervision of Ms. Naheed Khan, an MNA and political secretary to Ms. Benazir Bhutto. It primarily exists in provinces and a number of districts, even to the ward level. Its provincial heads are: Beelum Husnain (Punjab), Ruqiya Khannum Sommoro (Sindh), Mehrunisa Afridi (NWFP), Samina Razique (Balochistan). The provincial heads are ex-officio members of the CEC of the party. The tenure of the office-bearers is two years. The positions are filled through nominations on the recommendation of party cadre. The wing has no separate budget.

Jamaat-e-Islami (JI): The women's wing of Jamaat-e-Islami is a totally separate entity, since women have no presence or representation in the main body, other than the general secretary of the women's wing, who is ex-officio member of the central consultative committee of the main party. The JI women's wing (Halq-e-Khawateen) has strength of around 1500 Ruqan members (hard-core members). It has central, provincial structures as well as a district outreach. Ms. Kausar Firdous, a Senator, is currently the general secretary of the wing. The office-bearers are chosen through elections for a period of two years, with a two-term bar. The wing has a separate charter on women's rights issues, and gets a small allocation of funds from the main party.

Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam (Fazal-ur-Rehman) (JUI-F): This was established in March 2004; and it is being organized on central, provincial, district, tehsil and union level. It has yet to decide its procedures. Its newly formed central executive mostly consists of women legislators of NWFP, with Ms. Naeema Kishwar as its president.

Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) (PML-N): The women's wing of PML-N, like the main party, is passing through a period of crisis after October 1999, when the party was dislodged from power through a military intervention. Currently, its long-time president remains Ms. Ishrat Ashraf, an MNA. The central, provincial and district bodies of the wing, along with all other bodies in the party, were dissolved in 2004 by the party president. At the time of dissolution of these bodies, the wing was established in all four provinces.

Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM): The wing operates mostly on a regional basis, primarily in Sindh, and is organised in districts up to the unit (zone) level. It has a seven-member committee, which is headed by Ms. Khursheed Afsar, who has been in charge of the wing for several years. The committee has a tenure of one year and members are chosen through elections.

Awami National Party (ANP): The women's wing of the ANP, established in 2004, is the youngest among the women's wings. The first chapter was opened in the NWFP district of Charsadda and then in Peshawar, where it is headed by Ms. S. Naz, Advocate. The tenure of the wing is said to be four years and positions are being filled through nominations for the time being.

Pakistan People's Party (Patriots & Sherpao): The party wing, after the merger of two PPP-Sherpao and PPPP-patriots, is headed by Ms. Nasreen Khattak, an MPA from NWFP.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI): The women's wing has central, provincial and district structures, whose heads become ex-officio members of the party's central executive committee.

Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT): the women's wing is headed by Ms. Farah Naz, who also looks after the affairs of the other provinces. The wing is active mainly in Punjab.

In Balochistan, all regional parties have women's wings, except the Pakistan Paktoonkhwa Milli Awami Party (PPMAP). The women's wing of the National Party (NP), which was formed after the merger between Balochistan National Movement (BNM) and Balochistan National Democratic Party (BNDP), is headed by Ms. Yasmeen Lehri, whereas Ms. Samina Zafar is Secretary women's wing, Balochistan. The women's wing of the Jamhoori Watan Party (JWP) is headed by Ms. Razia Rab, and Ms. Shahida Irshad is its provincial president. The Balochistan National Party (BNP) has an extensive outreach of its women's wing, starting from the centre to the ward level. At the district level, a minimum of 20 women can establish their wing and hold elections annually to elect their office-bearers. They also elect one district councilor from among themselves to vote for the party's main office-bearers in the elections.

In Sindh, the women's wing of Pakistan People's Party- Shaheed Bhutto (PPP-SB) is headed by Ms. Seema Rafiq. The Sindhiani Tehrik, which is primarily a peasant-based women's organisation, is affiliated with Awami Tehrik of Rasool Bakhsh Paleejo. It did not contest elections 2002. Technically, the Sindhiani Tehrik cannot be categorized as a women's wing, since all its members do not hold Awami Tehrik's membership. It is free to make independent decisions, and Ms. Nazeer Qureshi is its central president.

ii) Role and Functioning

By and large, women's wings lack any significant decision-making power, tend to tow the party line with barely any autonomy, and play a minimal role in defining or influencing party agendas. Political parties use them primarily to mobilize women voters during elections and provide polling agents in women's booths, or to demonstrate on behalf of the party when directed by the leadership. The latter usually takes place when the political

party leadership is in crisis, or when support of party demands and positions is required.¹³ On a more routine level, the women party cadre of major political parties is used for ‘show of strength’ in public activities, such as welcoming leaders at the airports and participating in public meetings.

However, after the entry of a substantial number of women into legislatures, the women’s wings of mainstream parties are envisioning a new role and more effective modes within parties to assert themselves and influence party decisions. Several women party leaders and office-bearers of women’s wings of PML-Q and PPP have recently been quite outspoken at public forums, including media, on crucial issues concerning women; and a few of them have also raised these issues within the decision-making circles of their parties and at legislative forums. It was revealed by several women party leaders during informal discussions that party hierarchies are exhibiting some change in their behavior towards women; the leadership of these parties now feel relatively more compelled, if not inclined, to listen to the women cadre, to cater to their needs and to address their concerns, though the change is slow and the responses are mixed. This has happened, in particular, after the emergence of women as a force or a constituency to be reckoned with due to special quotas in legislatures.

The PML-N circles claim that recommendations are always taken from the women’s wing. The women’s wing of the PTI, which emerged a few years back with an urban middle class perspective on future politics, is in disarray, because the party lost the momentum of political resurgence after its electoral debacle in 2002. Other women’s wings of several regional parties in Balochistan (NP, BNP and JWP) are functioning on a limited scale, though their rank and file is continuing to undertake initiatives on women’s empowerment with the same enthusiasm and commitment they have developed over the years.

Women’s wings of some parties, like the JI and MQM, strictly operate within the ideological framework of their parties. In JI, women are confined to their women’s wing only. They have no representation in the main structure or decision-making process of the party. Only the general-secretary of the women’s wing can sit in the central Shura of the main party, as an ex-officio member, sometimes with her female colleagues, with a curtain between male and female members. The women only give suggestions when male members ask for it, and usually behave like passive listeners. They can give written recommendations to the center without any power or authority for implementation. It appears that they have accepted their stereotyped roles within the party set-up and do not intend to change the situation or assert their significance as women members. Primarily, the JI women’s wing is engaged in a number of welfare activities. It organizes religious programs and seminars and holds women’s conventions. JI women also help in arranging marriages of poor girls, providing dowry to them and distributing ration among the needy.

In the MQM, women members have a long history of struggle and sacrifices for the party. They worked as activists when their men were in hiding, and even took the dead bodies of their activists to graveyards during the military operation in 1993-95. But they are not involved in any decision making process. The women’s wing functions under tight control of the ‘coordination committee’. Party directives dictate the norms of functioning and

¹³ *ibid*

prior approvals are required for women party activists as well as women legislators who wish to attend any public event or speak on any important issue. The party organizes ‘political sittings’ for women party cadre on both national and international issues. The women party activists mostly remain busy with social welfare activities, such as cleanliness drives and Sunday bazaars.

In order to have a better understanding of the problems and dilemmas faced by active women cadre within parties about the role and functioning of their wings and related matters, focus group discussions and interviews were held with the leaders and office-bearers of women’s wings of major parties for this study. Some observations made by women political workers during these discussions and interviews are reproduced below:

A Focus Group Discussion in Islamabad

Some Observations made by Central Office-bearers of PML-Q Women’s Wing

- Since the reservation of seats in legislatures, women’s interest in politics is increasing. Previously, we had to visit them and request them to join our party, but now they themselves approach us and ask for membership.
- Information about women party members, data about sub-offices and office bearers is being collected and soon it will be made public, even on our website. For the last one year, we are trying to assert ourselves.
- There is no criteria/rules for the election of office-bearers of women’s wings. Budget constraints are heavy. Currently we are pooling funds from our pockets.
- Women’s representation in the central working committee is not adequate; this should be made on the basis of 50% representation to graduate parliamentarians and 50% to party workers, even if they are not graduates.
- The graduation bar for the general elections has deprived the party of committed workers and hardworking activists in the Assemblies. The B.A. condition should be removed; women should be given positions on the basis of party work and sacrifices for the party;
- Development funds to PML-Q women parliamentarians should be pooled together and spent on big projects of women’s development.

[Participants were: Farukh Khan (senior vice-president), Amna Saleem (central vice-president- federal), Riffat Sarwar (central vice-president-Punjab), Nina Mirza (additional general secretary), Farzana Malik (secretary information)]

“Once they become MNAs and MPAs they are not interested in party politics. They treat us like dirt. They do not find any time for party organisation. Those who have become ministers are busy being chief guests here and there and others are pre-occupied with self-promotion. They (MNAs, MPAs) think too high of themselves.” These are some of the comments made by the party cadre of various political parties in Karachi.

Some Observation made at a Group Discussion in Karachi

Women's wings should be re-organised as 'autonomous' bodies with separate budgets, this will encourage more women to join them. The wings should chalk out their own priorities and strategies while adhering to main policy guidelines of the party. They should maintain membership records and hold elections regularly. Women's wings should continue to work, because women would be excluded from the political arena and only a handful of privileged women would stay back, if they were dissolved. The intense lobbying of civil society groups has resulted in pressure on political parties to address women's issues; women's rights group can play a vital role in organizing, educating and strengthening women in politics. They can provide a neutral platform where political polarisation could decrease or possibly melt down. Aurat Foundation should facilitate a monthly meeting of members of women's wing in Karachi.

[Participants of group discussion held in Karachi were: Shama Mithani, (MPA PPPP), Maryam Paleejo (Sindhiani), Shahida Jatoi (PTI), Seema Rafiq (PPP-SB)]

A Focus Group Discussion in Lahore

Some Observations made by Office-bearers of Women's Wing, Punjab PPPP

- In a male-dominated society, it is more convenient for women to begin their political career in women's wings, this gives them confidence and enhances their ability to dealing with male counterparts in political parties, who can be mostly very discouraging.
- Financial constraints are a major impediment in awarding of tickets to women on general seats. There should be an enabling and conducive environment for women to participate in elections, for instance family support and so on.
- There should be a minimum of five percent mandatory quota of party tickets for women in all parties to contest elections on general seats. It would not have been possible for women to come in mainstream politics without reserved seats.
- Women party cadres have close interaction with women legislators, who attend all party meetings. Men in political parties need to be gender-sensitised.
- NGOs are playing an active role in creating awareness and politically grooming women, although most of the women parliamentarians do not attend their functions, neither do they read their printed material.

[Participants were: Beelum Husnain (president, Punjab), Mrs. Irfan (vice-president, Punjab), Farkhanda Malik (information secretary, Punjab,) Amina Zaidi (additional secretary, Punjab), Sajida Mir (president, Lahore), Bushra Shahbaz (general secretary, Punjab)]

Brief Comments of some Women Leaders of Different Parties

Dr. Hamida Khuhro, senior vice-president of PML-Q and minister for education in Sindh, while talking about the role of women's wings, said: "their weakness lie in the lack of interest by the party leaderships to organise women. She said women's wings were strong at one time because political activists were running them. Women who belonged to women's wing were politically conscious, but, now such women have either joined NGOs or they were more involved with welfare activities. Dr. Hamida Khuhro said: "if women's wings were stronger today, women legislators would have been in touch with them. They would have been able to raise women's issues on assembly floors in an organised and effective manner.

Dr. Saeeda Malik, vice-president of PML-Q women's wing, and minister for women's development in Sindh, said that women's wings were crucial for women's political participation and they should be strengthened. The basic cause of their weakness is disunity among women themselves, she says. "I tried to bring together women MPAs of my party at least once a month to discuss different issues, but it did not happen. The MPAs from other parties also never came on our invitation. Perhaps it is not in the interest of men to let women unite and it is important for us to understand this", she adds.

Kausar Firdous, general secretary of the women's wing of JI, and a senator, said the wing's membership mostly comprises educated women, and its office-bearers remain in close contact with the rank and file through various programmes. She said the wing generates its own financial resources to meet expenses of a large number of activities. Although, the wing pursues policy guidelines of the main party, it can give recommendations on different issues, which are given weightage by the main Shura, she said, adding that the wing also maintains a process of consultation with the 'all-male' party hierarchy, through a specially formed 'women's committee', headed by the JI amir.

Dr. Ruqiya Saeed Hashmi, a PML-Q MPA from Balochistan, said that PML-Q women's wing, especially in Balochistan, was not functioning properly, because it did not have roots in workers with political background, rather its positions were distributed among women, according to their family background. Wrong nominations are the root cause of the failure of women's wing, she said.

Shahida Irshad, president women's wing of JWP in Balochistan, claims that the executive council of the party gives importance to suggestions given by women in the party. She said "when the party chief himself remains in direct contact with the women's wing, no other channel is required". She said party was striving hard to establish women's wing at district and tehsil level to strengthen the party and get ready for local government elections.

(d) Participation in Decision-Making

The proportion of women's representation in decision-making bodies of political parties is dismally low. It has not seen any significant improvement since 1997-1999, even after the substantial increase in the proportion of women's representation in legislatures in 2002 (around 20%). This has led to an obvious imbalance in spaces available to women in two important decision-making forums, with the poor representation in the former having extremely negative repercussions on the performance of the latter. In the absence of a transparent democratic process in parties and lack of pressure from women's wings, nominations or selection of women in decision-making bodies largely depends on the leaders' personal choice or whims. However, some major parties have recently formed different committees, including women's rights committees, which are mostly headed by women legislators. The information about women's share in decision-making bodies, as provided by parties, is given below:

- The PML-Q has not announced its central executive committee, after the merger of PML factions and other parties into it.
- The PPPP has no central executive committee or any other highest decision-making body; its parent body, the PPP has 2 women out of 37 in its central executive committee (5.4%) with 4 women out of 12 special invitees to CEC (33.3%) and 4 women among 12-member finance committee as observers to CEC (28.5%); and 4 women in 56-member federal council (7.1%); In Sindh council, there are 25 women out of a total of 250 members (10%); and only 1 woman in 23-member Sindh executive committee (4.3%).
- The PML-N has 3 women out of total 60 members of its central working committee (5%); according to party sources in Lahore, there are 20 women out of 80 members of Punjab's provincial working committee (25%).
- The MQM has 1 woman out of 12 members in its coordination committee (8.3%).
- The ANP has 2 women out of a total 18 members in its central executive committee (11.1%).
- The PTI has 5 women out of its 40-member central executive committee (12.5%).
- The PAT has 3 women in its 30-member central executive committee (10%).
- The NP has 4 women in its 29-member central working committee (13.7%).
- The JWP has 2 women out of total 32 members of its central committee (6.2%).
- The BNP has 4 women in its 55-member central executive committee (7.2%).
- The PPP-SB has 4 women in its 29-member central executive committee (13.7%).

- The LPP has 2 women in its 7-member central executive committee (28%) and 4 women in its national council of 28 members (14.2%).
- The NWP has 6 women in its 41-member central executive committee (14.6%).
- The QJP has 3 women in its 34-member national working committee (8.8%).

Ms. Benazir Bhutto, who has been PM twice, continues to head the PPP, which could not be registered with the ECP before elections 2002, due to legal restrictions, and it contested elections in the name of PPPP with Makhdoom Amin Fahim as its president. Officially, among the parties registered with the ECP, only one party, the PPP-SB is headed by a woman, Ms. Ghinwa Bhutto with Ms. Seema Rafiq as its vice-president. Among others, Ms. Hamida Khuhro and Ms. Yaqut Jamil-Ur-Rehman are senior vice-president and vice-president of PML-Q, respectively; Ms. Tehmina Daultana is central vice-president of PML-N and Ms. Saba Sadiq is additional information secretary of PML-N Punjab; Ms. Fauzia Habib is information secretary of PPPP; Ms. Anisa Zeb Tahirkheli is finance secretary of PPP (Sherpao & Patriots); Begum Nasim Wali Khan is provincial president NWFP of ANP and Ms. Neelum Shah is its vice president from Punjab; Ms. Naseem Shamim Malik is vice-president of NWP; Ms. Naheed Afandee and Ms. Nazli Javed are vice-chairperson and joint secretary of LLP, respectively; and Ms. Rashida Dohad is joint secretary of QJP.

(e) Main Findings

- There has been no significant improvement in organisational systems of political parties and they are continuing to pay less attention towards institution-building and organisational matters; Most of the parties have not kept or updated proper records of members, including women members, though there has been some recent indications of good intent from a few parties to streamline things;
- A majority of the women's cadre in political parties feel women's wings are essential to mainstream women into politics, particularly due to women's limited access to resources and less space available to them in the male-dominated society;
- Women's wings of major parties are showing interest and enthusiasm in organizing them; there is a greater awareness and increased realisation to mainstream women into politics, particularly after the reservation of seats for women in local government and legislatures; the establishment of women's wings by a few important parties (JUI-F & ANP) shows significance of women's constituency being recognised by the more liberal and the most conservative political parties alike;
- Women's wings lack autonomy in decision-making; they cannot take independent decisions and even their recommendations carry no mandatory weight; they have no rules to govern their functioning; they have no fixed or a separate budget; monetary constraints impede their independent working to organise programmes or undertake independent initiatives; elections are usually not held in women's wings, and are just a formality even if they are held; key positions are filled through nominations by party leaders; there is no criterion of selection of office-bearers of women's wings; the arbitrary and non-transparent process creates resentment among loyal and committed workers; no monitoring or accountability processes exist in women's wings to keep check on their office-

- bearers;
- Women's wings have no capacity of large-scale mobilisation of women's ranks to become real pressure groups, therefore, by and large, they carry no or minimal influence on party leadership as well as on women legislators;
 - There is a lack of communication among party workers, office-bearers of women's wings and women parliamentarians, which creates confusion and chaos; no one exactly knows who is doing what; there is also lack of sustained and structured interaction between women cadre and party leadership within parties;
 - Most of the office-bearers of women's wings of some parties are sitting in Assemblies and show no interest in the functioning of the wings; women cadre in political parties, which could not make it to the Assemblies, have lost interest and their wings are in disarray;
 - There is no space for political training in women's wings; the office-bearers or active party workers generally lack knowledge or understanding of political systems and governance issues;
 - The method of indirect elections on reserved seats has created more divisions in women's wings; since women of upper class and the favourite ones were nominated on these seats, the committed party cadre from middle class feels neglected and left-out, and thus, shows less interest in party activities;
 - Women's representation in decision-making bodies of the parties is still very low, however, there has been slight improvement in the situation since 1997-1999; women are continuing to be ignored and kept excluded from major policy and decision-making processes; more women than previously, however, are occupying leadership positions than before in most of the parties;
 - Gender biases and the existing patterns of gender inequality exclude women from the decision-making process; the absence of institutional mechanisms within parties continue to hinder increased and effective participation of women in political parties;
 - Women's rights organisations can play an important role in enhancing capacities of women in politics through training or political education programmes as well as by providing platforms to women across parties for consensus-building and minimizing tensions, at least on crucial women's rights issues.

2.3 WOMEN AS ELECTION CANDIDATES

The elections 2002 saw the highest number of women participating in the electoral process than ever before, both as candidates on general seats as well as on seats reserved for women. The constituencies for the general seats were single member territorial constituencies. The elections on general seats were held on the basis of adult franchise and the system of joint electorate. The distribution of seats in different categories, including reserved seats for women, in the NA, the Senate and the Provincial Assemblies is as under:

Table No. 3: Number of Seats in National Assembly				
Province/ Area	General Seats	Seats Reserved for Women	Seats Reserved for Non-Muslims	General Seats
Punjab	148	35		183
Sindh	61	14		75
NWFP	35	8		43
Balochistan	14	3		17
FATA	12	-		12
Federal Capital	02	-		02
Total	272	60	10	342

Table No. 4: Number of Seats in Senate				
Province/ Area	General Seats	Seats Reserved for Women	Seats Reserved for Non-Muslims	General Seats
Punjab	14	4	4	22
Sindh	14	4	4	22
NWFP	14	4	4	22
Balochistan	14	4	4	22
FATA	8	-	-	8
Federal Capital	2	1	1	4
Total	66	17	17	100

Table No. 5: Number of Seats in Provincial Assemblies				
Province/ Area	General Seats	Seats Reserved for Women	Seats Reserved for Non-Muslims	General Seats
Punjab	297	66	8	371
Sindh	130	29	9	168
NWFP	99	22	3	124
Balochistan	51	11	3	65
Total	577	128	23	728

Source: General Elections 2002 Report, Election Commission of Pakistan

(a) Women Candidates on General Seats

In elections 2002, altogether 188 women contested 163 seats as compared to 6,824 male candidates on overall 849 general seats. This meant that 57 women contested general seats in the NA and 131 in the PAs. Since 13 women contested 2 seats each and 1 contested 3, there were overall 202 women candidatures (3%). In the 1997 elections, altogether 56 women contested 59 general seats (34 in the NA and 22 in the PAs).

