AURAT FOUNDATION

LEGISLATIVE WATCH

Founded by Shahla Zia Patron-in-Chief: Nigar Ahmad

2013 elections - women's representation in legislatures

By Maliha Zia

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There are a total of 228 women overall in the National and Provincial Assemblies: 70 in the National Assembly, 141 in all four of the Provincial Assemblies, whereas 17 are in the Senate. Their overall proportion of representation is 19.5 % i.e. 228 out of 1170 members (**Table 1**). *(During 2002-2007 and 2008-2013 it was 19.9 %. Since 2008, there has been a decrease of 6 MNAs in the National Assembly and one member in the Senate).*

Of the 228 women, 205 are on reserved seats for women; 21 have won on general seats and 2 have come on reserved seats for non-Muslims.

Of the 141 women in the Provincial Assemblies: 76 are in Punjab Assembly; 31 are in Sindh Assembly; 22 are in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly; and 12 are in the Balochistan Assembly.

Of these 228: 116 belong to PML-N; 41 belong to PPPP; 23 belong to PTI; 15 belong to MQM; 9 belong to JUI-F; 4 belong to PMAP; 3 each belong to ANP and PML-F; 2 each belong to PML, BNP-A, QWP, JI, National Party; and 1 each belong to AJIP, NPP, PML-Z and PML-Q. (**Table 5 on Page 2**)

Table 1: Women's Legislative Representation after 2013 Elections

Legislatures	Women elected on reserved seats		Women elected on general seats		Women elected on reserved seats for minorities		Number of women out of total in all categories	% of women's overall representation
	Number of total	% of total	Number of total	% of total	Number of total	% of total		
National Assembly	60/342	17.5	9/272	3.3	1/10	10	70/342	20.5
Senate	17/100	17	-	-	-	-	17/100	17
Punjab Assembly	66/371	17.8	9/295	3.0	1/8	12.5	76/371	20.5
Sindh Assembly	29/168	17.3	2/130	1.5	0/9	0	31/168	18.5
Khyber Paktunkhwa Assembly	22/124	17.7	0/99	0	0/3	0	22/124	17.7
Balochistan Assembly	11/65	16.9	1/51	2.0	0/3	0	12/65	18.5
OVERALL	**205/1170**	**17.5**	**21/847**	**2.5**	**2/33**	**6.0**	**228/1170**	**19.5**

In the National Assembly:

- There are currently 70 women out of a total of 342 i.e. 20.5%). *(During 2008-2013 their representation was 76 out of a total of 342 i.e. 22.2%).*
- Of the 70 women: 60 are on reserved seats for women, 9 have come in on general seats and 1 came in on a reserved seat for non-Muslims.
- Of these: 39 belong to PML-N; 13 belong to PPPP; 6 belong to PTI; 4 belong to JUI-F; 4 belong to MQM; 1 each belongs to PML-F, PMAP, JI and NPP.

In the Senate:

- There are currently 17 out of a total of 100 i.e. 17%. The Senate members were elected in 2009 and 2012. The next elections for half the House will be held in 2015.
- Of the 17 women currently in the Senate: 8 belong to PPPP; 2 each belong to PML-N, ANP, BNP-A; and MQM; and 1 belongs to PML.

In the Punjab Assembly:

- There are currently 76 out of a total of 371 i.e. 20.5%. *(During 2008-2013 their representation was the same, 76 out of 371 i.e. 20.5% whereas during 2002-2007 there representation was less, 73 out of 371 i.e. 19.7%).*
- Of the 76 women, 66 are on reserved seats for women; 9 have come in on general seats. 1 has come in on a reserved seats for non-Muslims;
- Of these: 67 belong to PML-N; 6 belong to PTI; 1 each belongs to PPPP, PML, PML-Z.

In the Sindh Assembly:

- There are currently 31 out of a total of 168 i.e. 18.5%. *(During 2008-2013, their representation was a little less, 30 out of 168 i.e. 17.8%, whereas it was higher during 2002-2007, 33 out of 168 i.e. 19.6%).*
- Of the 31 women, 29 are on reserved seats for women, 2 have come in on general seats.
- Of these: 18 belong to PPPP; 9 belong to MQM; 2 belong to PML-F; 1 each belongs to PML-N and PTI.

