

Friday, October 04, 2013

NCSW demands release of gender disaggregated electoral data

Myra Imran
Islamabad

National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) Chairperson Khawar Mumtaz on Thursday suggested Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to release gender disaggregated electoral data of all stages of May 11 elections so that further interventions regarding women political participation can be designed accordingly.

She said information on rejected votes can also give vital insight into the need of voters' education among women. She demanded reserved seats for women in the AJK Legislative Assembly as it is implemented in national and provincial assemblies.

She was speaking at the

post-election multi-stakeholders consultation organised to launch of final report titled 'Finding and Recommendations: General Elections Monitoring Mission (GEM) Pakistan' by Gender Concerns International and Aurat Foundation.

The speakers appreciated the work of ECP besides pointing out areas that still require improvement. They recommended that before elections, every party should be asked to submit report on the number of seats and amount of funds every party is reserving for women candidates.

Presented by Head of GEM Sabra Bano, the report informed that women represented 43.6 per cent of registered voters for the 2013 general elections-37.6 million women were registered

to vote nationwide as compared to 48.6 million men. The report mentions though in the months leading up to May 2013 elections, the ECP recruited 31 new women employees at various levels, women still account for only 1.8 per cent of ECP's 2288 employees. The report recommends 33 per cent allocation of office holding and decision making positions to women at all levels and in all committees and take decisive action against party personnel who engage in preventing women from voting.

It also suggests political parties to allocate special budgets for women candidates for their constituencies especially empowerment related programs. The report demands ECP to build capacities of women in the

commission and ensure gender balance at all levels of decision making. The document also stresses the ECP to ensure effective method of collecting gender-disaggregated data. It suggests separate male and female polling stations in areas where required. The report recommends more women election observers in upcoming elections.

The report says that a significant number of reserved seats for women in the National Assembly were awarded to friends and family members of top political leaders. Some of them even lost on May 11 elections but have joined the National Assembly as parliamentarians via reserved seats. After elections 2013, the percentage of women parliamentarians was 19.29 per

cent. It is significant to mention that without the affirmative measure of reserved seats, the amount would have only been 1.75 per cent.

Speaking on this occasion, representative of Aurat Foundation Farkhanda Aurangzeb suggested effective election observation by the government bodies as the only way to ensure transparency in the electoral process.

Journalist Shahid Masood pointed out areas in the electoral process that still need improvement. He said many recommendations mentioned in the report were pointed out by media after 2008 elections but not much improved in the 2013 elections which was disappointing and food for thought for the ECP. Gender Concerns International (GCI) monitored May Election 2013 in Pakistan from a distinct gender perspective.

GCI conducted mission in partnership with Aurat Foundation. All 120 female observers observed 555 polling stations across the country.