For the National Assembly: A total of 57 women contested 50 seats as compared to 1978 male candidates on 272 general seats in the NA. Since 3 women contested 2 seats each in the NA, there were overall 60 women candidatures (3.0%). Of these, 34 contested 31 seats from Punjab; 21 contested 14 seats from Sindh; 3 contested 3 seats from NWFP and; one contested one seat from Balochistan. No woman contested on general seats from Islamabad and FATA. [In 1997, 34 women contested 37 seats (3 contesting 2 seats each).]

For the Punjab Provincial Assembly: A total of 62 women contested 59 seats as compared to 2293 male candidates on 297 general seats in the PA. Since one woman contested 2 seats in the PA and 8 contested one seat each in the NA and the PA, there were overall 71 women candidatures (3%). [In 1997, 9 women contested 9 seats.]

For the Sindh Provincial Assembly: A total of 60 women contested 46 seats as compared to 1453 male candidates on 130 general seats in the PA. Since 2 women contested 2 seats each in the PA and 1 contested 2 seats in the NA and 1 in the PA, there were overall 63 women candidatures (4.1%). [In 1997, 8 women contested 8 seats.]

For the NWFP Assembly: Only 2 women (0.3%) contested 2 seats as compared to 626 male candidates on 99 general seats in the PA. [In 1997, 4 women contested 4 seats.]

For the Balochistan Provincial Assembly: Only 6 women (1.2%) contested 6 seats as compared to 474 male candidates on 51 general seats in the PA. [In 1997, one woman contested one seat.]

i) Women Contesting on Party Tickets and as Independents

Of the total 202 women candidates, 101 contested election on party tickets, both for the NA and the PAs, and an equal number of 101 were independent candidates. Of all the tickets awarded by political parties for the NA and the PAs, 18 were given by PML-Q and

Table No. 6: Women Candidates on General Seats: An Election-Wise Comparison						
Elections	NA	Punjab PA	Sindh PA	NWFP PA	Balochistan PA	Total
2002	60	71	63	2	6	202
1997	34	9	8	4	1	56
1993	16	8	12	2	3	41
1990	13	11	6	4	1	35
1988	17	13	5	2	1	38
1985*	15	10	13	2	--	40
*All candidates were independents since the elections 1985 were held on non-party basis						
Source: Compiled by AF Islamabad research team from ECP election reports 1985,1988, 1990,1993,1997, 2002 and Baseline Report						

PPPP each; 11 by PML-N; 10 by PTI; 8 by PAT; 6 by MQM; 4 by PML-Z; 3 by PDP; 2 each by National Alliance, MQMP, PML-J, TPP, NPPWG, Sunni Tehrik and SURA; and one each by ANP, PWP, TI, LPP, QJP, PPP-Sherpao, AQP, PFP and BNM. [In 1997, of the 59 seats contested by women, 39 were on tickets given by political parties (24 in the NA and 12 in the PAs). 20 were independents (10 in the NA and PAs each).]

National Assembly: Party tickets were awarded to 38 women and 22 women contested as independent candidates. Among political parties, PPPP gave tickets to 10 women; PML-Q to 8; PML-N to 4; MQM to 4; PAT to 2; PTI to 2; and National Alliance, PML-Z, PML-J, TI, TPP, ANP, NPPWG and PWP to one each.

Punjab PA: Party tickets were awarded to 32 women and 39 stood as independents. PML-Q gave tickets to 8 women; PML-N to 5; PPPP to 4; PTI to 4; PAT to 3 PDP to 2; and PML-Z, TPP, NPPWG, LPP, QJP and AQP to one each.

Party	NA	Punjab PA	Sindh PA	NWFP PA	Balochistan PA	Total
PML-Q	8	8	2	-	-	18
PPPP	10	4	4	-	-	18
PML-N	4	5	2	-	-	11
PTI	2	4	3	1	-	10
PAT	2	3	3	-	-	8
MQM	4	-	2	-	-	6
PML-Z	1	1	2	-	-	4
MQMP	-	-	2	-	-	2
PML-J	1	-	1	-	-	2
TPP	1	1	-	-	-	2
National Alliance	1	-	1	-	-	2
NPPWG	1	1	-	-	-	2
ANP	1	-	-	-	-	1
PWP	1	-	-	-	-	1
Sunni Tehrik	-	-	2	-	-	2
TI	1	-	-	-	-	1
LPP	-	1	-	-	-	1
QJP	-	1	-	-	-	1
PDP	-	2	1	-	-	3
AQP	-	1	-	-	-	1
SURA	-	-	2	-	-	2
PPP-Sherpao	-	-	-	1	-	1
PFP	-	-	1	-	-	1
BNP	-	-	-	-	1	1
TOTAL	38	32	28	2	1	101

Source: Compiled by AF Islamabad research team from General Elections 2002 Report Vol. II, ECP

Sindh PA: Party tickets were given to 28 women and 35 were independents. PPPP gave tickets to 4; PTI and PAT to 3; PML-Q, PML-N, PML-Z, MQM, MQMP, Sunni Tehrik and SURA to 2 each; and PML-J, National Alliance, PDP, PFP to one each.

NWFP Assembly: 2 women contested election, both on party tickets, one each given by PPP-Sherpao and PTI.

Balochistan PA: Only BNM gave ticket to a woman and the rest of the 5 women contested as independents.

Of the 101 women candidates fielded by 24 parties, only 21 won from 7 parties. Of the 18

Some Background and Experiences of Candidates Winning on General Seats

Bilquis Mukhtar, elected for Sindh Assembly from a general seat in Karachi on the MQM ticket, has been associated with the party since her student days. She said in an interview that her entire campaign was run by the party, and she did not spend anything from her own pocket. “I went door-to-door and addressed corner and public meetings, but my only responsibility was to meet people and make speeches, the rest of the arrangements, including all expenses, were made by the party, and even if we were holding meetings late by night, the party was responsible to arrange transport for us to our homes. I faced all kinds of challenges. Our camps were burnt and there was rowdism by our opponents and so on,” she said.

Samina Khalid Ghurki, elected for the National Assembly from a general seat in Lahore on the PPPP ticket, is daughter-in-law of late Haji Muhammed Asghar Ghurki (elected MNA twice) and wife of Khalid Gurkhi (elected MPA twice). She said she got the opportunity because of the graduation requirement, since she was the only family member that fulfilled it. “This was our family constituency and could not be relinquished,” she said. “The election experience was very good. My opponents argued that being a woman I wouldn’t be able to do anything, but the response of the constituents was supportive because my in-laws had been associated with the PPP for a long time and had done a lot of welfare and political work in the area,” she said.

Hameeda Waheed-ud-Din, elected for the Punjab Assembly from a general seat in Mandi Bahau Din on the PML-Q ticket, was also previously elected as nazim of a local union council in 2001. She also runs an NGO in the area. “My late father had been twice MPA in Punjab and the constituency could not be left empty,” she said. “The election experience was good and we did not encounter any major problem, since it was our family constituency and people knew and trusted us,” she said.

Alhaji Ghazala Habib Tanoli is the only woman elected to the NWFP Assembly from a general seat in Mansehra on the PPP-Sherpao ticket. She is the daughter of Habib-ur-Rehman Tanoli (twice MPA and minister in NWFP). She said she was not interested in politics, but when her father was arrested by the National Accountability Bureau, she had no option except to enter politics - being the eldest child in the family. “We didn’t face many problems, because it was our family constituency,” she said.

Nasreen Rahman Khetran is the first ever and the only woman elected for the Balochistan Assembly from a general seat. She was elected from Loralai as an independent candidate (she later joined PML-Q). She is wife of the chieftain of Khetran tribe, Sardar Abdul Rahman Khetran from Barkhan. She contested election because her husband was not eligible to contest under the new election rules. Her husband has been thrice MPA and previously other elder members of the family held the seat. “I faced no problem during the campaign, rather people welcomed me everywhere I went and gave me the fullest respect,” she said.

PML-Q contestants, 7 won, 5 were runners-up. Of the 18 PPPP contestants, 8 won, 4 were runners-up. Of the 11 PML-N contestants, one won, 2 were runners-up and one was in third position. Of the 4 MQM contestants, 2 won, one was runner-up. One woman contestant each from the National Alliance, PPP-Sherpao and PML-J also won.

The absence of women candidates on party tickets in NWFP and Balochistan, with the exception of only 3 party candidates (2 in NWFP: one each by PTI and PPP-Sherpao; and one by BNM in Balochistan) is striking and indicates the reluctance of mainstream parties in these provinces to undertake initiatives for supporting women. The violation of women's electoral rights i.e., to freely vote and contest elections, also continued in certain areas of NWFP and Balochistan.

Women Candidates Contesting on Party Tickets in 1993, 1997 & 2002 Elections:

- 1993: PPP gave 4 tickets to women out of 166 candidates (2.4%).
PML-N gave 3 out of 173 (1.7%).
MQM gave 2 out of 33 (6.1%), but later boycotted NA elections.
- 1997: PPP gave 9 tickets to women out of 163 (5.5%).
PML-N gave 7 out of 178 (3.9%).
PPP-SB gave 7 out of 67 (10.4%).
PML-J gave 1 out of 17 (5.9%).
PTI gave none (0%) and the Khaksar Tehreek gave one out of 5 (20%).
- 2002: PML-Q gave 18 out of overall 646 candidates (2.7%), 8 out of 197 in NA (4%), 8 out of 278 in Punjab (2.8%), 2 out of 71 in Sindh (2.7%).
PPPP gave 18 out of 710 (2.5%), 10 out of 232 in NA (4.3%), 4 out of 266 in Punjab (1.5%), 4 out of 128 in Sindh (3.1%).

PML-N gave 11 out of 546 (2%), 4 out of 171 in NA (2.3%), 5 out of 235 in Punjab (2.1%), 2 out of 75 in Sindh (2.6%).
PTI gave 10 out of 295 (3.3%), 2 out of 97 in NA (2%), 4 out of 86 in Punjab (4.6%), 3 out of 61 in Sindh (4.9%), one out of 40 in NWFP (2.5%).
PAT gave 8 out of 218 (3.6%), 3 out of 66 in NA (4.5%), 3 out of 108 in Punjab (2.7%), 2 out of 28 in Sindh (7.1%).
MQM gave 6 out of 182 (3.2%), 4 out of 60 in NA (6.6%), 2 out of 109 in Sindh (1.8%).
PML-Z gave 4 out of 57 (7%), 1 out of 16 in NA (6.2%), 1 out of 23 in Punjab (4.3%), 2 out of 15 in Sindh (13.3%).

Source: Compiled and converted into % by AF Islamabad research team from Baseline Report & General Elections 2002 Report Volume II, ECP

ii) Main Losers on General Seats Contested by Women

There were some notable exceptions among the women candidates, those who lost the election as runners-up¹⁴. Some lost with a narrow margin and some were far behind in votes received. They were either contesting on the tickets of mainstream political parties or were supported by main parties, and belonged to traditional political families with strong support in their constituencies. Some of them were experienced politicians with considerable background in electoral politics.

Altogether, 16 women candidates lost election as runners-up (9 for the NA; 6 for the Punjab PA and; 1 for the Sindh PA). These are:

1. Syeda Abida Hussain (PML-Q: 65436 votes) lost to Syed Faisal Saleh Hayat (in PPPP at that time: 7,6201 votes) in NA-88 Jhang-III.
2. Asma Shah Nawaz (PPPP: 64,355 votes) lost to Hamid Nasir Chatta (GDA: 69,171 votes) in NA-101 Gujranwala-VII.
3. Sumaira Yasser Rasheed (Ind: 27,316 votes) lost to Muhammad Nasir Khan (PML-Q: 32,104 votes) in NA-115 Narowal-I.
4. Syeda Nelofar Qasim Mehdi (Ind.: 25,137 votes) lost to Ch. Manzoor Ahmed (PPPP: 28,732 votes) in NA-139 Kasur-II.
5. Begum Shehnaz Javed (in PPPP at that time: 35,496 votes) lost to Sardar Farooq Ahmad Khan Leghari (NA: 39,312 votes) in NA-163 Sahiwal-IV.
6. Shahida Daultana (PPPP: 47,841 votes) and Tehmina Daultana (PML-N: 31,382 votes) both lost to Ishaq Khan Khakwani (PML-Q: 61,849 votes) in NA-168 Vehari-II.
7. Tehmina Daultana (PML-N: 57,613 votes) lost to Khan Aftab Ahmad Khan Khichi (PML-Q: 61,536 votes) in NA-169 Vehari-III.
8. Adeeba Gul Magsi (Ind: 28,610 votes) lost to another female candidate, Shamshad Sattar Bachani (PPPP: 50,624 votes) in NA-223 Hyderabad-VI.
9. Nasreen Jalil (MQM: 19,414 votes) lost to Abdul Sattar Afghani (MMA: 21,462 votes) in NA-250 Karachi-XII.
10. Neelam Chaudhry (PPPP: 18,027 votes) lost to Ashfaq-ur-Rehman (PML-Q: 29,554 votes) in PP-86 T.T.Singh-III.
11. Nazia Raheel (PML-Q: 21,623 votes) lost to another female candidate, Aashifa Riaz Fatiana (Ind: 29,559 votes) in PP-88 T.T.Singh-V.
12. Safia Begum (PML-N: 14,942 votes) lost to another female candidate, Hameeda Waheed-ud-Din (PML-Q: 33,122 votes) in PP-116 Mandi Bahauddin-I.
13. Nafisa Rashid (PML-Q: 29,016 votes) lost to Tahir Iqbal Ch. (PML-N: 37,363 votes) in PP-236 Vehari-V.
14. Sunnya Mansoor (PDP: 26,892 votes) lost to Imtiaz Aleem Qureshi (PML-Q: 29,154 votes) in PP-256 Muzafargarh-VI.
15. Rozia Jamil Akhtar Sidhu (PML-Q: 13,774 votes) lost to Dr. Mohammad Afzal (PPPP: 35,989 votes) in PP-276 Bahawalpur-X.
16. Husna Rahoo (PML-Q: 21,767 votes) lost to Mohammad Nawaz Chandio (PPPP: 23,718 votes) in PS-59 Badin-V.

There were at least three constituencies in which both winners and runners-up were

¹⁴ General Elections 2002 Report Volume II, ECP

women: Shamshad Sattar Bachani (PPPP) and Adeeba Gul Magsi (Ind.) in NA-223 Hyderabad-VI; Aashifa Riaz Fatiana (Ind.) and Nazia Raheel (PML-Q) in PP-88 T.T.Singh-V; and Hameeda Waheed-ud-Din (PML-Q) and Safia Begum (PML-N) in PP-116 Mandi Bahauddin-I.

iii) The Independent Women Candidates

As we know, an unprecedented number of women (101) contested elections 2002, on general seats as independent candidates. Of these, 22 were contesting for the NA (13 from Punjab, 7 from Sindh and one each from NWFP and Balochistan); 39 for the Punjab PA; 35 for the Sindh PA; and 5 for the Balochistan PA. Of these, only 4 won, 3 remained as runners-up, and the rest lost with huge margins. [In 1997, only 22 women stood as independents and none was able to win]

The situation of independent women candidates in NWFP and Balochistan is similar to that of party candidates in these provinces. Only one woman candidate came forward in NWFP for the NA seat and none for the provincial assembly. However, 6 women contested elections in Balochistan (5 for the PA and one for the NA); only two won (both later joined the ruling party, and became ministers; one in the federal cabinet and one in the provincial cabinet).

It was difficult to approach all or most of these independent candidates for this study, however, those who did respond had insightful comments when asked about the motivating factors behind their decision to contest the election as independents; problems faced in the direct contest with men candidates and the management of election campaign in terms of mobility and finances. Some of the observations made by these independent women candidates, who despite losing the election, have not lost hope and still feel upbeat about their future plans, are reproduced below:

Brief Background and Experiences of some Independent Women Candidates

Dr. Syeda Fauzia Raza, a law graduate, homeopathic doctor and tehsil councillor, contested elections from Sukkur for the Sindh Assembly. She made the election decision herself because she wanted to raise the concerns of common citizens and the problems of women in her constituency. She said parties always gave tickets to influential people. Her family, particularly her father, supported her decision. A lot of rumors and wrong information were spread about her, she says, but she didn't bother. She said her experience as a councillor and her practice as a doctor helped her in the campaign. She said she was very disheartened when she lost, and claims she could have won if she had contested on a party ticket. She said she would definitely contest elections in future, maybe for the nazim's post in the next local government elections.

Zahida Parveen Detho, a Masters in Public Administration, contested elections from two constituencies of Mirpurkhas for the Sindh Assembly. She is running her own NGO and has been involved with the citizen's network of Aurat Foundation in the area. She was aware of women's problems and made up her mind to contest elections as soon as the announcement was made. She said she knew she would lose, but she wanted to convey a message that an ordinary woman, too, had the right to contest elections and this was not an all-male domain. She said she faced threats, pressures in the campaign and huge offers were made to her to withdraw. She said she realised when she lost that it was almost possible for an individual to succeed in elections without political parties' support. She said she might form her own group or join a party in future.

Parveen Saeed, a Masters in Mass Communication and an active social worker, contested election from Karachi for the Sindh Assembly. She said her constituency was extremely backward and mostly inhabited by daily wage-earners. She had earned some recognition in the area because of her social work and was fully conscious of women's problems, but she had no financial resources. She wanted to establish that women had equal rights and they must participate in politics. She said she was getting offers from MQM and PPPP and she might join one of them, because she felt that people's problems could not be solved without party support.

Sarkar Abbas, a practicing lawyer and district councillor, contested elections from Rawalpindi for the Punjab Assembly. She said her prime motivation was to work for clean politics and to break the monopoly of a few families in politics. She ran a hectic campaign by going door-to-door and addressing numerous meetings. However, she said shortage of financial resources and workers, both of which political parties had abundantly, were two major constraints. She said people voted for parties and not individuals, therefore, she felt strongly that women should join parties if mainstreaming of women in politics was required. She has joined PPP-Sherpao recently.

Shamoon Meer Badshah Qaisrani contested from D. G. Khan for the Punjab Assembly. Her husband was also contesting from the same constituency of PML-Q ticket. She said, she in fact was a covering candidate to her husband, whose B.A. degree had been challenged by a rival candidate. The Lahore High Court ruled in her husband's favour and he eventually contested and won the election. She said she was the first woman in tehsil Taunsa who came forward to participate in elections. She said women of the area were facing enormous problems and they could not explain them to men. She said she actually ran her husband's campaign and mobilised women's support for him. She said if she had contested the election in her husband's place, she could have secured more votes than him. She is planning to contest next local government elections for the nazim's post.

Fauzia Sultana, a practicing lawyer and a city councillor, contested elections from Lahore for the Punjab Assembly. She said her motivation to contest election came from her experience in the last local government elections, when she received enormous support and encouragement. She said people gave her a lot of support, but the campaigns run by party candidates were more organised, and people mostly voted along party lines. She said she had no intention to join any party or to contest general elections again, however, she said she would contest elections of the Lahore High Court Bar.