In the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly:

- There are currently 22 out of a total of 124 i.e. 17.7%. *(During 2008-2013, their representation was the same, 22 out of 124 i.e. 17.7%, whereas it was higher during 2002-2007, 23 out of 124 i.e. 18.5%).*
- All the 22 women are on reserved seats for women.
- Of these: 10 women belong to PTI; 3 each belong to JUI-F and PML-N; 2 belong to QWP; 1 each belongs to PPPP, ANP, JI and AJIP.

In the Balochistan Assembly:

- There are currently 12 out of a total of 65 i.e. 18.5% *(During 2008-2013 and 2002-2007, their representation was the same, 12 out of 65 i.e. 18.5%).*
- Of these 12 women, 11 are on reserved seats for women, and 1 woman won on a general seat.
- Of these: 4 belong to PML-N; 3 belong to Pashtoonkhwa Milli Awami Party; 2 each belong to National Party and JUI-F, and 1 belongs to PML-Q.

A new generation of women legislators arrives

By Wasim Wagha

Research input from Mumtaz Mughal (Lahore), Saima Munir (Peshawar), Rubina Brohi & Shirin Khan (Karachi), Allauddin Khilji (Quetta), Shamaila Tanvir (Islamabad)

General Elections 2013 heralded into a parliamentary era that is characterized by the arrival of an overwhelming number of new entrants into all national and provincial assemblies with enormous challenges of grave nature glaring straight into their eyes. This is also true in the case of women parliamentarians.

An initial survey conducted by Aurat Foundation reveals that there are overall 141 newcomers out of a total number of 211 women elected on reserved as well as on general seats in National Assembly and four provincial assemblies (**Table 2**). The percentage of new comers is around 66.8% of the total women parliamentarians.

Table 2: Women Parliamentarians' Legislative Experience

Assembly	First Term	Second Term	Third Term	Fourth Term	Fifth Term	Total
National Assembly	37	23	8	1	1	70
Punjab Assembly	60	12	4	0	0	76
Sindh Assembly	20	5	6	0	0	31
Khyber Paktunkhwa Assembly	18	2	2	0	0	22
Balochistan Assembly	6	3	3	0	0	12
Total	**141**	**45**	**23**	**1**	**1**	**211**

On reserved seats the overall number of newcomers for women in National Assembly and four Provincial Assemblies is 129 out of a total of 188 seats, i.e. 68.6% of the total **(Senate is not included).**

On general seats in National Assembly and four Provincial Assemblies, 12 women were elected for

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Women's participation as voters in 2013 elections

This article has relied upon information from GEM observation mission from Gender Concerns International; EU Election Observation Mission, Pakistan 2013 Final Report General Elections - 11 May 2013; and the International Federation for Electoral Systems (IFES).

Staff Report

The elections of May 2013 proved to have a number of diverse results from a gender perspective, with both positive and negative outcomes. The participation of the public at large in the elections despite all threats of violence and other obstacles and the voices raised in indignation of reported cases of rigging and other electoral violations in encouraging with regards to voter's political input and education. It must be noted that the voter turnout has increased from 2008.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) performed well in the pre-election phase. There was a concentrated and concerted effort to increase the registration of women as voters, especially in less developed areas.

The ECP partnered with National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) to work towards this goal, using the Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC). This effort yielded positive results with higher number of registered female voters. Alongside civil society initiatives, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and National Database and Registration Authority also implemented a temporary, semi-automatic voter registration process when citizens register for their CNICs.

However, despite these efforts, reportedly, 10 million of eligible Pakistani women remained unregistered and unable to vote. The ECP also took positive steps which included increasing polling stations with the intention to move them closer to women's residences; introduction of an SMS facility to assist the public in identifying where to vote and under which number (however this assistance was limited to the literate public only - the illiterate public remained dependent on political party camps).

