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Gender Election Monitoring Mission launched for election



By Ijaz Kakakhel

ISLAMABAD: To monitor arrangements for women voters in general election, the Gender Concerns International (GCI) in partnership with local gender based organisation has launched its Gender Election Monitoring Mission in Pakistan.

Aurat Foundation will assist the GCI in monitoring arrangements in specific areas of the country. The GEM Mission is the only observation mission organised by an international NGO that has been accredited by Election Commission of Pakistan. Prior to the press conference a 'Multi-stakeholders Round Table on Inclusive Democracy & Gender Concerns Election 2013 Pakistan' was organised here at a local hotel.

The GEM Mission will monitor the elections with a focus on women's participation. Both the organisations have already signed a MoU on March 1, 2013, under which 10 international and 50 national observers will monitor the coming elections from a gender perspective.

A team of women gender experts and international observers (IOs) will be deployed to their respective observation stations to observe the electoral process on May 11. The IOs will be joined by fifty female observers from Pakistan, who have been recruited and appointed by the Aurat Foundation.

The GEM Mission's international observer team includes Sabra Bano, Head of the Mission, Magda De Meyer, the Deputy Head of the Mission who have monitored previous elections in Libya (2012), Morocco (2011), Tunisia (2011), and Pakistan (2008).

Farkhanda Aurangzaib, Chief Coordinator, GEM Domestic Observers, Aurat Foundation, is coordinating the 50 domestic observers, from Sindh, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad Capital Territory.

"If the general election process is not inclusive of women, it won't bring true democracy", said Sabra Bano while sharing the objectives of the GEM Mission.

Earlier in the day, expert international trainers held training workshops for GEM domestic observers on 'how to observe the general elections with gender lenses.'

The trainers also laid down and discussed a comprehensive observation methodology developed through Gender Concerns International's experience in election observation and promoting gender inclusive governance throughout the Middle East and North Africa Region and parts of Asia.

Sabra Bano said the mission wants to visit Balochistan for monitoring purposes but the local organisation and security experts stopped them for going there. She stressed that they had worked in conflict areas in different countries like Libya and Afghanistan.