Shaista Salman, a B.ED and Masters in Education as well as a councillor, contested election from Lahore for the Punjab Assembly. She said she decided to contest election because of her earlier success in the local government elections. She said she was convinced that since she had won the local election, she would also win the provincial election. She said people in the area also persuaded her to contest because they had already tried all the political parties and they believed that she, being an educated woman, should be given a chance. She said she ran the campaign for some days, but, later abandoned it because the PML-N candidate was a relative and he was pressing her to quit and support him. She said her husband, who was also a councillor, pressed her to withdraw. She was determined to contest elections in future.

Rubina Shaheen, an elected labour councillor, contested election from two Lahore constituencies, for the NA and the Punjab Assembly. She also runs a madrassa in the locality. She said people of the area knew her well because of her social and political work and she thought she would be able to manage huge national and provincial constituencies due to her previous local government elections. She said though people's response was very good, nonetheless competing with party candidates was very difficult. She said she had joined PML-Q after the elections. She is currently vice-president of its women's wing in one of Lahore's towns.

Begum Rukhsana Shakeel Ahmed also contested elections from Lahore for two constituencies, for the NA and the Punjab Assembly. She is the sister of Begum Rehana Jamil, an MPA who won from the same provincial constituency on a PML-N ticket. She said personally she had no motivation to contest the election, but since her brother was an important leader of PML-N in Lahore, he secured party ticket for one sister (Begum Rehana) and submitted her (Begum Rukhsana) nominations as an independent candidate, to retain the constituency within the family. She said she did not run her campaign, instead she was busy with her sister's campaign. Both the sisters have joined PML-Q after elections.

Ambar Baloch contested from Khairpur for the Sindh Assembly. She is BSC, BEd and is running an NGO in the area. She is the first woman in her family, who has joined politics and is involved in social work. She said she was fully aware of women's problems and wanted to alleviate their suffering. She said she decided to contest elections on the persuasion of her NGO friends with the objective of addressing the concerns of common people. She said politics in her area was controlled by waderas and it was a means of money-making. She ran an organised campaign with the support of her friends. She said though she had lost, she was able to make new contacts and she would continue her mission and would not join any party, instead she would make her own group of clean individuals.

(b) Women Candidates on Reserved Seats

In elections 2002, there were 919 women candidates against a total of 205 seats reserved for women in the NA and the four PAs, according to the party lists submitted to the ECP before the elections. Of all the nominations, the PML-Q nominated the highest number (167) followed by the MMA (158) and the PPPP (146). No seats were reserved for women in the National Assembly from Islamabad and the FATA despite the existence of general seats for the National assembly in these areas.¹⁵

National Assembly: There were 279 women candidates against 60 reserved seats. MMA nominated 57(34 from Punjab; 11 from Sindh; 8 from NWFP; 4 from Balochistan). PML-Q nominated 46 (26 from Punjab; 9 from Sindh; 8 from NWFP; 3 from Balochistan). PPPP nominated 40 (22 from Punjab; 9 from Sindh; 6 from NWFP; 3 from Balochistan). NA nominated 21 (14 from Punjab; 3 from Sindh; 1 from NWFP; 3 from Balochistan). PML-N nominated 19 (12 from Punjab; 1 from Sindh; 4 from NWFP; 2 from Balochistan). PTI nominated 18 (12 from Punjab; 3 from Sindh; 4 from NWFP; 1 from Balochistan). MQM nominated 12 (all from Sindh). ANP nominated 5 (all from NWFP). PPP-Sherpao nominated 3 (all from NWFP). Several other parties also nominated women in fewer numbers as candidates on reserved seats.

Punjab Provincial Assembly: There were 250 candidates against 66 seats reserved for women. PML-Q nominated 65; PPPP 49; MMA 44; PML-N 20; National Alliance 19; PTI 16; PAT 11; PML-Z 6; PML-J 3. Some smaller parties also nominated one or two women on these seats.

¹⁵ Party list submitted, ECP

Sindh Provincial Assembly: There were 212 candidates against 29 seats reserved for women. PPPP nominated 33; MQM 32; MMA 28; PML-Q 21; National Alliance 14; PML-N 9; PTI 7; PML-F 6; PAT 3. Some smaller parties also nominated one or two women on these seats.

NWFP Assembly: There were 126 candidates against 22 seats reserved for women. PML-Q nominating 24; MMA 21; PPPP 19; PML-N 13; PPP-Sherpao 12; ANP 9; PTI 8; PAT 3; National Alliance 2; PML-Z 2. Some smaller parties also nominated one or two women on these seats.

Balochistan Provincial Assembly: There were 52 candidates against 11 seats reserved for women. PML-Q nominated 11; MMA 8; PPPP 5; PML-N 2; National Alliance 7; JWP 4; BNDP 3; PPMAP 3; BNP 2; BNM 3; MQM, ANP and BNC one each.

S#	Party	NA	Punjab PA	Sindh PA	NWFP PA	Balochistan PA	Total
1	PML-Q	46	65	21	24	11	167
2	MMA	57	44	28	21	8	158
3	PPPP	40	49	33	19	5	146
4	PML-N	19	20	9	13	2	63
5	National Alliance	21	19	14	2	7	63
6	PTI	18	16	7	8	--	49
7	MQM	12	--	32	--	--	44
8	PAT	8	11	3	3	--	25
9	ANP	5	--	2	9	--	16
10	PPP-Sherpao	3	--	--	12	--	15
Parties with aggregate total of 10 or above listed							
<i>Source: AF Research Teams (Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar, Quetta) quoting from party lists provided by ECP and provincial election authorities</i>							

(c) Method of Election on Reserved Seats and Process of Nominations

The method of filling in women's seats, as well as non-Muslim seats, in the NA and the PAs is through a party list system of proportional representation, whereby the reserved seats allocated to a province are divided between parties in proportion to the total general seats won by them from that province in the concerned election.

Indirect elections to women's reserved seats through a system of proportional representation, which is completely different from the mainstream direct election system, was criticised mainly by activist women and committed party workers, who had roots in the constituencies and the potential to mobilise the electorate. They were also wary of the indirect system, because they knew they would be bypassed in the nominations. They were supported by women's rights groups, who had been fighting for almost a decade to

have these seats restored with a direct mode of election on them. The indirect method of election is being opposed on several grounds. These include:

- The indirect method of election deprives women of the opportunity of dealing directly with the electorate. This lack of electoral experience at the constituency-level may, as in the past, impede their entry into mainstream politics.
- Women on reserved seats, unlike those on general seats, have no geographical constituencies. Without representing a specific section of the electorate, or being able to effectively deliver at a constituency-level, their chances of winning a general seat at a later stage become limited.
- The system does not guarantee geographical coverage of the country. The reserved seats are allocated to each province as a whole; and which areas the women come from depends entirely on the nominations made and seats won by the different parties.
- The nomination system allows complete control over selection to political party leadership, opening the door to nepotism and creating a strong public perception of selections being made on the basis of relationship or influence, rather than merit. It also leads to disillusionment among women workers, who feel they have been ignored despite their background of party work and loyalty.
- The nomination system also means that the women remain dependent on and accountable to their male-dominated parties, rather than the electorate. Without the support of a constituency base, their strength and influence within the party remains limited.
- The current system, whereby reserved seats are proportionately distributed among political parties, denies independent women candidates the opportunity to contest them.

In several discussions with different categories of women in political parties for this study, most of the elite women as well as women presently sitting in the Assemblies were in favour of the indirect mode. They argued that women were more vulnerable to electoral politics of money and muscle and the present environment was not conducive for women to go door-to-door canvassing, especially when the constituencies were too large and women had no resources and a lot of mobility restrictions. They were of the view that unless the electoral system underwent radical changes to enable women to afford constituency-based politics, the direct method of election was not feasible.

On the other hand, the party activists said that women presently sitting in the Assemblies would only support the present system because it offered them better chances of securing nominations. They said that once nominated and elected by male members of the parties, these women with no constituency support felt more dependent on them and remained reluctant to take independent decisions. To the argument that women lack resources, active party workers were of the opinion that political parties must bear the cost of elections for them. They believed that once elected through the present system, the lack of their constituencies and political support at the electorate level did not lend credibility to their representation. Party workers held the general perception that nomination for reserved seats were rarely made on merit and this had weakened women's wings by causing frustration among women workers. They felt that the method of direct elections would remove such grievances and competent women would emerge as genuine representatives.

(d) Main Findings

1. Altogether 1,121 women candidates contested election (202 on general and 919 on reserved seats). This is an unprecedented mobilisation of women's political ranks, in terms of their actual participation in the electoral process on general seats as well as through some kind of active or passive involvement in the process of indirect elections on reserved seats.
2. Financial constraints remain a major impediment for women to come on as candidates on general seats. Despite ceilings on election expenses by the ECP, the higher costs of contesting elections remain a reality in politics. Very few women have the requisite financial resources; and even where some do, they often do not have control over them and cannot make independent decisions about their utilisation. Since political parties do not bear the election costs of their candidates, the financial implications of contesting elections affect women more than men, as they find it more difficult than men to get sufficient financial backing from others. Thus, most women awarded tickets for assembly elections by political parties belong to the feudal or upper-middle classes.
3. The criterion for selection of women candidates in almost all parties, both for general and reserved seats, remained exclusively within the domain of party hierarchy. The gender perspective and track record of nominees were not the determining factors and selection process was marred with irregularities and nepotism.
4. The constraints on mobility and free interaction with male constituents are another major hurdle faced by women candidates.
5. Aggressive electioneering campaigns and related violence, as well as fear of harassment and character assassination, are extremely discouraging factors for women, particularly in the absence of adequate security arrangements.

General Seats:

- More women came forward as election candidates on general seats than ever before in any previous election. The number of women (188) contesting elections in 2002, was nearly four times higher than the number of women (56) contesting in 1997, reflecting an increase in their level of awareness about their political rights and the desire to enter into public sphere;
- The increase in the number of women candidates actually took place in the domain of provincial assemblies, where it rose nearly six times in 2002. There were 131 women candidates for the PAs in 2002 as compared to only 22 in 1997. The increase in number of women candidates in the NA (56) was slightly higher as compared to the number (34) in 1997.
- The number of candidates in NWFP and Balochistan was negligible as compared to Punjab and Sindh. Parties were reluctant to give tickets to women and they themselves were apparently not ready to take risks as independents in the face of unfavourable circumstances. This points towards hazardous situation for women's political participation in these provinces;
- Mainstreaming parties gave more tickets to women than in previous elections. PML-Q and PPPP topped the table by fielding more candidates on general seats followed by PML-N. This reflects a change in the attitude of party hierarchies towards women active in parties – some acceptance of women in leadership roles

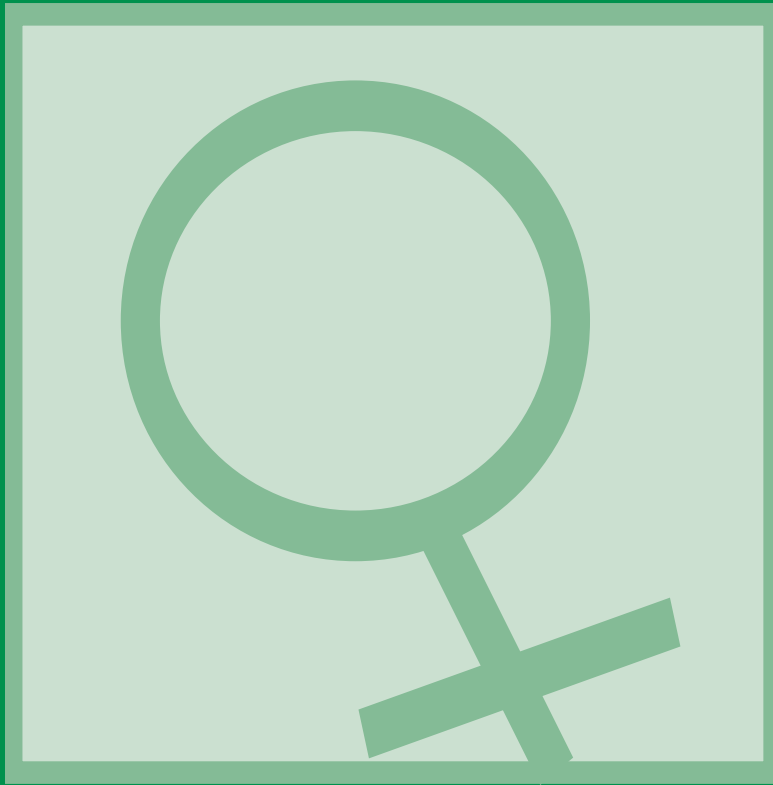
– though reluctantly it might be. However, the factor of increase in the number of seats in the legislatures should also be kept in mind; there were more constituencies in 2002 than in 1997; Smaller parties like PTI, PAT and MQM, who have a relatively more middle class background and outlook, offered more space to women by providing them opportunity to contest elections on their tickets.

- The MMA did not award a single ticket to women on general seats, though it nominated substantially higher number of women on reserved seats, apparently a decision motivated by their gender-segregated mindset.
- Political parties were more inclined to give tickets to women on safe constituencies, rather than to take risks by putting them in weak constituencies. This is evident from the fact that of all the 89 women candidates contesting on party tickets, 25 won the election and 16 lost as runners-up. This means that 41 women do hold a constituency-based influence. Among the rest of the 48 women candidates on party tickets, a majority of them lost because of their parties' overall poor showing in the election, and almost one third of women candidates in mainstream parties were given tickets on losing constituencies, and ironically, only party activists and workers were fielded there.
- Party tickets on general seats by mainstream parties were mostly awarded to women belonging to feudal and upper classes. Activists and long-time loyalists were also given tickets by these parties in fewer constituencies, but, no special effort was undertaken by the parties to ensure their success in the election.
- The number of independent women candidates (101) is amazingly high as compared to only 22 in elections in 1997. While several factors might have contributed towards this, the most crucial one appears to be the inspiration drawn from 33% representation of women in the local government, and later, reservation of women's seats in the legislatures. This must have motivated women to show more interest as well as to take practical measures to participate in political and public life along with the realisation of being equal citizens of the country. The increase in the level of awareness on women's rights issues through continuous efforts of civil society organisations and the media might have also inspired them. Perhaps some disenchantment with bigger political parties is a reason, too, given that securing ticket for ordinary people is almost an impossible task. However a noticeable trend among independents who lost, indicates a growing realisation of the indispensability of political parties.

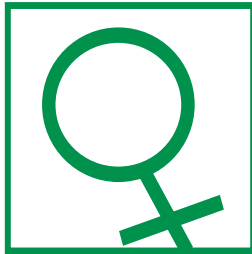
Reserved Seats:

- The reservation, while providing space to a significant number of party activists to enter legislatures as public representatives, proved equally beneficial for a large number of women who were picked on the basis of personal influence or relationship, and who had no record either in the service of the party or to the cause of women.
- The criteria of selection to reserved seats caused major disturbances in the women's cadre in political parties. The process was mostly arbitrary and non-transparent. This was particularly apparent in the case of some of the parties later expected to form the government, where women's wings were not even consulted in the process of list preparation; and barely any of the women workers with a track record were placed high enough on the party list to ensure their chances of

election. Even the party lists were alleged to have been altered, with names added, deleted, or entire lists changed before the selection process.



3. Women as Public Representatives



The general elections 2002 came as a turning point in the political history of Pakistan as far as women’s participation in political and public life is concerned. With a substantial reservation of seats for women in all the legislatures, and a record number of women winning on general seats, these elections resulted in enhancing the overall proportion of women’s representation in the national and provincial legislatures to an impressive 19.9% (233 out of a total of 1170) from a meager 1.4% (11 out of a total of 787) during 1997-99.

Today, Pakistan leads South Asia in the arena of women’s political representation. The current proportion of women’s representation also pushed Pakistan much higher in regional and international ranking of the GEM (gender empowerment measurement). It moved up from 100th on the list of 102 countries in 1999 to 58th position in 2003 in the GEM index.

(a) Overall Legislative Representation of Women

Altogether, there are currently a total of 232 women¹⁶ in the legislative assemblies of Pakistan: 73 in the National Assembly, 18 in the Senate, and 141 in the four Provincial Assemblies. Of the 141 women in the Provincial Assemblies: 73 are in the Punjab Assembly, 33 in the Sindh Assembly, 23 in the NWFP Assembly, and 12 in the Balochistan Assembly.

Table No. 9: Current Legislative Representation of Women 2002-present				
Assemblies	Female members	Male members	Total members	Female Percentage of the Total
Overall	232	938	1170	19.8%
National Assembly	73	269	342	21.3%
Senate	18	82	100	18%
Punjab Assembly	73	298	371	19.7%
Sindh Assembly	33	135	168	19.6%
NWFP Assembly	23	101	124	18.5%
Balochistan Assembly	12	53	65	18.5%

Source: Compiled and converted into % by AF Islamabad research team from General Elections 2002 Report Volume I and II, ECP

¹⁶ Originally the total was 233, but one woman MNA vacated her seat.

Of the 232 women, 205 are on seats reserved for women, 25 won elections on general seats (one later vacated her seat), two came on seats reserved for non-Muslims and one on a seat reserved for technocrats. The overall proportion of women's representation in the national and provincial legislatures (232 out of a total of 1,170) currently is thus 19.8 %. [During 1997-99, their overall representation was 11 out of a total of 787 i.e. 1.4 %].

National Assembly: There are currently 73 women out of a total membership of 342 (21.3%). [During 1997-99, their representation in the National Assembly was 7 out of a total of 217 i.e. 3.2 %]. Of the 73 women, 60 are on seats reserved for women, 12 have come in on general seats and one has come in on a seat for non-Muslims. Of these, 26 belong to PML-Q, 20 to PPPP, 13 to MMA, 4 to National Alliance, 3 to PML-N, 3 to MQM, one each to PML-F, PML-J, PML-Jinnah, and one independent. [During the post-election period, one woman winning as independent joined a political party].

Senate: There are currently 18 women out of a total membership of 100 (18%). [During 1997-99, their representation in the Senate was 2 out of a total of 87 i.e. 2.3 %]. Of the 18 women, 17 have come in on seats reserved for women; one on a seat reserved for technocrats. Of these: 10 belong to PML-Q; 2 to MMA; 2 to MQM; one each to PPPP, National Alliance, PML-N and PPP-S.

Punjab Assembly: There are currently 73 women out of a total membership of 371 (19.7%). [During 1997-99, their representation in the Punjab Assembly was one out of a total of 248 i.e. 0.4 %]. Of the 73 women, 66 are on seats reserved for women, 6 have come in on general seats while one has come on a seat reserved for non-Muslims. Of these, 42 belong to PML-Q, 14 to PPPP, 9 to PML-N, 3 to National Alliance, 2 to MMA, one each to PPPP-Patriots, PML-J and PML-Jinn. [During the post-election period, one woman winning as independent joined a political party and one woman changed party allegiances].

Sindh Assembly: There are currently 33 women out of a total membership of 168 (19.6%). [During 1997-99, their representation in the Sindh Assembly was 0 out of a total of 109 i.e. 0 %]. Of the 33 women, 29 are on seats reserved for women, while 4 have come in on general seats. Of these, 14 belong to PPPP, 9 to MQM, 3 to PML-Q, 3 to National Alliance, 2 to MAP and 2 to PML-F. [During the post-election period, two women changed party allegiances].

NWFP Assembly: There are currently 23 women out of a total membership of 124 (18.5%). [During 1997-99, their representation in the NWFP Assembly was one out of a total of 83 i.e. 1.2 %]. Of the 23 women, 22 are on seats reserved for women, while one has come in on a general seat. Of these, 13 belong to MMA, 3 to PPP-S, 2 to PML-Q, 2 to PPPP, 2 to ANP, and one to PML-N.

Balochistan Assembly: There are currently 12 women out of a total membership of 65 (18.5%). [During 1997-99, their representation in the Balochistan Assembly was 0 out of a total of 43 i.e. 0 %]. Of the 12 women, 11 are on seats reserved for women, while one has come in on a general seat. Of these, 5 belong to PML-Q, 3 to MMA, one each to National Alliance, BNM, JWP and MMA. [During the post-election period, one woman winning as independent joined a political party]

(b) Women Elected on General Seats

In the 2002 elections, altogether 25 women won general seats. 13 in the National Assembly (one later vacated her seat for a bye-election), 6 in the Punjab Assembly, 4 in the Sindh Assembly, and one each in the NWFP and Balochistan Assemblies. [In 1997, only 7 women won general seats; 6 in the National Assembly (one more later won a seat in bye-elections), and one in the NWFP Assembly.]