The election day brought forth a number of issues which were overlooked or not sufficiently managed by the ECP. This includes standard polling stations with lack of privacy, inadequate physical space, chaos etc; the lack of a complete regulatory framework resulting in a great deal of ad hocism and lack of proper reporting to the central office; too much delegated powers of the ROs, without sufficient regulation or central oversight; reports of rigging; reports of women not being allowed to vote in certain union councils; short comings in complaints resolution; flaws in procedure by polling agents etc.

> "The ECP, despite stating the intention to collect and release gender disaggregated electoral data on all stages of the elections, has failed to do so. This is a great setback for enhancing women's future political participation."

With regards to women specifically, a number of women polling stations had male presiding officers. In certain cases, husbands or fathers were 'assisting' the female presiding officer. While an overall turnout of female voters was observed in a number of regions, with women in some union councils, such as Lilliani and Moazamabad, voted for the first time ever. In other regions, women were once again barred or socially terrorized into not voting.

The ECP, despite stating the intention to collect and release gender disaggregated electoral data on all stages of the elections, has failed to do so. This is a great setback for enhancing women's future political participation. Once the gender disaggregated data and data on rejected votes is shared with the public, it can give vital insight into the need of voters' education amongst women. The demand for the release of this data must be reiterated at each and every opportunity to ensure the ECP fulfills its state intention.

The lapses of the Election Commission of Pakistan and the lack of gender disaggregated data are issues which must be raised and addressed by the ECP, especially in time for the local government elections which are scheduled to be held soon. It is vital that the gaps and lacunas identified by various organizations must be noted, compiled and shared with the ECP as soon as possible to enhance its role, transparency and performance in time for the local government elections and the next elections.

Table 3: Registered Voters: 2013 Election

Region	Total Voters	Women Voters & %		Men Voters & %	
Sindh	18963375	8472744	44.68%	10490631	55.32%
Punjab	49259334	21561633	43.77%	27697701	56.22%
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	12266157	5257624	42.86%	7008533	57.14%
Balochistan	3336659	1421271	42.60%	1915388	57.40%
FATA	1738313	596079	3.29%	1142234	65.71%
Federal Area	625964	288064	46.01%	337900	53.98%
Grand Total	**86189802**	**37597415**	**43.62%**	**48592387**	**56.38%**

Table 4: Comparison of Turnout in Elections 2008 - 2013

Province / Region	Turnout 2013	Turnout 2008
Punjab	60%	48%
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	45%	34%
Sindh	54%	44%
Balochistan	43%	31%
FATA	36%	31%
Total	**55%**	**44%**

Table 5: Party Position of Women Legislators: After 2013 Elections

R for Reserved seat
G for General seat
M for Minorities seat

	National Assembly			Senate	Punjab PA			Sindh PA		KP PA		Balochistan PA		Total
	R	G	M	R	R	G	M	R	G	R	G	R	G	
Pakistan Muslim Leaque - Nawaz (PML-N)	35	4	-	2	58	9	-	1	-	3	-	3	1	**116**
Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP)	8	5	-	8	1	-	-	16	2	1	-	-	-	**41**
Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)	6	-	-	-	5	-	1	1	-	10	-	-	-	**23**
Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM)	4	-	-	2	-	-	-	9	-	-	-	-	-	**15**
Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam - Fazal-ur-Rehman (JUI-F)	3	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	2	-	**9**
Pushtoonkhwa Milli Awami Party (PMAP)	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	**4**
Awami National Party (ANP)	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	**3**
Pakistan Muslim League - Functional (PML-F)	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	**3**
Balochistan National Party (BNP-A)	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	**2**
Qaumi Watan Party (QWP)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	**2**
National Party (NP)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	**2**
Pakistan Muslim Leaque (PML)	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	**2**
Jamaat-e-Islami (JI)	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	**2**
Pakistan Muslim League - Quaid (PML-Q)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	**1**
National Peoples Party (NPP)	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	**1**
Pakistan Muslim League - Zia (PML-Z)	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	**1**
Awami Jamhoori Ittehad Pakistan (AJIP)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	**1**
Total	**60**	**9**	**1**	**17**	**66**	**9**	**1**	**29**	**2**	**22**	**0**	**11**	**1**	**228**

Number of women candidates rises sharply in 2013 elections

By Wasim Wagha
With research input from
AF's rigional offices

The tremendous increase in the number of women coming up as candidates for general seats of the National Assembly and four Provincial Assemblies in 2013 elections reflects their increased level of participation in politics as compared to 2008 elections.