National Assembly: Originally, 13 women were elected as members of the National Assembly (MNAs) in 2002. Of these, 5 belonged to PPPP, 4 to PML-Q, one each to PML-Jinnah and NA, and 2 independents.

In post-election developments, an independent MNA, Mrs. Zubaida Jalal joined the PML-Q. Ms. Rubina Shaheen Wattoo (PML-Jinnah) and Mrs. Sumera Malik (National Alliance) also came into the PML-Q fold after their parties' merger into the PML-Q. In the meantime, however, Mrs. Eman Wasim (PML-Q) vacated her seat for Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz's bye-election.

At present, 12 women elected on general seats are sitting in the NA. Of these, 6 belong to the PML-Q (Ghulam Bibi Bharwana, Riffat Javed, Hina Rabbani Khar, Zubaida Jalal, Sumera Malik and Rubina Shaheen Wattoo), 5 to PPPP (Samina Khalid Ghurki, Khalida Mohsin Ali Qureshi, Dr. Azra Fazal, Shamshad Sattar Bachani and Dr. Fehmida Mirza), and one remains independent (Saima Akhtar Bharwana).

Provincial Assemblies:

Punjab Assembly: 6 women came in on general seats. Of these, 3 belonged to PML-Q, one to PPPP, one to PML-N, and one was an independent (Aashifa Riaz Fatiana), who later joined PML-Q. Therefore, now 4 women belong to PML-Q (Syeda Sughra Imam, Maria Tariq, Hameeda Waheed-ud-Din and Aashifa Riaz Fatiana); one is with PPPP (Dr. Nadia Aziz); and one is with PML-N (Begum Rehana Jamil).

Sindh Assembly: 4 women came in on general seats. Of these, 2 belonged to PPPP (Marvi Mazhar and Sassui Palijo), and 2 to MQM (Bilquis Mukhtar and Rehana Nasreen).

NWFP Assembly: Only one woman (Alhajia Ghazala Habib) came in on a general seat, and she belonged to PPP-Sherpao.

Balochistan Assembly: Only one woman (Nasreen Rahman) came in on a general seat as independent, but she later joined PML-Q.

i) Comparison with Previous Elections

Women's representation in the legislatures on general seats has seen a sudden increase from elections 2002, as compared to previous elections since 1985. The elections on general seats by women have traditionally been contested by those who held immense political power backed by popular support and a strong electoral constituency. Benazir Bhutto won NA elections four times (in 1988, 1990, 1993 and 1997); Nusrat Bhutto won NA seat thrice (in 1988, 1990 and 1993); Syeda Abida Hussain won NA seat thrice (in

1985, 1988 and 1997); Tehmina Daultana won NA seats twice (in 1993 and 1997). In the provincial elections, Begum Nasim Wali Khan won four times from NWFP (in 1988, 1990, 1993 and 1997); Fouzia Behram won twice from Punjab (in 1988 and 1990). Three women have won NA elections once: Dr. Ashraf Abbasi (in 1988); Shahnaz Javed (in 1993); Fahmida Mirza and Majida Wyne (in 1997). Four women have won provincial elections once: Sajida Nayyar Abidi and Farhat Khawaja Rafiq, both from Punjab (in 1985) and Musarrat Sultana from Punjab and Feroza Begum from Sindh (in 1993). No woman had ever won elections on a general seat from Balochistan until 2002. An election-wise comparison of elected women is made in the following table.

Table No. 10: Women Elected on General Seats. An Election-Wise Comparison						
Election Years	NA	Punjab PA	Sindh PA	NWFP PA	Balochistan PA	Total
2002	13	6	4	1	1	25
1997	*7	--	--	1	--	8
1993	4	1	1	1	--	7
1990	2	1	--	1	--	4
1988	**4	1	--	1	--	6
1985	***2	2	--	--	--	4
*One woman was elected in a bye-election.						
**Benazir Bhutto won from three constituencies; Nusrat Bhutto and Syeda Abida Hussain from two constituencies each, later to give up the additional seats won.						
*** One woman was elected in a bye-election. The elections were held on non-party basis.						
Source: <i>Baseline Report & General Elections 2002 Report Vol. I, ECP</i>						

(c) Women Elected on Reserved Seats

There are currently 205 women in the national and provincial legislatures, who got elected on reserved seats in elections 2002. Of these, 60 are in the NA, 17 in the Senate and 128 in the PAs. Of these, 77 belonged to PML-Q, 43 to PPPP, 34 to MMA, 13 to PML-N, 12 to MQM, 11 to National Alliance, 3 each to PPP-Sherpao and PML-F, 2 each to PML-J and ANP, one each to PML-Jinnah, BNM, PPMAP, JWP and PPPP-Patriot.

National Assembly: 60 women came in on reserved seats. Of these, 22 belonged to PML-Q, 15 to PPPP, 12 to MMA, 3 each to PML-N, MQM and National Alliance, and one each to PML-F and PML-J.

Senate: 17 women came in on reserved seats. Of these, 9 belonged to PML-Q, 2 each to MMA and MQM, and one each to PPPP, PML-N, National Alliance and PPP-Sherpao.

Punjab Assembly: 66 women came in on reserved seats. Of these, 37 belonged to PML-Q, 13 to PPPP, 8 to PML-N, 3 to National Alliance, 2 to MMA, and one each to PML-J, PML-Jinnah and PPPP-Patriot. (The PPPP-Patriot MPA was originally elected on a PPPP ticket, but switched loyalty soon after the elections when PPPP-Patriot was formed).

Sindh Assembly: 29 women came in on reserved seats. Of these, 12 belonged to PPPP (one later changed party allegiance and joined PPPP-Patriot); 7 to MQM, 3 each to PML-Q and National Alliance, 2 to MMA (one later changed party allegiance and joined PML-Q), and 2 to PML-F.

NWFP Assembly: 22 women came in on reserved seats. Of these, 13 belonged to MMA, 2 each to PML-Q, PPPP, PPP-Sherpao and ANP, and one to PML-N.

Balochistan Assembly: 11 women came in on reserved seats. Of these, 4 belonged to PML-Q, 3 to MMA, and one each to National Alliance, BNM, JWP and PPMAP.

Table No. 11: Women Elected on Reserved Seats in Elections 2002							
Parties	NA	Senate	Punjab	Sindh	NWFP	Balochistan	Total
PML-Q	22	9	37	3	2	4	77
PPPP	15	1	13	12	2	--	43
MMA	12	2	2	2	13	3	34
MQM	3	2	--	7	--	--	12
PML-N	3	1	8	--	1	--	13
National Alliance	3	1	3	3	--	1	11
PML-F	1	--	--	2	--	--	3
PML-J	1	--	1	--	--	--	2
PML-Jinnah	--	--	1	--	--	--	1
PPPP-Patriot	--	--	1	--	--	--	1
ANP	--	--	--	--	2	--	2
PPP-Sherpao	--	1	--	--	2	--	3
BNM	--	--	--	--	--	1	1
JWP	--	--	--	--	--	1	1
PPMAP	--	--	--	--	--	1	1
Total	60	17	66	29	22	11	205

Source: General Elections 2002 Report Vol. I, ECP & Legislative Watch Newsletter, Aurat Foundation, February 2003

i) Comparison with Previous Elections

Since no provision for reserved seats for women existed in elections 1990, 1993 and 1997, there was no representation of women in the Assemblies through reserved seats during this period. The last time seats were reserved for women in the Assemblies were 1985 and 1988. The proportion of women's representation in 1985 and 1988 was 8.4% in the NA, 4.6% in Punjab Assembly, 4.4% in Sindh Assembly, 4.6% in NWFP Assembly and 4.4% in Balochistan Assembly. No reservation for women existed in the Senate in 1985 and 1988 Assemblies.

Table No. 12: Women Elected on Reserved Seats. An Election-Wise Comparison.

Elections	NA	Punjab PA	Sindh PA	NWFP PA	Balochistan PA	Total
2002	60	66	29	22	11	205
1988	20	12	5	4	2	43
1985	20	12	5	4	2	43

Source: Baseline Report & General Elections 2002 Report Vol. I, ECP

(d) Women Elected on Seats Reserved for Non-Muslims and Technocrats

There was no provision of women's quota in these categories of reserved seats, despite demands by women's rights groups. Nonetheless, two women came in on seats reserved for non-Muslims, and one came in on seats reserved for technocrats in the Senate. Of the two elected on seats reserved for non-Muslims, one belonged to PML-Q in the Punjab Assembly and one to MMA in the National Assembly. The one who was elected on the technocrat seat in the Senate came from Sindh and belonged to PML-Q.

(e) Overall Party Position of Women in All Legislatures

Currently, there are 232 women in all legislatures. 88 belong to PML-Q, 51 to PPPP, 35 to MMA, 14 to PML-N, 14 to MQM, 12 to National Alliance, 4 to PPP-S, 3 to PML-F, 2

Table No. 13: Present Party Position of Women Legislators. Elections 2002 –2003.

Party	NA	Senate	Punjab PA	Sindh PA	NWFP PA	Balochistan PA	Total
PML-Q	26	10	42	3	2	5	88
PPPP	20	1	14	14	2	-	51
MMA	13	2	2	2	13	3	35
PML-N	3	1	9	-	1	-	14
MQM	3	2	-	9	-	-	14
National Alliance	4	1	3	3	-	1	12
PPP-S	-	1	-	-	3	-	4
PML-F	1	-	-	2	-	-	3
PML-J	1	-	1	-	-	-	2
PML-Jinnah	1	-	1	-	-	-	2
ANP	-	-	-	-	2	-	2
BNM	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
PPMAP	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
JWP	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
PPPP Patriot	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Independent	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Total Seats	73	18	73	33	23	12	232

Source: Legislative Watch Newsletter, Aurat Foundation, February 2003

to PML-J, 2 to PML-Jinnah, 2 to ANP, 1 each to BNM, PPMAP, JWP, PPPP-Patriots and one more independent. [During the post-election period, 3 women winning as independents joined PML-Q, and three women changed party allegiances (2 joined PPPP-Patriot and one PML-Q).

Since no official party position is available after the major political mergers in the recent past, the figures given above reflect the position as of February 2002. This is with the exception of the one deletion of a PML-Q legislator, Eman Waseem, who vacated her seat for Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz to help get him elected in the NA through a bye-election.

Unofficially, the PML-Q, which held the biggest block of women parliamentarians (88) in all the legislatures at the time of elections, has further increased its tally (107) after the merger of several PML factions and other parties with it. The other large groups in the Assemblies, which have substantial number of women legislators, include PPPP (51), MMA (35), PML-N (14) and MQM (14).

(f) Closing Observations

- The overall proportion of women's legislative representation has shot up to around 20% from 1.4% in 1997-1999. It is the highest in South Asia, and 58th on the GEM index, even higher than that of the UK and US. The reservation of seats as well as more women winning on general seats contributed to this improvement.
- The assumption of a new leadership role by a substantial number of women heralded the beginning of a new era of transformed political culture in Pakistan, which promises more space to women in political and public life than ever before, with the expectations that they would undertake initiatives to make their presence sustainable, and its impact felt in society.
- Like several male parliamentarians who are close relatives of former or present politicians and parliamentarians, the majority of women who are elected on general seats belong to traditional political families who have been active in politics for years due to their strong economic or political background. They secured or were given tickets to retain their constituencies within the family, since in most of the cases no suitable male members were available among closest family circles, due to election rules and restrictions, particularly the graduation bar. However, there are a few exceptions, too, and some active and senior party leaders were also able to win on party tickets.
- Unlike women elected on general seats, a significant number of women who came in on reserved seats do not belong to upper class political families. Several among them are party activists who have a middle class background and a strong track record in politics as well as in activism on women's rights. However, a number of women, particularly in the ruling party, are merely close relatives of key party leaders, with no or minimal track record of party work or personal political background.
- The results on reserved seats indicate that there are several large regions in each province from which there are no women representatives. The representation of women from rural areas, which comprise the larger part of Pakistan, is disproportionately low. Instead, many of the women come from the provincial capitals and cities.
- The system of indirect elections on reserved seats created a complication

regarding the allocation of funds to legislators. In the case of women on reserved seats, these funds could end up being used in just the areas they belong to (where the legislator on the general seat already has matching funds), rather than the whole country.

- No seats were reserved for women in the Federal Capital and FATA, despite the existence of general seats there. Women's rights groups had demanded this reservation and a PML-Q woman politician moved the Supreme Court for such reservation, but the petition could not be entertained.



4. Women in Political and Legislative Positions



Women's share in political and legislative positions has always been marginal in Pakistan with the situation further deteriorating after the provision of reserved seats expired in 1990. Most executive political positions (prime minister, chief ministers, ministers, Speakers/deputy speakers of the assemblies, chairmen/deputy chairmen of the Senate, parliamentary secretaries) can only be held by elected members of legislatures. However, any eligible person can be appointed for several political positions, e.g. provincial governors, advisors and special assistants, by the concerned authority. The post of president can also be held by any eligible person through an election procedure laid down in the Constitution.

The pace and progress to induct women into ministerial positions has been very slow, at the federal and provincial level, since the establishment of civilian governments in December 2002. Even when they were appointed, almost a year-and-a-half later, in the federal and provincial cabinets, it was to a negligible number of positions. In the NWFP women have not been given any share in the government so far. The process of appointments of parliamentary secretaries and chairpersons/members of standing committees in the Parliament has also been completed only recently with some women legislators securing certain positions. The appointments in some categories of legislative positions in the provinces either have been made, also recently, or the process is underway.

Currently, there are 6 women ministers in the federal cabinet; 4 in Punjab; 2 in Sindh and 2 in the Balochistan cabinet. There is one advisor to PM with the status of a minister at the federal level, and one as advisor to the Chief Minister in Sindh. Most of the inductions in federal and provincial governments were made by the end of 2003 or during 2004. Except for Sindh, where a woman legislator holds the office of the deputy speaker of the Sindh Assembly, no woman holds similar legislative office in any other legislature, nor does any woman holds any political office above the post of minister in the country.

(a) Share of Women in the Federal Government

Jamali's Tenure (November 2002 – June 2004): There was only one woman minister in the federal cabinet, announced by Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali, after he was sworn in as Prime Minister on 23 November 2002. In his 21-member cabinet, the only woman federal minister was Zubeida Jalal, who was given the portfolio of education, which she also held in General Pervez Musharraf's cabinet during 1999-2002. Jamali also appointed four advisors with the status of ministers which included one woman, Nilofar Bakhtiar, who was made incharge of the Ministry of Women's Development, Social Welfare and Special Education. Jamali, at a later stage, inducted another four ministers into his cabinet, who were all men. Thus, the ratio of women's representation in Jamali's cabinet, which was

4.7% (one out of 21) initially, got further reduced to 4% (one out of 25) towards the end of his tenure.

Shujaat's Tenure (June 2004 – August 2004): Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, the president of PML-Q, retained the previous cabinet with the addition of two federal ministers (both men) when he became the prime minister for an interim period. Thus, the share of women in his cabinet was further reduced to 3.7% (one out of 27). Nilofar Bakhtiar also retained her position as advisor to the PM during this period.

Shaukat's Tenure (August 2004 – present): Shaukat Aziz became prime minister on 27 August 2004, and announced a 59-member federal cabinet, the largest in Pakistan's history, which included six women (one as federal minister and 5 as ministers of state). This increased the share of women in the federal cabinet to 10.1% from the previous 3.7%. However, most of the women were given posts of junior ministers. Zubeida Jalal was made Minister of Social Welfare and Special Education, after splitting it from the Ministry of Women's Development. The present cabinet includes 33 federal ministers (32 men and one woman); and 26 ministers of State (21 men and 5 women). The women ministers are: Zubeida Jalal, Federal Minister of Social Welfare and Special Education; Hina Rabbani Khar, Minister of State for Economic Affairs Division; Ghulam Bibi Bharwana, Minister of State for Education; Shahnaz Shaikh, Minister of State for Health; Anisa Zeb Tahirkheli, Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting; and Sumera Malik, Minister of State for Tourism. Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz also appointed three advisors to the PM, including Nilofar Bakhtiar, who continued to be in-charge of the Ministry of Women's Development.

(b) Share of Women in the Provincial Governments

Punjab: Currently, there are 4 women in the 40-member provincial cabinet (10%). They were been inducted into the cabinet in the second phase of its expansion in November 2003. These are: Aashifa Riaz Fatiana, Minister for Women's Development and Human Rights; Nasim Lodhi, Minister for Population Welfare; Qudsia Lodhi, Minister for Special Education; and Joyce Ruffin Julius, Minister for Minorities Affairs. There is no woman as advisor or special assistant to the CM.

Sindh: Currently, there are two women ministers in the 18-member provincial cabinet (11.1%). Dr. Saeeda Malik, Minister for Women's Development, held this position since the beginning of 2003, and Hamida Khuhro, Minister for Education was given the slot in 2004. Only one woman, Fatima Surriya Bajia, is advisor to the CM on youth and cultural affairs, out of total 20 advisors (5%).

NWFP: Women have not been given any share in the 18-member provincial cabinet (0%) since December 2002, when the MMA government was formed.

Balochistan: Currently, there are two women ministers in the 30-member coalition cabinet (6.6%). These are: Nasreen Rahman Khetran, Minister for Population Welfare, and Shama Parveen Magsi, Minister for Women's Development and Social Welfare. They have been included in the cabinet in 2004, over a year-and-a-half after the formation of government in the province. It is for the first time in Balochistan's history that two women have been inducted into the provincial government. There is no woman as advisor or special assistant to the CM.

Table No. 14: No. of Ministers, Ministers of State and Advisors to Prime Minister by Gender and Year in the Federal Cabinet									
Year	Federal Ministers			Ministers of State			Advisors		
	Women	Men	Both Sexes	Women	Men	Both Sexes	Women	Men	Both Sexes
2003	1	24	25	-	-	-	1	3	4
2004	1	32	33	5	21	26	1	2	3

Source: AF Research teams (Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar, Quetta) quoting authorities at Cabinet Division, Islamabad & provincial Chief Minister secretariats

Table No. 15: No. of Ministers, Advisors and Special Assistants to Chief Ministers by Gender and Year in the Provincial Cabinets									
Year	Federal Ministers			Ministers of State			Advisors		
	Women	Men	Both Sexes	Women	Men	Both Sexes	Women	Men	Both Sexes
Punjab									
2003	5	36	41	-	2	2	-	-	-
2004	4	36	40	-	2	2	-	1	1
Sindh									
2003	1	19	20	1	14	15	1	3	4
2004	2	16	18	1	19	20	-	-	-
NWFP									
2003	-	18	18	-	2	2	-	1	1
Balochistan									
2003	-	14	14	-	-	-	-	-	-
2004	2	28	30	-	-	-	-	1	1

Source: ibid

(c) Share of Women in Legislative Positions

Federal Level: There are currently 6 women parliamentary secretaries out of 33 (18.1%) and 9 women are chairpersons of standing committees out of a total of 37 in the NA (24.3%). In the Senate, only 3 women (13%) out of 23 are chairpersons of standing committees.

Punjab: There are currently 12 women parliamentary secretaries, and only 5 women head different standing committees. In addition to these, a woman was appointed as head of a specially-constituted committee on violence against women, but the committee has not yet started functioning.

Sindh: The office of the deputy speaker has been held by a woman legislator, Raheela Tiwana, since the beginning of tenure of the assembly in 2002. Also, there are two women in the panel of chairpersons of the assembly. There are no women parliamentary

secretaries and neither is any of the 17 standing committees headed by a woman. NWFP: There are no women parliamentary secretaries, and neither have they been made chairperson of any of the 28 standing committees. Nighat Yasmin Orakzai (PML-Q) contested election for the office of the deputy speaker, after the elections 2002, but failed to get enough votes.

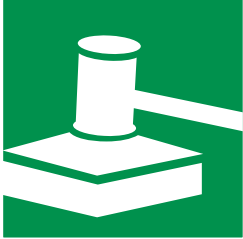
Balochistan: Parliamentary secretaries and chairpersons of standing committees have not yet been appointed; however, some women have been inducted in some standing committees as members.

(d) Main Findings

- The share of women in the governments at the federal and provincial level is still low and disproportionate to the ratio of representation they hold in the legislatures. Six women are ministers (10.1%) in the federal cabinet as compared to their overall strength of 91 in the Parliament (20.5%). Four women are ministers (10%) in Punjab as compared to their strength of 73 in the provincial legislature (19.7%). Two women are ministers (11.1%) in Sindh as compared to their strength of 33 in the provincial legislature (19.6%). Women's share in the NWFP government is nil (0%) as compared to their strength of 23 in the provincial legislature (18.5%). Two women are ministers (6.6%) in Balochistan as compared to their strength of 12 in the provincial legislature (18.5%).
- At the federal level, 5 out of 6 women ministers are junior ministers (ministers of state), a measure that appears to be more an expression of tokenism to appease women legislators of the coalition partners, as well as raise the credentials of the government's pro-women posture.
- More women elected on general seats, who clearly have a feudal background, were accommodated in the federal cabinet than women who came in on reserved seats (4 out of 6 women ministers are those who were elected on general seats), whereas the number of women on reserved seats in the Parliament is much more than women who came in on general seats, even in the ruling party.
- Almost all women ministers in the federal or provincial cabinets were given responsibilities in the social sector. There is only one exception in the federal cabinet where a woman has been given a portfolio of economic affairs, but that too with a junior status.
- The MMA government has given no share to women in the NWFP, despite the presence of 13 MMA women legislators in the provincial assembly and contrary to its claim of protecting women's rights. Both of the women ministers in Balochistan, where the MMA is a partner in the ruling coalition, belong to PML-Q, and have been inducted in the cabinet on the pressure of women legislators.
- The Sindh Provincial Assembly carries a distinction of electing a woman as deputy Speaker of the House since its inception; in none of the other national or provincial legislatures have women been given any such position. [In Pakistan's legislative history, only two women have previously held such high legislative position (Dr. Ashraf Abbasi was twice elected deputy speaker in the National Assembly, in 1977 and 1988. Noorjehan Panzai, a sitting MNA, was elected deputy chairman of the Senate during 1990-1993.)]
- The share of women in the posts of parliamentary secretaries and chairpersons of standing committees in the National Assembly is almost in proportion to their legislative representation, and is an encouraging sign.



5. Women in Legislative Bodies and their Activities



A significant number of women have become members of legislative bodies after the elections 2002. Their presence in the legislatures has impacted in various ways on the political culture of Pakistan as well as the functioning of these legislatures. As compared to the previous tenures of assemblies, when male representatives used to ignore or barely touch upon women's rights issues, the physical presence of women in the present assemblies is resulting in the articulation of their concerns with a clearer perspective and a sincerity of purpose. Since the experience of women in these legislative bodies is still in its nascent stage, they are still trying to learn the complexities of the legislative system as well as the compulsions of power relations within their political parties and governance structures. In the section below, a brief description of women legislators in terms of their educational, parliamentary and socio-political background has been provided, along with an assessment of their interventions in legislatures and its impact on political parties and media. An attempt has also been made to identify existing forums and linkages within parties and outside, where women legislators and women in parties can exert themselves, and which could facilitate their effective participation in political and legislative processes.

(a) **Brief Description of Women Legislators**

Out of a total of 232 women legislators, 216 have entered the assemblies for the first time and have no previous parliamentary or legislative experience. However, almost all women legislators either belong to political families, or have been married into political families. A considerable number of them also have sufficient political experience as party activists, and some have background of activism on women's rights issues. Also, most of the women legislators sitting in national and provincial legislatures are highly qualified and hold post-graduate degrees.¹⁷

National Assembly

Educational Background: Out of current 73 women members of the National Assembly, 48 hold post-graduate degrees (18 M.B.B.S./Ph.d, and 30 MAs); 7 are law graduates and the remaining 18 are simple graduates.

Parliamentary Experience: 63 out of 73 are new entrants into the NA and have been elected for the first time, either on general or reserved seat. Only 10 were elected previously for the national or provincial legislatures (Tehmina Daultana, Fehmida Mirza, Dr. Attiya Inayatullah, Bushra Rehman, Noorjehan Panezai, K. Fiza Junejo, Fauzia Habib, Shahnaz Sheikh, Shagufta Jumani, Begum Rehana Aleem Mashahdi). Only a few of them have some ministerial experience (Dr. Attiya Inayatullah, Zubeida Jalal and Tehmina Daultana).

¹⁷ Compiled by AF research teams (Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar, Quetta) through data collection from legislators

Socio-political and Family Background: With a few exceptions also, almost all of them belong to political families or have been married into families with political backgrounds. 26 have come from rural or urban elite families. 33 have a history of political activism, several of them are office-bearers or active members of women's wings, and also have some background in women's rights activism. Of the 12 women elected on general seats, 11 belong to rural/urban elite families, mostly with feudal backgrounds. It was also revealed during discussions with several women legislators that their qualifications became an imperative for their selection as candidates as no suitable male graduates were available, and the families were reluctant to sacrifice their constituencies.

Senate

Educational Background: Out of current 18 women members of the Senate, over half of them hold post-graduate qualifications (one Ph.D, one M.Phil, 8 MAs); 3 are B.A./B.Ed and one L.L.B.

Parliamentary Experience: All 18 women have been elected as Senators for the first time, however, 2 of them have previous parliamentary experience as members of provincial legislatures (Anisa Zeb Tahirkheli and Agha Pari Gul). A few possess some ministerial experience (Anisa Zeb Tahirkheli and Roshan Khursheed Bharucha).

Socio-political and Family Background: Almost half of them come from a political background; 4 from political families and 3 have been active in the women's wing of political parties. Three of them are educationists; 3 are social welfare activists; and one is an engineer. Most of them have come from urban areas with more professional backgrounds.

Punjab Assembly

Educational Background: Nearly half of the 73 women legislators have post-graduate qualifications (5 M.B.B.S., 34 MAs), and 7 are law graduates.

Parliamentary Experience: Except one (Shaheen Attiq-ur-Rehman), all 73 women are new entrants in the assembly and have been elected for the first time. Only one, Shaheen Attiq-ur-Rehman, has also ministerial experience.

Socio-political and Family Background: Almost all belong to political families with their close male relatives in active politics. Over half of them have come from rural or urban elite families, and the rest have a middle class background. Nearly 17 are political and social activists with direct exposure in politics and social activism; and 17 are purely housewives.

Sindh Assembly

Educational Background: 15 out of 33 women legislators have post-graduate degrees (2 M.B.B.S., one Ph.D., one M.A./M. Phil., one M.A./L.L.B, 10 MAs).

Parliamentary Experience: Only two women (Hamida Khuhro and Begum Gulzar Unar) have previous parliamentary experience, and the rest of the 31 are new entrants in the assembly.

Socio-political and Family Background: Almost all of them belong to political families. Most of them have sufficient political background through activism in political parties and women's wings. Some of them have also history of social and women's rights activism. 16 have come from interior Sindh and 17 belong to Karachi.

NWFP Assembly

Educational Background: 11 out of 23 have post-graduate degrees (2 M.B.B.S., one

M.A./L.L.B and 8 MAs); 2 are L.L.B, and one is B.Ed.

Parliamentary Experience: All 23, except one (Dr. Imtiaz Sultan Bukhari), are new entrants in the assembly, and are elected for the first time. Only one out of 23 (Riffat Akbar Swati) has ministerial experience in a caretaker government.

Socio-political and Family Background: All belong to political families or have been married into political families. A majority of them has a middle class background and close affiliation with political parties. Some have actively worked in women's wings and some have history of social activism.

Balochistan Assembly

Educational Background: All 12 women legislators hold MA level degrees (3 M.B.B.S. and 9 MAs).

Parliamentary Experience: All 12 are new entrants in the assembly with no previous parliamentary experience and no previous ministerial experience.

Socio-political and Family Background: All belong to political families or have male relatives in political families. Seven out of 12 belong to big tribal or upper class families, and 5 are from middle class families who have attained the seat due to party affiliation or a track record of social activism. Two are educationists; 4 are either on the board or are members of non-governmental sector organisations, with a few having some history of involvement in the Beijing follow-up process, and the preparation of the NPA¹⁸.

(b) Impact of Women in Legislatures

Women in the legislatures began to impact the political and legislative processes gradually as the political and constitutional crisis over the LFO and the issue of the President holding two offices continued to dominate the proceedings of the assemblies for the first two parliamentary years. The performance of women legislators and their impact should also been seen in the context of the overall performance of these legislatures. Only 2 bills, including the finance bill, were passed by the NA during the first year, and 17 bills, including a constitutional amendment were passed during the second year. The president could not address the joint session of Parliament during the first year. The Leader of the Opposition in the NA was appointed on 25 May 2004, almost over a year after the commencement of first parliamentary year. In addition to this political environment, women legislators' own disadvantages characterized by their lack of parliamentary and political experience, their heavy dependence on party hierarchies, and the patriarchal values and gender biases within parties and legislatures continued to make their task even more difficult.

However, despite all these odds, their initiatives began to gather pace almost by the end of the first parliamentary year. Contrary to general perceptions that there was no movement in their ranks, the legislative record shows that they were picking up issues and moving bills, introducing resolutions, calling attention notices and questions during the second year. Some of the legislative initiatives undertaken by women legislators and main issues raised by them in legislatures, with the focus on the National Assembly are discussed below:¹⁹

¹⁸ *The National Plan of Action prepared by Pakistan based on its commitments made at the Fourth UN World Conference on Women held at Beijing in 1995.*

¹⁹ *Compiled by AF research teams (Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar, Quetta) from gazette notifications and assembly records*

i) Issues Raised and Legislative Initiatives Undertaken

National Assembly: At least 3 bills were introduced by women legislators of direct concern to women. Of these, 2 were initiated and pushed by PPPP MNA Sherry Rehman. One related to the overall situation of women and measures to address their core issues (The Protection and Empowerment of Women Bill, 2004); and one related to the issue of ‘honour’ killing, suggesting several amendments in the existing law (The Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill, 2004). One official bill (The Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill, 2004) also on ‘honour’ killing was introduced by the treasury benches on the initiative of Nilofar Bakhtiar, Advisor to PM on Women’s Development. This bill was passed by both the

Shifting of Perceptions on Core Issues of Women’s Legal Rights

The killing of women on the pretext of ‘honour’ remained an important issue before the national legislatures throughout the last two years. However, unlike the situation in 1999, when the Senate refused to debate the resolution against ‘honour’ killing, the NA was able to pass a bill, considered by many as inadequate, to address the issue in 2004. The issue was also raised several times in different legislatures in the form of resolutions and questions to condemn the barbaric practice, with only the Balochistan Assembly being able to pass a unanimous resolution against it. Also, in 2003-2004, the issue of Hudood Ordinances came up for discussion for the first time before any legislature, since the promulgation of these laws in 1979. The bill on empowerment of women, introduced by Sherry Rehman of PPPP, carries a clause for the repeal of these laws, and several bills introduced by the MQM and MMA have called for amendments into these laws, whereas a resolution tabled by Senator Farhatullah Babar of PPPP in the Senate described the Hudood Ordinances as un-Islamic.

Houses and became an Act. A few women and men legislators of the PML-Q, notably Mehnaz Rafi and M. P. Bhandara also dedicatedly pleaded the case for effective legislation on ‘honour’ killing in the NA. Another bill, which has been jointly moved by several women and men legislators of PML-Q, PPPP and MMA, is an example of cross-party legislative initiative (The Control of Thalassaemia Bill, 2004).

Some of the more active and vocal women parliamentarians also moved 15 resolutions in the NA during this period on different issues. These included: 5% budget allocation to end unemployment and poverty in the country (Mehnaz Rafi); women’s share in inheritance (Samia Raheel Qazi); abolition of exploitative practices and customs such as women’s ‘marriage with Quran’ ‘honour killing’ and ‘wata sata’ (Samia Raheel Qazi, Jamila Ahmad, Razia Aziz, Bilqees Saif); legislation for economic, social, political and legal rights of women (Kashmala Tariq and Mehnaz Rafi); death sentence for those who injure/mutilate any person by throwing acid (Mehnaz Rafi); construction and expansion of jails from funds of Access to Justice Programme to solve the problem of congestion in jails (Razia Aziz, Jamila Ahmad, Samia Raheel Qazi); controlling price hike (Aisha Munawar, Ambreen Naeem); banning the use of plastic shopping bags and bringing in use biodegradable shopping bags (Mehnaz Rafi & Kashmala Tariq); promotion of cottage industry (Mehnaz Rafi); and establishment of Parliamentary Group on Women’s Development and Gender Issues (Mehnaz Rafi). Only one resolution, on proper legislation for women’s economic, social, political and legal rights, was adopted by the NA.

Some women parliamentarians also raised issues of an urgent nature in the NA through Calling Attention Notices. Some of these were related to: killing of a woman and man on the pretext of ‘honour’ in Mirpur Mathelo, Sindh; threats to the lives of a Solangi couple from Sindh who married out of their free will; non-registration of FIR by Islamabad Police against a civil servant who misbehaved with a lady journalist; changing the uniform of PIA airhostesses in disregard to the eastern values and traditions; killing of 7 farmers and arrest of others at military farms in Okara; attack on the office of daily Kawish and TV channel KTN in Ghotki, Sindh; purchase of aircraft by PIA at exorbitant prices; and non-establishment of a driving training school of the NHA, resulting in road accidents. A few women parliamentarians also presented three motions in the National Assembly to address the issue of ownership rights to the residents of katchi abadis in Islamabad (Dr. Firdous Ashiq Awan); discussion on the situation arising out of unemployment in the country (Mehnaz Rafi, Gul-e-Farkhanda); and law and order situation in the country (Samia Raheel Qazi, Jamila Ahmad and Mahreen Anwar Raja, through two separate motions).

About 73 questions were asked by 18 women legislators during Question Hours in the NA, which dealt with both general issues of public interest and specific issues concerning women. The legislators, who most frequently asked questions, included: Ayla Malik, Gul-e-Farkhanda, Fauzia Wahab, Sherry Rehman, Inayat Begum, Shahzadi Umerzadi Tiwana, Bilqees Saif, Mahreen Anwar Raja and Shagufta Jumani. Some of the questions asking for information relating to women were: the number of female and male lawyers employed by the Law and Justice Department since 1999; proposal to include health and education projects in the development schemes of women parliamentarians; any seminar by MoWD during 2002 for the protection of orphans and indigent women; proposal to provide education and health facility to the poor girls in the country; names of foreign countries/organisations providing aid/grant for the welfare of women in Pakistan during the present regime; women’s quota in government services at present and whether it is being observed; proposal to establish one Working Women’s Hostel in each tehsil for working women; present strength of female and male air and ground staff; total number of women recruited in the government departments during the last four years along with details; the number of women who have been victims of stove burning across the country from January 2000 to April 2004. Besides, these issues of women’s concerns, the women parliamentarians also raised issues of national importance concerning the public in general.

Some observations of a few prominent women legislators, who have been actively involved in party politics for a long time are given below:

Mehnaz Rafi (MNA PML-Q) believes the women’s struggle is bearing fruit. It is a long history of struggle from the early eighties until today. Women are more aware of their rights than they were before. But the challenges are also enormous. “The experience of legislation on the issue of ‘honour’ killing in the National Assembly was a great learning for us. There was more resistance to it within the party than outside. We had to fight and lobby very hard. Actually, I wanted to introduce the bill on ‘honour’ killing much earlier on the basis of a draft bill given to me by Shahla Zia of Aurat Foundation. But, I was stopped by the party by saying that the treasury benches would introduce an official bill on the issue. Then I and M. P. Bhandara tried to move a resolution against ‘honour’ killing, but you cannot imagine how difficult it became for us to bring it on the agenda for discussion. That actually never happened. We protested to the Speaker several times. But, we don’t know who was obstructing it,” she said. She is of the view that despite all political and ideological differences and obstacles, women should not quit efforts to forge broad alliances on major women’s rights issues. “We have no other choice and we have been working on it for a long time in collaboration with women’s rights groups,” she said. There should also be strict criteria for

selection of women candidates for general and reserved seats. “We need to see, who has sacrificed more for party, who has gone to jail, who has suffered more. These seats are not for relatives of party leaders or their friends,” she said.

Fauzia Habib (MNA, secretary information PPP) believes women’s strength has increased tremendously and their voice is being more widely heard today as compared to the past. There were only handful women in the political class a few decades ago, and now there are women all around. However, there are several hurdles for them within the system, parties and the assemblies. Gender equality is still a dream in political and public life. The Speaker does not involve women much in the proceedings. Women legislators want to bring in bills, but technical assistance and research input is not provided to them. There are also problems in the party. Although, the chairperson herself is a woman and there are progressive and enlightened people in the party, women are generally not encouraged. The stage is always occupied by men as ‘ego’ and ‘status’ is a big problem for them. Women are always told to go and bring people. Patriarchal values and attitudes are firmly entrenched in the mindset of male politicians. Political polarisation is a big hurdle in the way of cross-party consensus. The bill on ‘honour’ killing is one example. Why was consensus not sought on this issue of crucial importance to women? There are ocean-wide differences which hinder consensus-building. Women are fighting on many fronts of a large battle; sometimes we do not know where to concentrate more. The only way today is perhaps to strengthen women’s wing as much as possible and to convert them into real pressure group within parties.

Samia Raheel Qazi (MNA MMA) believes that women’s wing of Jamaat-e-Islami is endeavouring to protect the rights of Muslim women, because the agenda of women’s participation in political and public life is basically a conspiracy against entire humanity. Muslim woman is its primary target. If woman will come out of her home, which is her basic place, the family as well as social structure will collapse. To a question, why then JI opted for elections on women’s reserved seats, she said her party initially opposed 33% representation of women, but when it became a law “we thought it appropriate to participate in the process, because we are a law-abiding party and we always prefer to work under constitutional limits.” She said “the MMA women are now taking all sorts of initiatives in the assemblies. We are moving bills and resolutions on general as well as specific issues concerning women.” She said she was part of that small group in Balochistan, in 1997-1998, which took the initiative to establish a cross-party women forum. She said the women’s wing of the JI is the most organised women’s wing. “We take independent decisions and the main party leadership is bound to accept our recommendations. The names of women candidates on reserved seats were also recommended by the women’s wing,” she said.

Punjab Assembly: 10 private member bills were introduced by women legislators, of which only one was passed (The Punjab Supervision and Control of Children Homes (Amendment) Bill 2003, moved by Shaheena Asad of PML-Q). The rest were either disposed of due to the absence of legislators or referred to the standing committees. Of the total, 3 bills were moved by Shaheena Asad; 2 by Shagufta Anwar (PML-Q); one by Rubina Nazar Sulehri (PML-Q); one by Maha Raja Tehreen (PML-Q); one by Dr. Anjum Amjad (PML-Q) on the issue of domestic violence; one by Humaira Awais Shahid (PML-Q); and one recently submitted in the assembly secretariat by Zaib-Un-Nisa Quershi (MMA). Women legislators also moved 9 resolutions during this period on different issues. These include four resolutions moved by Dr. Samia Amjad (for a campaign to kill stray dogs, for university status to Nishtar Medical College, Multan, to congratulate CM Punjab on confirming doctors working on contract basis, and for setting up Punjab College of Family Physicians); two by Humaira Awais Shahid (for minimum 5 years punishment for those involved in the practice of Vani; and for speedy trials against persons accused of acid-throwing and free legal aid for acid victims); one by Shehla Rathor (for loans on less mark up for farmers to buy seeds, fertilisers and machinery); one by Saadia Humayoun (for exemption of toll tax or issuance of free passes for the residents of Shahdra); and one by Misbah Kokkab (on the right of maintenance of divorced women for

feeding infants even after the period of iddat). Women parliamentarians also presented 16 privileged motions in the assembly. Of these 6 related to breach of privilege by personnel of different individuals of government and private institutions for misbehaving and using derogatory remarks against MPA or MPAs; and one jointly submitted by PPP and PML-N women legislators against SSP Lahore for illegal arrest, harassment and confinement of PPP MPAs.