The figures in this regard as reported in these columns show that number of women contestants on general seats went up sharply as overall 419 women entered into the electoral race in 2013 for general seats as compared to overall 192 women contestants in 2008.

It requires extensive research and analysis to determine the factors behind this increase, however, there is no denying the fact that women have shown much more interest in electoral activity that borders politics in the current elections (2013) than in all previous general elections.

Overall, 419 women stood up as candidates for general seats in general elections 2013 for National Assemblies and all four Provincial Assemblies, Of the 419 women contestants, 160 women received political party tickets and 259 contested elections as independents, according to a review of election results released by Election Commission of Pakistan by the Aurat Foundation's regional teams. (In 2008 elections, overall 192 women contested elections; 78 on party tickets and 114 as independents).

Overall, MQM awarded highest number of tickets to women, i.e. 25 for National and Provincial Assemblies, followed by PPPP which gave ticket to 24 women. 20 tickets were awarded by PML-N; 16 by APML; 12 by PTI; 11 by PML-Q, 5 each by PML-F and PP-SB; 4 each by PNML and MWMP; 3 each by AMLP and AJPP; 2 each by ANP, PGP, PCP, STPP, QWP, TTP and PJP. Several other smaller parties each gave ticket to 1 woman.

For the National Assembly, a total number of 135 women contested election in 2013 on general seats. Only 9 won their seats and became members of the National Assembly **(See Table 9 on Page 8-9)**; 14 ended up as runners-up while bagging enormous votes and some losing with close margin, and 4 finished in the race at third position **(See Table 8 on Page 5)**. The rest of the 107 women candidates, who secured fewer votes, either belonged to smaller and local parties or they contested election as independent candidates.

Of the 135 women contestants, 61 women contested election on party ticket and 71 entered the race as independents for altogether 113 National Assembly constituencies. (In 2008, 72 women candidates were contesting 63 constituencies of the National assembly; 41 on party tickets and 31 as independents).

Table 6: Women Contesting General Seats on Party Tickets or as independents in 2013 Elections

Party	Punjab		Sindh		Khyber Pakhtunkhwa		Balochistan		ICT	Total
	NA	PP	NA	PS	NA	PK	NA	BS		
MQM	6	10	2	5	0	2	0	0	0	25
PPPP	7	5	5	5	1	1	0	0	0	24
PML-N	6	9	1	2	0	1	1	0	0	20
APML	3	5	0	5	0	2	0	1	0	16
PTI	5	4	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	12
PML	1	3	0	5	0	1	1	0	0	11
PML-F	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	5
PP-SB	0	1	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	5
PNML	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
MWMP	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	4
Others*	6	9	4	7	4	3	0	0	1	34
Independents	46	112	13	51	13	16	1	6	1	259
Total	**82**	**162**	**30**	**89**	**18**	**26**	**3**	**7**	**2**	**419**

NA: National Assembly - **PP:** Provincial Assembly Punjab - **PS:** Provincial Assembly Sindh - **PK:** Provincial Assembly Khyber Pakhtunkhwa - **BS:** Provincial Assembly Balochistan.

* Other mainstream or regional political parties who fielded three or less candidates.

The figures for general elections 2013 on general seats where women took part show upward trend in all respects: for instance, 61 women contested election on a political party ticket in 2013, whereas in 2008, 41 women received political party ticket. Similarly, the number of women contesting as independent candidates in 2013 also jumped to 74 as compared to 31 women in 2008.