Humaira Awais Shahid (MPA PML-Q, Punjab - initially from Millat Party) has been consistently raising women's rights issues on the floor of the assembly, and was able to draw attention of the legislators towards sensitive issues, like Vani, stove burning, acid throwing, etc. In her opinion, educated people like her who have entered politics with a perception that they can bring change in the existing system, are in fact misfits in the system, because they cannot adjust to the environment. As a legislator, she said, she faced a lot of hurdles. If the government doesn't want legislation on any issue, it would deliberately not bring the item on the agenda, or reject it on technical grounds, thus an issue is scuttled in the initial stage and fails to get public attention. Secondly, it is not a question of male or female politicians, but a question of independent thinking. Our system does not want independent, educated and intellectual people in the assemblies, who have a vision of the future, but it wants 'typical politicians' (either male or female) who could easily be trapped into bargains on issues. Humaira believes that 'practical politics' in Pakistan is a game of vested interests. According to her, there are different categories of members within the assemblies. First, there are women with no political background and they are just representing their industrialist class with jewelry and the like. Second, there is a feudal class whose close male relatives were not qualified to be members of the assemblies. Third, there is a category of social workers, which has nothing to offer. Fourth, there is a class of professionals, like lawyers, doctors and teachers from the middle class, but they are very ineffective because they don't know anything about practical politics. She thinks that this is an evolutionary process and a change can be expected only if independent thinking is promoted and respected in political institutions.

Misbah Kokkab (MPA PML-Q, Punjab) has been actively participating in assembly debates and raising women's rights issues. She believes that making headway in a male-dominated society requires determination and courage. In her view, the present cadre of women parliamentarians has entered politics from the sky lab and not through the pipeline. Most of them have entered politics without any solid political experience. Their parties are using them as 'puppets and rubber stamps'. If women want to be effective in the decision-making process, they should properly use their power and strength. She said it is good that women parliamentarians have consensus, at least, on women's rights issues.

Saba Sadiq (MPA PML-N, Punjab) believes that educated women should come forward and join mainstream politics to address women's issues and compete with their male counterparts. They should not restrict themselves to women's wings, but should also try to sensitise male party leaders. She thinks parties should financially support women candidates in elections, otherwise it won't be possible for them to manage huge constituencies. In assemblies, members from both the treasury and opposition benches sometime discourage women, but there is no solution except to continue to struggle.

Sindh Assembly: Women legislators continuously raised issues through bills, resolutions and points of order. The deputy speaker herself moved 28 resolutions concerning women. One of the resolutions initiated by a woman member and passed unanimously was regarding the jobs of disabled people. A woman member has also submitted a bill on domestic violence though it has not been put on the agenda yet. Several attempts were also made by women legislators to get a resolution through against 'honour' killings (karo kari), but unfortunately, due to some misunderstanding and the lack of cross-party consensus, the efforts did not succeed. However, a committee was formed to re-draft the

resolution. Some resolutions moved by women legislators could not be discussed as their turn never came. Some of the main issues raised by women legislators included: violence against women; karo kari; discriminatory laws including Hudood Ordinances; water crisis in Sindh; oil leak from Tasman Spirit and its impact on fishermen; construction of National Highway from Ratodero to Sehwan; present policy of delivering cotton to the factories; tax rebates and loan facilities to flood affectees in Thatta district; construction of Judicial Complex in Karachi; restrictions on deep-sea fishing; increase in oil and ghee prices.

Rahila Tiwana (MPA PML-Q, Deputy Speaker, Sindh Assembly) has so far moved about 28 resolutions in the assembly, but they have not become part of the agenda. These cover issues such as violence against women, karo kari and economic measures to improve the lot of women. “But, in spite of my being the deputy speaker, I am not supported. It is not a strange behaviour towards women. I think, there are some people who want others, particularly women, to remain subservient,” she said. Rahila also tried to form a ‘women’s caucus’ but it did not materialise. Political polarisation is the main hurdle in bringing women on one platform. Even women from the treasury benches cannot rise above party affiliation and get together, she said. “I have even offered relaxation of rules to women legislators, but they have not availed my offer. If they do, they will be able to push women’s issues effectively on the assembly floor. It would only be possible, if they sit across the table, on a common platform, to discuss women’s issues and push them together,” she believes. She said the first issue she raised in the assembly was about the police torture and harassment of women prisoners. She proposed to do away with the parallel judicial system and police torture of poor people. She is publicly advocating for jail reforms to improve the jail conditions and providing legal aid to women inmates. For those who cannot afford bail money, she suggests that government should use Zakat and Ushr money.

Dr. Hamida Khuhro (senior vice-president, PML-Q, Minister of Education, Sindh) says she didn’t face any particular problem as a woman, but the same as every minister would face in this set-up. Though it has not been a long time since she assumed office, she has taken a major initiative to changing women’s traditional roles (stereotyping) in the curriculum. She has issued specific instructions to textbook writers to highlight different roles played by women in society, keeping in view the gender sensitivities. As far as, the role of women legislators is concerned, she believes there is a lot to be done. “An organised forum for women legislators has not emerged so far. Let us not forget that such large number of women have reached the assemblies for the first time. Most of them are new to the political process. Their political background and awareness level is not so strong. They are not familiar with the legislative process. On top of it, the attitude of males in society and in the assemblies is not positive. Political parties are not interested in raising women’s issues and women members have no pressure from women in general, as they are not elected by them,” she said. “Anyway, we are passing through a transitional period and things will change,” she hoped.

Dr. Saeeda Malik (Minister for Women’s Development, Sindh) says she faces a lot of obstacles as a woman minister. “These are hurdles created by government departments and the bureaucracy and there are external pressures. The patriarchal system can certainly be singled out as the main factor. They try their best to push behind even a woman who holds power and influence and they do with different tactics. This includes educated men, male parliamentarians and ministers. My suggestions are not discussed and taken seriously. My orders are not implemented properly and my work is not considered serious enough. Actually, we need to change this entire mindset which harbours deep prejudices against women. I have raised this issue at the platforms of NGOs and in my own party,” she said. The first measure, she took as a minister, was to raise her voice for a separate women’s development ministry, which was complimentary to the ministry of social welfare. Through her efforts, the ministry and the women’s development directorate is functioning independently. She also tried to establish ‘women complaint centres’, but due to the shortage of police force, these are not functioning properly. For the economic empowerment of women, many steps were taken, she said, like separate women enclosures and stalls for needy women in Sunday Bazars. The women’s ministry has also planned several projects, like display centres, resource centres, skill development training, crisis centres and day-care centres. “We are trying hard to put it together but

people with the same mindset are creating hurdles and causing delay,” she said. “Women’s voice in the Assembly shall only be heard and strengthened if it is backed by women’s wings of political parties and women’s rights NGOs,” she believes.

Hir Soho (MQM MPA, Sindh) moved a resolution on ‘honour’ killing in the Sindh Assembly. “On 7 November 2003, the Speaker called me in his chamber along with other members whose names were selected through balloting. When I was going towards the chamber I discussed with my colleague, Bilqees Mukhtar, which resolution should be selected, and we both agreed on karo kari. It was our personal decision and we were very enthusiastic about it. On 11 November, the resolution came on the agenda. But you know and the whole world knows what happened to it. Our own party, other parties, women MPAs and the opposition killed this opportunity without any regrets. If I wanted I could have moved another resolution but I did not want to waste it. It is lack of sensitivity towards women’s problems. I took up this issue in my party also but they were not happy with my initiative.” Hir believes that women MPAs need training and a lot of home work to bring up women’s issues on legislative agendas, so that they do not fail in their efforts. She is of the opinion that women need to take a bold and uncompromising stance.

Begum Gulzar (MPA PML-F, Sindh) says she has spent the development funds allotted to her on building roads in her constituency, Pir-Jo-Goth. She believes that means of communications are essentially required if women want to access better education or health facilities. Education for girls is another top priority for her. She has also got approval for a girls college in her constituency. She also wants to establish a computer centre to train young men and women.

Shama Mithani (MPA PPP, Sindh) is spending her development funds in her constituency No. PS 118. She said she had to fight within the party for utilisation of funds according to her own choice, because the party had asked women elected on reserved seats to spend their budgets on the discretion of the party. “This was a clear discrimination, however, since I had attended training sessions with Aurat Foundation, I decided to assert myself. I convinced them to let me spend my budget on establishing a medical diagnostic centre and a maternity home in Shantinagar, my constituency. I also wanted to spend some part of my funds on sewerage facilities in the vicinity where I live. I explained to the party leadership that this would help me in creating a future constituency for next elections. They liked the idea and allowed me to do so,” she said.

Naila Inam (MPA PML-F, Sindh) says she has spent her budget as instructed by her minister. She said that some portion of the funds was spent on improving electric and road facilities in her locality in Karachi, where she lived, and the rest was given to the party. She said that her minister told her that the party had a vote-bank in rural Sindh, therefore, the money needed to be invested there. In her party, she said, almost all MPAs deposit their development funds with the minister and he spends it on his own discretion. She thinks women MPAs lack knowledge to prepare PC1 and lose out on budget allocations. They need sufficient training to fill the forms and handle the budgets.

Nuzhat Pathan (MPA PPP, Sindh) says the government has identified certain areas for the utilisation of developments funds, which do not include schemes for women’s development. On the other hand, the party has also attached some restrictions on women MPAs, who came in on reserved seats, for utilisation of these funds. “I wanted to spend my budget in my area, especially on women. It could have been used to improve the conditions of jail and a shelter home, but it was not possible, even if the party had agreed to it, because it was a non-development sector according to the government,” she said.

NWFP Assembly: Although women legislators were not vocal on women’s rights issues, they raised issues of public interest and took a stand on social and institutional matters. On the issue of discriminatory laws against women, particularly the Hudood Ordinances, the women legislators of MMA and some from other parties were mainly pursuing the official MMA policy of defending these laws. Nighat Yasmin Orakzai (PML-Q) and Naeema Kishwar from (JUI-F) moved a joint resolution in September 2003, against the recommendations of the National Commission on the Status of Women for repeal of the Hudood Ordinances. The resolution was unanimously adopted. A group of women MPAs

from the MMA, Sabira Shakir, Zubaida Khatoon, Nargis Zain, Aftab Shabir, Fauzia Farrukh and Shagufta Naz also condemned the demonstration organised by the Joint Action Committee against the Hudood Ordinances, outside the Provincial Assembly in December 2003. Women members of the assembly moved 23 resolutions during the first two parliamentary years. These were moved by Riffat Akber Swati, Nighat Yasmin Orakzai, Naeema Kishwar, Yasmin Khan, Dr. Sameen Mehmood Jan, Shagufta Naz, Ghazala Habib, Imtiaz Sultan Bokhari, Zubaida Khatoon and Salma Baber. The resolutions mostly covered these issues: Sui gas connections; extension of date for computerised NICs; release of juvenile offenders on completion of their sentence; appointment of women religious teachers and Qaria in girls high schools; restoration of flights between Islamabad and D. I. Khan; removal of retired army officers from civil posts; house loan facilities for people of NWFP and Balochistan through National Bank of Pakistan; removal of some text against religion from the curriculum of Islamic and Social Studies. Nasreen Khattak raised the issue of women's development schemes, when the allocations for different departments were announced in June 2004. Farah Aqil Shah submitted 9 call attention notices, which included the issue of appointment of women probation officers in NWFP, re-examination of the issue of contract-based lady doctors and security situation in Peshawar.

Naeema Kishwar (MPA MMA, from JUI-F, NWFP) thinks, “the delay in bringing our call attention notices to the agenda for discussion is the biggest hurdle for us in the assembly.” This also happens to all our initiatives, whether we speak on point of order or move a resolution. If it suits the interests of the government and the opposition alike, it gets through, otherwise it fizzles out. She says, “We are also constantly told by male colleagues that you have no constituency, why do you need funds. They also demand our share on the plea that they need it because they are going to contest elections and want to do development work in their constituencies. We are also being told that we have come on ‘charity seats’.”

Farah Aqil Shah (MPA ANP, NWFP) says, “The biggest problem is that we are not taken seriously and our presence in the assembly is not being acknowledged. We have been made to sit there just to fill the seats. Our notices are not brought on agenda, and if we press for it, we are ridiculed with sarcastic remarks like ‘maaf karoo’ (forgive us). We are neither allowed to speak nor we are given sufficient time. Our initiatives are treated like a fun and just a formality.” She said when she did some development work in some areas, the MPA from that constituency became furious and asked her if she was preparing to contest elections. “We are not free to spend our funds according to our plans,” she said. “After two-and-a-half-year, it looks that they are not ready to accept our presence in the assembly.”

Ghaliba Khursheed (MPA MMA, from Islami Tehreek Pakistan, NWFP) says that male colleagues get preference in the assembly in all matters and women are primarily discriminated against because of their reserved seats. “Our interventions are not taken seriously and we are not given enough time to speak, until we tell them that we have heard you, now give us time. We are also constantly reminded that we do not have any constituency”.

Balochistan Assembly: This Assembly was the first to pass unanimous resolutions against karo kari (‘honour’ killing) and valwar. Dr. Shama Ishaq (NP), Dr. Rubaba Khan Buledi (JWP), Spozhmai Achakzai (PPMAP) and Rubina Irfan (PML-Q) asked 29 questions. Of these, some were related to women's rights e.g. transfer of female teachers outside their localities, violence against women, absence of lady doctors in rural areas and less job quota for women. Altogether, women legislators moved 13 resolutions, of which 3 were passed by the assembly.

Rubina Irfan (MPA PML-Q, Balochistan) feels that men are afraid of women's empowerment. The top leadership of PML, in the centre and in Balochistan, is good, but downward it is all 'dirt'. Women have worked very hard to reach this stage, but, even among them, there are some who are only interested in power and money. She believes that merit is the key to improving things. The ills like nominations, personal friendships, favouritism and incompetent people in leadership positions are ruining party. "We need to get rid of people, who are hungry to have an 'assembly seat'. Women politicians require 'political schooling' and only those workers should be promoted and encouraged who have a history of work and sacrifices for the party," she said. There are numerous problems for women legislators. She feels that they are not encouraged, and if they intend to take own initiatives and raise issue, their development funds are stopped.

Dr. Ruqiya Saeed Hashmi (MPA PML-Q, Balochistan) feels that the environment in the legislature is not helpful and male colleagues usually don't support women legislators when they take up issues at the floor of the House. She thinks that due to Sardari system even men do not know about their rights. She feels that reserved seats should be filled through direct elections because otherwise they are hijacked by family members of politicians. She stressed the need for cross-party relationships among women legislators and said that she always supported her colleagues in the opposition whenever any resolution was moved by them on women's rights issues. She added that a separate platform should be formed for women parliamentarians to discuss their problems.

ii) Impact on Parties

The restoration of women's reserved seats and their enhanced legislative representation has also impacted positively on political parties. However, it appears that the process of change in attitudes and behaviours of male party leaders in accepting women in their new leadership roles still has a long way to go. Just how women's legislative representation has impacted the political culture was a subject of discussion with key leaders of different

Liaqat Baloch (MNA, deputy secretary-general MMA & Naib Amir JI) believes that women in legislatures represent half of the country's population. He thinks that the presence of civilised political women workers adds to the dignity of the Parliament, and

women who have no political background and those who represent NGOs are a problem in themselves for their parties as well as for the National Assembly. He thinks that MMA women legislators have taken part in the House proceedings with decency and after proper homework and they have created a good image for themselves as well as for the MMA. Their presence has also dispelled the negative image purportedly created by some elements about religious parties. He feels satisfied with the performance of MMA women parliamentary group, who actively participated in the proceedings despite their lack of parliamentary experience. "The women's wing of JI is effectively working in the country, particularly to defend Pakistan's foundations of Islamic ideology and family structure in a Muslim society through religious preaching and spreading teachings of Quran and Sunnah," he said.

M. P. Bhandara (MNA PML-Q) feels that women's presence in the National Assembly certainly has an impact, for example, the 'honour' killing bill would have never gone through so easily if women legislators were not there, and had not actively supported it. He gives 50 marks to legislators in general and 40 to women legislators out of 100 in terms of their performance in the legislature. He feels that most of the women legislators usually remain silent, and only a few women, those who know to speak, take active part in the proceedings. This also applies to women and men of all parties, he believes. Women in the Parliament and even in their own parties should not be viewed as a separate group. "They should be treated equally in all respects and in the overall context of party organisation. However, the party structures should be improved, and this is a suggestion for all parties. There should be inter-party as well as cross-party meetings with all, people present in the assemblies and those who are outside within parties," he said

Kunwar Khalid Younas (MNA, member coordination committee, MQM) said, “MQM has always supported political participation of women. We have given representation to women in all the committees. In the assemblies, we have raised the issue of violence against women, discriminatory laws, ban on Jirga and amendment in the Citizenship Act. Our women members have no problem in contesting elections. Our party gives ticket to them for general seats and they have proven their ability to win.” He claimed that MQM has the largest number of active women members in the party and they can play a vital role in creating awareness on gender issues. He said he himself had moved a bill for amendments in Hudood Ordinances.

Nisar Ahmed Khuro (PPPP MPA and Leader of the Opposition in Sindh Assembly) believes that enhanced political representation of women in the assemblies is a good experience, but it is yet to show any positive results. “Our party gives maximum space and freedom to its women members. They are free to attend seminars, discussions and to participate in media debate. They have been very active and vocal. They pressurise me a lot and at times I am put in a very difficult situation. Our women members have moved several resolutions on karo kari and Hudood Ordinances but they have not been put on the agenda. Even if we succeed in putting them on the agenda, no time is allotted for discussion. On women’s issues, PPPP has a clear stand and we consult our women legislators on all important issues. In standing committee, we have nominated women members according to their own decisions.” He went on to explain that the PPPP did not support the karo kari resolution presented by the MQM woman member because his part had proposed provincial legislation on karo kari along with the resolution. That was turned down by the treasury benches and the Speaker constituted a committee to rewrite the resolution.

Sardar Zulfiqar Ali Khusa (President, PML (N) Punjab) believes the reservation of women’s seats is an excellent step, but it has not really matched with the quality of women in legislatures. Effective representation of women in the governments is still lacking, which is not a good sign. Women mostly deliver whatever is assigned to them maybe because they are few in numbers. Women have always been very active within the party and this can be assessed from the example of Mrs. Kulsoom Nawaz Sharif, who despite being a housewife entered in politics after the 1999 coup and was able to mobilise party workers. He thinks educational qualification and political experience are two different things. Degrees cannot be a substitute of political awareness. The party has taken measures to build and strengthen constituencies where its women candidates were contesting. However, with less economic resources and inadequate security arrangements, it is a difficult task for women to reach out to people and get votes. The cultural behaviours also discourage them to enter politics He is of the opinion that the government should allocate resources for women to contest elections or at least the parties should financially support their own women candidates.. He said women parliamentarians attend NGO workshops without any homework and least interest. They themselves are not active and interested in issue-based politics revolving around women’s issues.

Farid Toofan (Provincial General Secretary, ANP, NWFP) said there is a difference between open and reserved seats for women. In the case of reservation, political parties mostly try to oblige their influential members. He says, “In our party we have a good cadre for the future and we will discuss within the party whether to keep the same or to bring forward new leadership. Before there was no women’s wing in the party because as a secular political party we were against separate women’s wings. But since seats have been reserved for women, these are being formed in different districts. We have also engaged our women to train with the NDI.

Syed Ali Shah (Provincial President, PML-Q, NWFP) said, “We see very tough competition for nominations in future elections amongst women’s wings of different parties. Rivalries among women’s groups within the party become a problem, which sometimes creates public embarrassment. Overall, we are satisfied with their performance, however, there should be some mechanism within the party to review it.” He said, affiliation with the party should be a plus point for awarding a ticket.

Haji Jalil Jan (Provincial Information Secretary, JUI-F, NWFP) said, “Our members of the Provincial Assembly have taken the responsibility to organise the women’s wing of the party. Some of the legislators are vocal while some are not.” He said that he was working as a liaison person between the party leadership and women members. “Since now we have a women’s wing, we will nominate women on reserved seats through consultation in future. We are also keen to nominate our women for training workshops, because we know most of them have not come from political backgrounds.”

Habib Jalib (General Secretary, BNP, Quetta) thinks that due to the presence of women in legislatures, at least negative legislation against women has stopped. This is a major impact of their presence in assemblies. Furthermore, they have also raised issues which were never discussed at these forums earlier. He thinks women can be more effective in assemblies if they come through direct elections. Women should also come up from the grassroots level. They should have a constituency and must know the art of meeting people. He believes that men have a typical mindset towards women and it is very difficult to change their thinking. Even parties do not genuinely support women cadre, he feels.

Dr. Ishaq Baloch (Secretary Information, NP, Quetta) says that the women’s wing of his party is very strong and women are organised at all levels in Balochistan. He said that over 100 women participated in the current year’s council session and took active part in the debates over issues by raising women’s rights issues. He believes that due to women’s presence in the assembly, resolutions on ‘honour’ killing and valwar were unanimously passed. However, he feels women from the ruling party usually follow the path of their male colleagues. He thinks cross-party consensus on women’s issues can help in strengthening women’s voice, and to ensure this an institute or forum should be established where women from across parties could voice their concerns and formulate common positions.

Women’s legislative representation has also had an enormous public as well as media impact. In a quick response, women legislators received immediate recognition from different sections of society, including media. The more outspoken and vocal women legislators are participating in public forum debates, civil society consultative processes and media discussions. Their presence in legislatures and their engagement with public institutions and the media has resulted in more visibility of women’s rights issues. They are active participants in several debates or discussions going on in civil society or the media, mostly related to women’s rights issues as well as some major issues of public concern.

(c) Forums, Linkages and Networks

Internally, i.e. within political parties, women’s wings are a forum which bring the women’s cadre together on one platform where they can discuss specific problems faced by them within parties, as well as women’s issues in general. Since these are all-female

structures, they provide space only to women in parties to brainstorm on issues among themselves and to speak with one voice on them, if they wish to do so. This space does not bring the mainly male party leadership in direct engagement with women members to thrash out things face-to-face and reach a possible consensus or understanding on issues that need to be debated and discussed. Therefore, women's wings can only perform the function of pressure groups within parties, ideally speaking, and do not promise to become a forum within parties for a mutually productive dialogue between party leadership and the women's cadre on women's issues. More ironically, the women's wings have not even been able to provide space for an interaction between women legislators and women's rank and file within parties. Therefore, a more structured kind of interaction, which can make public representatives and women cadre accountable to each other, is presently missing.

Some attempts have recently been made by at least two mainstream parties to address this issue. The women's wing of the PML-Q has formed several committees, mostly headed by women legislators, to bring them effectively into the fold of women's wings. The PPPP has also formed several committees, under the main party, and has included women legislators in them. Thus, the decision-making bodies within parties (central or provincial executive/working committees), internally, are the only viable forums within parties where women can negotiate for women's rights effectively. However, since women hold minimal representation in these bodies, they remain at a disadvantage and are hardly able to influence major policy decisions in the interest of women. Within the legislatures, the parliamentary groups of political parties and the standing committees do provide some space to women legislators to raise a collective voice and exert pressure on party hierarchies. But the space has not been properly utilised yet due to various reasons, primarily due to the lack of legislative expertise and skills as well as the lack of knowledge and proper homework by the women legislators on issues. Beyond this, the absence of effective party mechanisms and structures and the lack of understanding of the significance of networking and alliance-building within political parties, have also resulted in the failure by political parties to undertake any initiatives to develop interaction among women public representatives of different tiers, i.e. the local government and the provincial and national legislatures, even among members affiliated to their own party.

However, externally, there are a number of facilitating factors which contribute towards the strengthening of democratic governance and creating an enabling environment for legislators, including women legislators, to effectively participate in legislative business and undertake initiatives for the protection and promotion of citizens' rights. A number of national advocacy NGOs have kept the advocacy wheel moving for several years by developing and maintaining close linkages with key members of different political institutions and stakeholders of governance, and by providing platforms to them for articulating their concerns and developing joint positions on crucial issues. At the same time, some of these women's rights and human rights groups engaged politicians, particularly the women political cadre in parties and their women's wings, in a series of issue-based capacity-building initiatives. Since the provision of reserved seats for women lapsed after the 1990 elections, there were only a few women sitting in the assemblies for twelve years (1990 to 2002). Thus, naturally, the thrust of civil society activism revolved around the demand of restoration and enhancement of women's reserved seats and the question of skill-based training of women politicians, who were also part of the struggle, never arose, particularly in the context of their legislative functioning. This decade of

activism on women's political participation and repeal of discriminatory laws, however, led to the transformation of mutual linkages between concerned women politicians and women's rights groups and activists into a strong bond and trusting relationship.

A number of civil society organisations, including Aurat Foundation, HRCF, Shirkat Gah, Sungi Development Foundation, SAP-Pk, The Network, Christain Study Centre, PILER, Pattan, CRCP, CCHD and SDPI continued to provide forums to members of political parties and the governments for debate and discussion on major issues concerning citizens, including women and minorities. In the context of awareness-raising and capacity-building of women politicians as well as bringing them together on common platforms, Aurat Foundation in particular, ran a number of long-term programmes. During 1997-1999, several women politicians from different political parties joined three project-based initiatives of Aurat Foundation (Political Education Programme, Women in Politics and Legislative Watch Groups). The initiatives aimed to enhance the knowledge-base of social and political activists across Pakistan on a variety of subjects including constitutional rights, political systems, economy, human rights, women's rights, etc. They created space for mutual interaction and dialogue between civil society activists and members of political parties, and involved women politicians in legislative watch groups for joint advocacy and lobbying interventions on women's rights issues.

In a similar initiative, a group of advocacy NGOs (Savera, SAP-Pk, HRCF and Aurat Foundation), during the same timeframe (1997-1999), ran advocacy campaigns to maximise women's participation in mainstream political and decision-making processes. Under the same initiative, Aurat Foundation initiated a process of bringing women in politics together on a common platform to develop cross-party consensus among them. The process began with a national-level workshop at Lahore in May 1998. Women politicians from a number of parties attended the national and provincial workshop and expressed interest in organising all-women alliances across political parties. In the meantime, some active women politicians in Balochistan (Razia Rab of JWP, Samia Raheel Qazi of JI, Rukhsana Ahmed and Ghazala Gola of PPP and Ruqayya Hashmi and Parveen Magsi of PML-N) had already established an all-women political forum, from their own initiative. The forum, however, could not be sustained and the initiative fizzled out in a few months time. But, it was revived after the Lahore workshop in 1998, with the name of All Balochistan Political Women Forum. Today, this is the only functional cross-party alliance of women politicians in Pakistan. Similar alliances or forums were also established in other provinces. The NWFP Women Political Coalition was set up during the first 'Women in Politics' workshop of Aurat Foundation, in September 1998; the Sindh Political Women's Alliance was formed during the same year, at a similar workshop; in Punjab, though no forum could immediately be established, a Joint Solidarity Front was later established in Lahore, after consistent efforts of Mehnaz Rafi of PML and Nigar Ahmad of Aurat Foundation. However, except for the forum in Balochistan, none of these could function properly and became inactive after a short period.)

Aurat Foundation also ran campaigns to highlight women's rights issues during election campaigns and gave manifesto suggestions to political parties in 1993, 1997 and 2002 elections (several parties incorporated these into their manifestos). Several women politicians (some now sitting in the assemblies) were involved and are still active in Aurat Foundation's advocacy and lobbying networks, for example, Mehnaz Rafi (MNA PML-Q), Beelum Husnain (MNA PPP) and Saba Sadiq (MPA PML-N) are members of Lahore

Legislative Watch Group (LWG); Ruqia Khannum Sommorro, Fauzia Wahab (MNA PPPP) and Gul-e-Farkhanda (MNA PML-Q) are members of Karachi LWG; Farah Aqil Shah (MPA ANP) and Nasreen Khattak (MPA PPP-Sherpao) are members of Peshawar LWG; and Rubina Irfan (MPA PML-Q) is member of Quetta LWP.

Nigar Ahmad, Executive Director of Aurat Foundation, while talking about the initiatives to bring women political workers on a common platform said, “This has been an exciting and fruitful experience. Women politicians on a number of occasions expressed a deep desire to establish cross-party linkages and develop them into formal alliances, at least on crucial women’s rights issues; and at some places, they even succeeded in their efforts. For instance, in Balochistan, the alliance formed by women has withstood all political crises in the province since 1998. It has membership of several women politicians, MPAs and councilors, and has undertaken a few bold initiatives, never heard of anywhere else in Pakistan, such as pooling of financial resources for the election campaigns of women candidates of the forum while taking funds from members of one party and funding the campaign of candidate of another party; and helping victims or survivors of violence against women through public advocacy and legal aid, etc. However, the gender status quo and political expediency has blocked movement towards more such initiatives. Women will have to rise above party politics and take bold steps. Grassroots pressure from women can provide the real base for such breakthrough. Women in national and provincial legislatures should derive strength from local women’s constituencies.” About the future role of the organisation, she said, “Besides carrying out our existing programmes of capacity-building of women legislators, women councilors and women cadre in parties, we are focussing on law reform initiatives within the legislatures to have some concrete results in the form of positive and women-friendly laws and gender-sensitive policies. The legislative bill on ‘honour’ killing prepared by us actually laid the foundation of the present legislation on the issue, though our original bill was badly mutilated, and we are undertaking similar initiatives in other areas, e.g. the reform of family laws and recognition of the value of work by home-based women workers,” she said.

Around elections 2002, a number of new organisations came into being to further strengthen the process of democratisation of political and legislative institutions through broad-based initiatives of capacity-building of legislators, as well as through law reform input and research and documentation of legislative processes. A unique initiative in this regard has come from legislators themselves, when some concerned parliamentarians formed Parliamentarians Commission for Human Rights (PCHR) in December 2002. This is a voluntary body of Parliamentarians formed to do advocacy on issues relating to Human Rights. A cross-party platform with representation of all major political parties in its 13-member Executive Committee, the PCHR is headed by member National Assembly, Mr. Riaz Fatiana. The secretary-general of the commission is Dr. G. G. Jamal, an MNA from FATA, while Kashmala Tariq, also an MNA, is its executive director. Among others, Mehnaz Rafi (MNA PML-Q), Khawaja Saad Rafiq (MNA PML-N), Dr. Farid Paracha (MNA MMA), Mumtaz Matiana (MNA PPPP), Fauzia Wahab (MNA PPPP) and Sherry Rehman (MNA PPPP) are members of the executive committee. The PCHR has successfully brought both men and women parliamentarians from across parties to its forum for a frank discussion on different issues. The PCHR has so far held over two dozen meetings and focus group discussions involving men and women legislators. It has initiated or been involved in preparing drafts of several legislative bills, of which five are still pending before the NA.

Kashmala Tariq, MNA and executive director of PCHR, while talking about the initiatives of the PCHR, said, “It has been a successful experience to bring representatives, both men and women, together from different parties. The response was very encouraging and a number of legislators actively participated in the PCHR activities and contributed by giving concrete suggestion to strengthen initiatives on reform of law and improve the situation of human rights in the country.” She, however, said that the idea of women caucuses was not reflected in these discussions. About the challenges to women legislators, she said, the biggest challenge was the acceptance by male colleagues of the fact that women could also legislate, and that women in the assemblies were there to do business. She said women legislators should be treated without gender discrimination.

The Centre for Democratic Development, set up by the HRCP in Islamabad, has also conducted several discussions with parliamentarians on a wide range of issues during 2003-2004. The Researchers, an Islamabad-based NGO with focal areas primarily in Sindh, has recently established a platform for interaction between civil society organisations and parliamentarians, with the name of ‘Pakistan Governance Forum’. The main objective of the initiative is to develop grassroots policy recommendations on citizens’ rights. The Liberal Forum in collaboration with Friedrich Naumann Stiftung has also been doing some capacity-building of women parliamentarians through seminars and dialogues. The Forum has also published two books for parliamentarians, titled: Handbook for Parliamentarians; and Women Parliamentarians: Swinging against the Tide.

Some support organisations also entered the field to strengthen legislative bodies and enhance knowledge and skills of parliamentarians, including women parliamentarians, through different capacity-building initiatives and programmes. They include the Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (PILDAT) and National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI). The PILDAT, a research and training institution dedicated to strengthening democracy and democratic institutions, is engaged in capacity-building of parliamentarians in a number of ways. These include training, lectures, seminars, public forums, study tours, and publications. It has organised several workshops and discussions during the last two years on various aspects of the functioning of the legislatures and key governance issues. It arranged two study tours for parliamentarians to India and the US to learn from the legislative experiences of these countries, and has published a number of useful briefing papers on different topics. It has also published State of Democracy Reports, and a directory of the present members of the National Assembly.

Ahmed Bilal Mehboob, executive director of the PILDAT, while talking about the experience of bringing parliamentarians from across parties around one table, said, “Among so many other things, the PILDAT has facilitated the formation of a Parliamentary Consultative Group on Women Issues (PCGWI). All members of the National Assembly and Senate who have an interest in promoting women’s rights and addressing women’s issues can become a member of the Group. So far, 27 persons have become members, out of which 21 (78%) are women and 6 (22%) are men. The Group has met 4 times in the past 10 months. The group membership is spread across all parties represented in the Parliament. The PCGWI decided in its 3rd meeting to adopt ‘Supply of Safe Drinking Water and Access to Sanitation’ as its one-point agenda for this year and resolved to work with the government to allocate maximum funds for this purpose to improve access to safe drinking water and sanitation by all communities in Pakistan.”

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), a US-based organisation working to strengthen and expand democracy worldwide, has been engaged in democratic development in South Asia for almost fifteen years. Most of NDI's work in Pakistan has focused on election-related activities in the past, but more recently it has expanded its work to include assistance to civil society groups and political party leadership. NDI's most recent initiative, "Supporting Women Political Leaders in Muslim South Asia", seeks to increase women's political participation in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan. The project aims at strengthening the ability of women to serve as party leaders and as elected officials. Four political parties, PML-Q, PPP, PML-N and MQM have signed agreements with NDI to carry out the project. It held a four-day regional workshop in Pakistan in 2004, which brought together women from the leading parties from each of the participating countries to collaborate with regional and international experts and trainers. NDI has also published useful material for parliamentarians.

In October 2003, World Vision, a US-based Catholic relief organisation, started its six-year project "Strengthening National and Provincial Legislative Governance in Pakistan". Funded by USAID, the project was implemented for almost a year by the Pakistan Legislative Strengthening Consortium (PLSC) with PILDAT, AWARD (Peshawar), CCHD (Lahore), CRCP (Islamabad), IRDO (Quetta), IFES (Islamabad) and The Researchers (Karachi) as consortium partners. The project did undertake some activities during the last year, but it had to wrap up its activities recently after it was withdrawn from World Vision by the funding agency.

The National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW), a semi-autonomous statutory body, has also undertaken some important initiatives to review discriminatory laws against women and assess the situation of women in the public sector. After an extensive consultative process involving different segments of society, including parliamentarians, it has also given concrete recommendations which include the repeal of the Hudood Ordinances and made critical observations on the Qisas and Diyat provisions in the law relating to 'honour' crimes.

Apart from civil society initiatives, the Women's Development Ministry and the Civil Services Academy have also conducted some training programmes for the capacity-building of women parliamentarians. One such training in 2003 was participated in by 24 women parliamentarians, including 20 MNAs and 4 Senators nominated by different political parties. The UN Development Program (UNDP) is also spearheading a 5-year programme with the collaboration of the GOP to encourage women's participation in politics and reduce gender discrimination in both the work force and domestic life. Under the programme, the UNDP, along with the Ministry for Women's Development, the National Commission on the Status of Women, the Planning Commission, the Economic Affairs Division and the Ministry of Law, Justice and Human Rights, will encourage women's involvement in politics through voter education and other measures.

(d) Main Findings

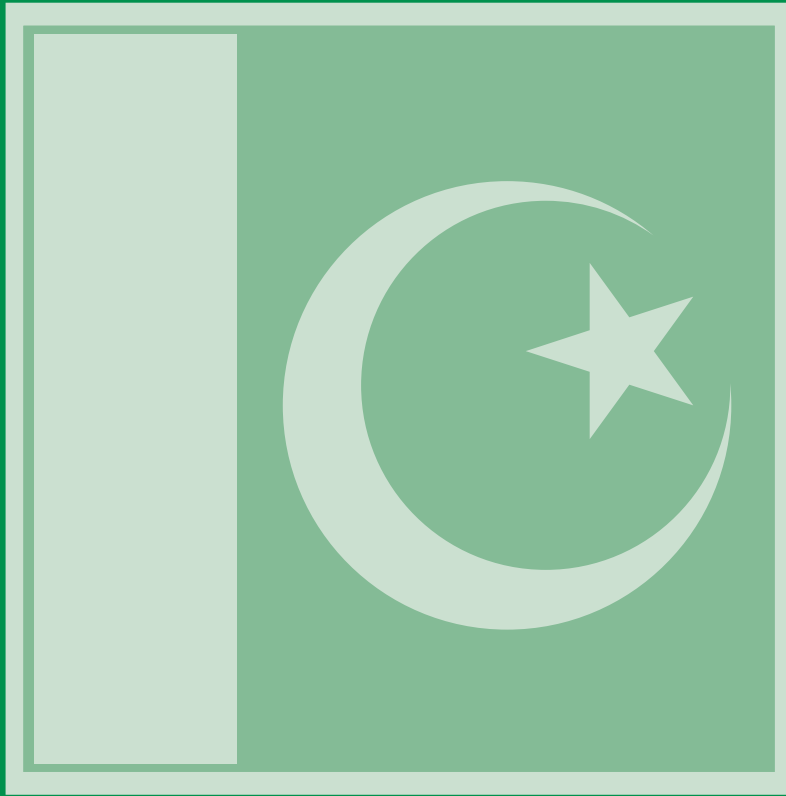
- An overwhelming majority of women legislators (216 out of 232) are new entrants in formal political and legislative institutions and have no previous parliamentary experience. Only 16 women legislators have some parliamentary experience, and that too of a limited nature. Most of them, however, have some

kind of connection with politics through their families or relatives in political families. Almost half of them have sufficient political experience through affiliation with parties and women's wings, and nearly one fourth of them have some background of activism on women's rights issues mostly undertaken in collaboration with civil society organisations, with some pursuing the women's cause independently as professionals. Most of them are also highly qualified, and there is a substantial number of professional among them, ie doctors, lawyers, teachers and journalists.

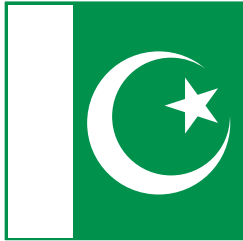
- A majority of women legislators lack knowledge of political systems, legislative procedures, how to intervene in the budget-making process, constitutional rights and national laws concerning women, international covenants and GOP's international obligations on women's rights and human rights (CEDAW, CRC), the Beijing follow-up process, the NPA and women's legal rights issues. There are no capacity-building programmes or initiatives within parties to train and educate legislators, especially the new entrants.
- Women legislators are raising issues in the legislatures and some of them have undertaken bold initiatives on women's rights issues. Their initiatives have brought to the fore critical issues relating to women for the first time on the floor of the assemblies in a loud and effective manner. However, they are performing under difficult circumstances which include the control of their respective parties, resistance from within parties and legislatures (mostly coming from feudal and gender-biased lobbies), party control over development funds of women legislators, unfriendly behaviour of male colleagues and lack of encouragement by party leadership.
- Women legislators are clearly discriminated against in terms of time and opportunities to speak and raise issues in the legislatures. There were several instances when they were ignored or disallowed from making an intervention by the chair. Their questions, calling attentions notices and resolutions are delayed without reason and explanation from the chair. The lack of technical assistance or support for drafting of bills and other legislative inputs, either from the parties or the legislatures, makes their task even more difficult.
- Women on reserved seats, with more activists in their ranks, have contributed more in terms of raising issues in the legislatures and undertaking other legislative initiatives. However, since they have been elected through an indirect system of election, they remain accountable only to male party leaders, who have facilitated their entry into assemblies, and are expected to faithfully toe the party line.
- The lack of a constituency by women who came in on reserved seats has become an irritant for them. They are frequently taunted with remarks like: "You have no constituency, why do you need development funds?", "Are you going to contest elections, why are you so vocal?", and more.
- Women who came in on general seats have been mostly ineffective in their performance and their participation in legislative proceedings was almost nil or limited to occasional interventions. Most of them also remain busy in self-promotion exercises for party or ministerial positions causing jealousies and rivalries among legislators as well as creating lobbies within parties. Similarly, women on general seats have been less enthusiastic in participating in the activities of civil society forums, including the media debates.
- Women in legislatures have, by and large, impacted positively on the internal political culture and functioning of parties, and male party leaders are providing

more space to them. However, it appears that the change in attitude from the patriarchal 'sense of patronage' to a more 'genuine feeling of partnership' towards women will be a slow and long process, depending on several factors, including women's own initiatives to strengthen their ranks and the gender-sensitisation of parties.

- There is an absence of a regular and structured interaction between the women's cadre and women legislators within parties. Similarly, there is a total lack of interaction among women public representatives belonging to different tiers of governance. Whatever sporadic interaction developed through occasional meetings and women's conventions usually results in rhetoric only and disarray, as no follow-up mechanisms exist to consolidate the initiatives undertaken. The phenomenon also hampers the evolution and development of a clear future course of action and consensus-building on crucial women's rights issues among women cadre within parties.
- Prominent women politicians and legislators of almost all parties, who generally carry the will of the women's cadre in their parties, have sincerely expressed their desire to unite across parties, at least on major issues concerning women. However, their precarious situation within parties and the climate of political polarisation reflect badly on their ability to secure cross-party consensus.
- A significant number of women legislators have shown interest in the activities of civil society organisations, particularly when they were first elected to the legislatures. However, with the passage of time only a limited number of women legislators from different parties, those who had some background in political and women's rights activism, remained involved in different capacity-building programmes and consultative processes initiated by NGOs or other organisations working with parliamentarians.
- Women political caucuses do not exist in Pakistan, however, there have been precedents of civil society initiatives to bring women across parties together on a common platform and form broad alliances. One such initiative translated into reality and became a sustainable entity in Balochistan in 1998. The idea of forming women parliamentary caucuses was floated by a few women parliamentarians soon after the elections 2002, to be later picked up by some other organisations. There also exist a number of initiatives, forums and platforms, both within civil society, the legislatures and the government, which can facilitate the process of forming women's cross-party alliances as well as political or parliamentary caucuses.



6. Future Directions



The reservation of seats for women in legislatures led to significant developments in the context of women's political empowerment. The 2002 elections saw the largest-ever number of women entering the legislative arena in Pakistan. But what was even more significant from the perspective of qualitative political change was the fact that, despite the substantial increase in reserved seats, the highest-ever number of women contested and won direct elections on general seats. This aspect of women's political participation has shattered the myth that women are not ready or willing to come into mainstream politics, or are not yet able to engage in electoral politics at the constituency-level.

It has also demonstrated the growing acceptance, among both political parties and the public, of women's role in politics. Women in political parties have indicated a strong interest in activating women's wings to make them more effective, with a few more parties also establishing their women's wings. Women legislators are also picking up issues and undertaking initiatives in the legislatures, a phenomenon resulting in more visibility of women's rights issues and inclusion of them in present discourse.

However, this is just one step forward in the struggle for women's empowerment. Numerous critical issues relating to women's economic, socio-cultural, legal and political rights remain to be effectively addressed. And while the presence of more women in legislative bodies will undoubtedly help to facilitate this process, to become an effective force women legislators will need not only to develop their collective strength, but also to acquire the knowledge and skills required to promote issues. All of this will take time. And while women legislators must assume the primary responsibility for initiating and sustaining the effort, they must receive support in their endeavours by all those concerned, including political party leadership, institutions of state, and civil society organisations.

(a) Constitutional and Legislative

There are several issues which need to be dealt with through legislative and constitutional reform in order to secure equality of rights and status for women in society and to mainstream gender into national laws and policies. Women legislators in close association with other segments of society, particularly the women's political cadre and civil society activists, will have to make special efforts to ensure that:

- The Constitution is amended to guarantee that absolute equality of rights is reflected in the Fundamental Rights chapter, the provisions for non-discrimination and affirmative action are strengthened, and all provisions of the Constitution are interpreted to accord with the fundamental rights provisions.
- State obligations and commitments under all International Treaties, Conventions and Declarations relating to human rights, to which Pakistan is a party, are upheld

and met; and other critical instruments e.g. the Optional Protocol on CEDAW, are ratified.

- All recommendations given by various State committees and commissions set up to review the situation of women and give recommendations, including the recommendations of the Inquiry Commission for Women, 1997, and recommendations of the National Commission on the Status of Women, 2002-2004, are tabled before the Parliament, approved and implemented.
- All existing macro- and micro-level economic policies are reviewed, and gender-sensitive economic growth indicators are developed and re-structured to make them more appropriate to the needs of women and other disadvantaged citizens.
- Budget allocations to the social sectors, i.e. education, health and population, and environment, are increased and specific budgetary resources to all line ministries/departments are allocated for interventions benefiting women; appropriate budgetary allocations are made to implement the national policy for women's development, the NPA and all women's development programmes.
- All discriminatory and derogatory laws e.g. the Hudood Ordinances, Qanoon-e-Shahadat and Qisas and Diyat provisions incorporated in the Pakistan Penal Code are repealed and special legislation enacted to eliminate all forms of violence against women including domestic violence, custodial violence, sexual violence and harassment, public humiliations, prostitution and trafficking of women.
- All customary practices which are derogatory and discriminative to women and children are banned, and special preventive measures are undertaken to check the occurrence of abuse of women's rights.
- All personal status laws are improved to ensure equality of status as well as women's financial security and rights in accordance with current socio-economic realities, and the process of justice in the family courts is expedited.
- Support structures (shelters, crisis centres, legal aid and counselling centres, and burn units, etc.) are established all over the country for female victims of violence and forced prostitution.
- A Code of Ethics to ensure gender-sensitive and non-discriminatory treatment for survivors of violence against women is reviewed, revised and implemented through a collaborative effort of government, civil society organisations, women's rights groups and experts, media professionals and progressive citizens.
- All parallel legal and quasi-legal systems are abolished to ensure a uniform, integrated judicial system in the country. Special measures are undertaken to discourage and eliminate the jirga system.
- Women's access to ownership and control of assets is increased, particularly in government distributed land and property, through the registration of title-deeds of all state-land allotted for lease or housing schemes jointly in the names of husband and wife, and in case of female headed households to the woman.
- Property inherited by women is registered in their names, particularly in the rural areas, and inheritance laws are strictly enforced to ensure that inheritance cases of widows and orphans are taken up on priority basis by courts and settled expeditiously.
- Legal cover of an adequate minimum wage, acceptable working hours, and health and maternity benefits to women is extended in the informal and agricultural sectors, as well as to casual, temporary, contract and piece-rate workers.
- Affirmative action is undertaken to encourage women's participation in formal sector employment through special measures to recruit qualified women at all

levels; phased enhancement of the minimum quota for women in the public sector; flexibility in regulations pertaining to age for entry or re-entry into government service; and incentives of day care facilities/crèches at larger workplaces.

- Women's employment opportunities are increased by encouraging rural-based industries and enterprises, especially those that absorb women, and increasing women's linkages with productive sectors such as industry and agriculture.
- Agricultural women's contribution is counted in national accounts – in GDP, through a redefinition of “work” in national statistics, and through disaggregating the remuneration for agricultural work done by women as “unpaid family helpers” or “informal sector workers”.
- A positive portrayal of women and girls in all forms of media is ensured through increased collaboration between government, media professionals, civil society organisations and women's rights groups and experts in the planning, designing and production of programmes.

(b) Networking and Alliance-Building

Women in legislatures must develop and maintain close and regular interaction with their own women's wings to create intra-party unity and harmony among women's ranks. This would also help in developing common positions on critical issues relating to women and also add credibility to these positions maintained by the women cadre in parties. Women in legislatures must also establish and increase linkages with their colleagues present at different levels of governance, particularly the local government, which could provide them support from the grassroots level for pressurizing party leaderships in crucial negotiations over women's rights issues.

Women legislators must also forge cross-party linkages and formalise the alliances into broad-based forums at the provincial and national levels. The forums should provide the space for honest discussions in a conducive environment, for sharing of information and experiences, enhancement of learning, forging of common positions and priorities, and strategising. Only through this collective effort will women legislators be able to create sufficient pressure to impact decisions on laws and policies, both within legislatures and their own political parties.

Women legislators can benefit from the experience of women's political caucuses existing in several parts of the world. These caucuses formed within parties and legislatures as well as across parties and legislatures, are increasingly becoming an effective means of activism for women in politics. They provide an institutional base to women to translate their many voices into a unified demand and transform their strength into a political force. Such initiatives have been undertaken in many countries, both as caucuses by women politicians as well as by women public representatives. In either case the caucuses have helped women to establish their political constituencies.

The experiences of these caucuses in several countries have shown that women are taken seriously only if they are perceived as a unified group which can influence a party decision on a specific issue or which can alter a vote on certain legislation. Women's political caucuses have also proven more effective in countries where adequate space is available to citizens for democratic interventions, and where women have gained some

foothold in political parties and legislatures. In Pakistan, where a substantial number of women are sitting in the legislatures, and where an upsurge in women's rank is currently being seen, the formation of such caucuses is not only a much-needed requirement, but perhaps an inevitable reality to carry forward the process of women's internal movement for unity.

The linkages and close interaction with state institutions, such as Ministries of Women's Development and of Law, Justice and Human Rights, the NCSW, Law and Justice Commission, the Planning Commission and the ECP, could influence national policies and plans by helping to mainstreaming gender into them. Women in legislatures can also benefit from the forums of civil society organisations, women's rights and human rights groups, special interest and professional associations, for more clarity and understanding of gender and civil society perspectives, and also to access and share information through useful dialogue and discussions.

(c) Learning and Capacity-Building

Women legislators must obviously address critical women's rights issues. However, they should not get marginalised into dealing only with issues seen as women-specific. In fact, to bring a gender-perspective into all public policy, they must ensure that women's concerns and priorities are reflected in all sectors such as economy, agriculture, education, health, sanitation, labour, housing and so on. They must also endeavour to voice the concerns of all other disadvantaged sectors of society.

Learning must be an on-going process and should include: the constitution; legislative/policy-making procedures, rules of business, and the functioning of committees, government organs and state institutions; key issues, laws and policies relating to women, as well as related international commitments; and main existing policies and programmes. To manage this, women legislators would have to structure the process, identify priorities and divide tasks. They could also set up internal study groups and identify resource persons with expertise in specific areas. To become effective in building pressure and getting concrete results within legislatures and their parties, they should make efforts to enhance their leadership, advocacy, communication, planning and strategising skills.

Women legislators should benefit from the capacity-building initiatives of civil society organisations as well as from any such initiatives undertaken by other support structures, including state institutions. They must avail all opportunities to enhance their knowledge and to be active participants in training workshops and consultative processes on a variety of subjects, since adequate knowledge and understanding of issues as well as proper homework for legislative inputs is the key to effective participation in legislative debates and impressive performance in the legislatures.

(d) Key Recommendations

The recommendations given below have emerged from the issues identified and the perspective gained during the course of this study. Several of these are already part of various reports and recommendations of different committees and commissions set up by the government to review the situation of women in Pakistan, as well as some studies

carried out by civil society organisations and individuals on women's participation in political and public life.

For Effective Participation in Legislatures: To enhance women's effectiveness as legislators, they need to:

- Establish intra-party parliamentary and cross-party parliamentary forums or caucuses to discuss and develop common positions on critical issues relating to women. Cross-party forums can be set up on a minimum programme agenda, e.g. on specific issues of violence against women, enhanced women's representation in public sector, and so on.
- Secure intensive political education on the political system, constitutional law, women's legal rights, issues of democracy and human rights, current political issues, Pakistan's commitments to international instruments, particularly relating to women and children, legislative procedures and rules of business as well as training on communication, leadership and negotiation skills.
- Acquire technical assistance and research input support from the secretariats of assemblies and their respective parties for preparation of bills and legislative inputs and interventions.
- Secure skills and knowledge for effective interventions in the committee system deliberations to debate, lobby and maneuver the legislative business in the standing committees, as well as to offer substantive input in the parliamentary party meetings.
- Devise ways of pooling the development funds received by women legislators for investing in projects/schemes for women's development or for legal aid or protection of survivors of violence against women, e.g. shelter homes or burn units across the country, rather than in some constituencies alone.
- Ensure regular and structured interaction with their own women's wings and women party cadres through well-placed mechanisms within parties, as well as through an increased level of experience-sharing and strategising with them on legislative issues and initiatives relating to women.
- Ensure regular interaction with women's advocacy groups, other civil society organisations and state institutions for capacity-building and advocacy on women's rights and human rights issues, and to give input into policy formulation processes on women's rights and macro-economic issues.
- Establish and develop linkages with women parliamentarians across the world through networking with women parliamentary caucuses existing in several countries (e.g. the Uganda Women's Caucus, the Zimbabwe Women's Parliamentary Caucus, the Southern African Development Community Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus, Congresswomen's Caucus in the United States, and the Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians of the Inter-Parliamentary Union).
- Participate in national, regional and international conferences and workshops on women's rights issues as well to actively become part of the Beijing follow-up, the NPA implementation and the CEDAW monitoring processes.

For Effective Participation as Public Representatives: To ensure effective participation in the political arena and consolidate the initial gains made in legislatures through their existing representation, women public representatives need to:

- Press for enhancement of current 17% proportion of reservation of seats to at least 33% proportion of reservation for women across all elective bodies, including the Senate, National and Provincial Assemblies. Also press for women's share in seats reserved from FATA and federal capital in the NA and PAs, and from FATA in the Senate.
- Ensure that about one-third of seats are reserved for women in all other categories of reserved seats in all elective bodies (seats reserved for non-Muslims in the NA and PAs, and seats reserved for technocrats/ulema in the Senate).
- Ensure that the reserved seats for women in the National and Provincial Assemblies are filled on the basis of direct constituency-based elections by a joint electorate. (Three possible modalities have been discussed in the Report of the Commission of Inquiry for Women, 1997.)
- Ensure that in addition to reserved seats for women, amendments in the appropriate laws are made, whereby it is made mandatory for all political parties contesting national or provincial elections to give a certain minimum percentage (15-20%) of their tickets for general seats to the concerned assembly to women.
- Ensure that the provision of reservation of seats for women in all elective bodies, including the local government, should be for a period of 50 years, which may be reviewed by parliament every 10 years with a view to gradually reducing the proportion if there is sufficient evidence to indicate that more women are coming in on general seats.
- Ensure that political parties bear at least 50% of the financial costs of their women members for contesting general or reserved seats, and provide other support in terms of planning election campaigns, training of female polling staff, providing instructional/educational materials for voters, and ensuring local party structure support.
- Ensure that the security deposit for female election candidates be reduced to encourage more women to contest elections.

For Effective Participation in Political Parties: To ensure increased membership of women in political parties and their representation in decision-making bodies, as well as to make their participation more informed and effective, the women's cadre in political parties must ensure that:

- Political parties maintain and update membership lists, and regular intra-party elections are held on the basis of these lists. Women's wings are responsible for female membership, which may be a joint exercise with the party. The lists of female membership are maintained and regularly updated by the women's wings.
- Amendments in the respective laws are made such that no political party is allowed to contest 30% or more seats in the national or provincial elections unless it has at least 30% female membership and at least 10% of its policy-making body are women. And no party is allowed to contest 15-29% seats unless it has at least 15% membership and at least 5% of its policy-making body are women.
- All positions in women's wings are filled through elections on the basis of lists of female members. Office-bearers have sufficient representation in all party structures, particularly the decision-making bodies, e.g. central and provincial executive committees, parliamentary boards and parliamentary party forums.
- Women's wings become autonomous entities, free to make independent decisions

in accordance with party manifestoes and policies. They are able to develop their own women's rights charters and devise policies on women's rights issues, and are actively involved in the preparation/amendment of the party charters and election manifestoes, particularly in the context of commitments to women's rights.

- Women's wings are provided adequate financial resources by the parties, enabling them to run campaigns for social and political mobilisation and arrange activities in order to broaden the support base of their parties among the masses and the electorate.
- The female membership of the party (or women's wing) is primarily responsible for developing the criteria for women candidates for reserved seats in the Senate, National and Provincial Assemblies, as well as for women candidates for general seats in the NA and PAs. They are involved in the final selection and their decisions are respected as mandatory in accordance with democratic norms and possibly through provisions in party constitutions.
- Regular and structured interaction is maintained among women party cadres, women's wings and women public representatives through formal discussions, experience-sharing meetings and party conventions, under a work plan prepared by women's wings. Similar interaction is also maintained and strengthened among these groups at various tiers, e.g. women councillors, women MPAs/MNAs and women Senators, through specially-arranged consultation meetings, exposure visits and party conventions.
- Legislative monitoring and accountability cells are established in women's wings to monitor and periodically assess the performance of women public representatives, as well as the record of a political party both in terms of its official commitments to women's rights issues and efforts in this regard. These cell(s) shall also keep a record of parties' internal efforts to enhance women's participation, including an assessment of the number of tickets given to women for contesting general seats, support provided to women by the parties, and whether women were given tickets to losing constituencies only.
- Educational programmes are conducted for women in political parties on the political system and women's issues and training programmes on paralegal, leadership and political skills.

For Effective Participation as Constituents/Voters: To enhance women's effective participation as constituents and voters, the following measures are required:

- Regular updating of electoral rolls should be carried out on an annual basis. Female personnel should be employed for female voter registration, with at least one female enumerator in each team across the country. Women should also be inducted in the ECP staff at all levels, including district ECP offices.
- The process of issuance of national identity cards (NIC) should be easy, simple and prompt, particularly in rural and remote areas. The accuracy of women's names on voter lists and NICs can be ensured thus: (a) if women already have NICs, recording their names and other data on the electoral rolls accordingly (or vice versa); (b) if they do not have NICs, instructing them that their cards must bear the same names and other data (or vice versa); (c) devising simple methods for a change of name or data on electoral rolls and NICs; (d) making appropriate changes in laws and rules so that women's names and identity do not undergo any change due to marriage or divorce; and (e) making photographs of women on

- NICs mandatory.
- Special campaigns/drives and proactive efforts (through electronic media, concerned agencies, local government structures, political parties, NGOs/CBOs etc.) should be undertaken to ensure that all eligible women have ID cards and are registered on the electoral rolls. The efforts should focus on tribal and rural women, and also on women with disabilities.
 - Measures should be undertaken by the ECP in collaboration with political parties, local government authorities, NGO/CBOs, and media to ensure that more women participate in the voting process and are knowledgeable about voting procedures. Special efforts must also be made to enable them to make informed political choices.
 - The ECP must maintain and release gender-disaggregated data on voter turnout to enable political parties, women's wings and the constituents to plan future strategies for ensuring women's electoral participation.
 - Separate polling stations must be set up for women, particularly in tribal or conservative rural areas. Trained female staff must be posted at the polling stations; and special security arrangements as well as facilities such as waiting rooms and bathrooms should be available.
 - A campaign on the right of women to vote, the importance of women's vote and voting according to their own choice, through mass media, particularly the electronic media, be carried out in collaboration with women's rights groups.
 - Prompt and strong action be undertaken under the existing penal provisions against parties, candidates, or any other groups or individuals acting to restrain women from registering or voting, or otherwise creating difficulties or impediments in the exercise of their right of franchise. The election be declared null and void in areas where the Election Commission finds evidence, according to some fixed standards, of large scale non-participation of women in voting.
 - The Election Commission female staff, government agencies, local councilors, political parties, NGOs, CBOs and other civil society organisations should engage in special voter education efforts and political education programmes for women voters and constituents through instructional materials, practical demonstrations and exercises, particularly in tribal and remote rural areas.