Among the 61 women candidates who received party tickets, 13 were awarded tickets by PPPP, 8 were awarded tickets by PML-N, another 8 were awarded tickets by MQM; PTI awarded tickets to 6 women candidates, PML-F and APML (All Pakistan Muslim League) each gave ticket to 3 women, ANP, PML-Q, Pakistan National Muslim League (PNML) and Awami Justice Party Pakistan (AJPP) each gave ticket to 2 women, whereas JUI-F, PML-J, Masawat Party (MP), Pakistan Aman Party (PAP), Pakistan Justice Party (PJP), Pakistan Gharib Party (PGP), Pakistan Seraiki Party (PSP), Peoples Party- Shaheed Bhuttu (PP-SB), Majlis-e-Wahadal Muslimeen (MWM), Pakistan Conservative Party (PCP), Sindh Taraqi Pasand Party (STPP) and Qaumi Awami Tehreek (QAT) each gave party ticket to 1 woman.

Among the National Assembly seats, there were 18 women candidates who contested 15 National Assembly constituencies in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The courage of women in FATA also made headlines in 2013 when 2 women stood up against all odds and contested elections in 2 constituencies. From Islamabad Capital Territory 2 women contested from 2 National Assembly seats. From Punjab, 82 women candidates contested from 63 constituencies, whereas from Sindh 32 women contested from 21 constituencies. In Balochistan 2 women contested 3 National Assembly seats.

One women candidate contested from 4 National Assembly constituencies, another 1 contested from 3 constituencies and 5 women candidates contested election on 2 constituencies each.

For the Punjab Provincial Assembly, a total number of 162 women contested election in 2013 on general seats. Of the 162 women contestants, 50 women contested election on party ticket and 112 entered the electoral race as independents. (In 2008, 73 women candidates contested election). Of 50 women who received party tickets, MQM gave ticket to 10 women; PML-N to 9 women; PPPP and APML each to 5 women; PTI to 4 and PML-Q to 3 women and; PNML and MWMP each to 2 women. Some other 9 smaller parties each gave ticket to 1 woman.

For the Sindh Provincial Assembly, a total number of 89 women contested election in 2013 on general seats. Of the 89 women contestants, 38 women contested election on party ticket and 51 entered the electoral race as independents. (In 2008, 28 women candidates contested election). Of 38 women who received party tickets, PPPP, MQM, APML and PML-Q each gave ticket to 5 women; PP-SB and AMLP each gave ticket to 3 women and PML-N, PTI, PML-F and MWMP each to 2 women. Some other 4 smaller parties each gave ticket to 1 woman.

For the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial Assembly, a total number of 26 women contested election in 2013 on general seats. Of the 26 women contestants, 10 women contested election on party ticket and 16 entered the electoral race as independents. (In 2008, 11 women candidates contested election). Of 10 women who received party tickets, QWP, APML and MQM each gave ticket to 2 women; PPPP, PML-N, PML-Q and TTP each gave ticket to 1 woman.

For the Balochistan Provincial Assembly, a total number of 7 women contested election in 2013 on general seats. Of the 7 women contestants, only APML awarded ticket to 1 woman and rest of the 6 contested elections as independents. (In 2008, 8 women candidates contested election; the only province where the number of women candidates did not increase)

Winners & runners-up: Out of a total of 419 women candidates on general seats for National Assembly and Provincial Assemblies, 21 were elected. Of these 21, 9 won National Assembly seats; 9 Punjab Provincial Assembly seats; 2 Sindh Provincial Assembly seats; and 1 Balochistan Provincial Assembly seat. **(See Table 9 on Page 8-9)**. All winners belonged to political parties and none of the independents won any seat.

There were 18 runners-up in the race of general seats for National Assembly. Of these, 14 stood second and 4 at third position. 16 contested election on party ticket and 2 were independents. **(See Table 8 on Page 5)**.

Table 7: Women Contesting General Seats in 2013 & 2008 Elections - A Comparison at a Glance

2013 General Elections			
Assemblies	**Political Parties**	**Independents**	**Total**
National Assembly	61	74	**135**
Provincal Assemblies	99	185	**284**
Total	**160**	**259**	**419**
2008 General Elections			
Assemblies	**Political Parties**	**Independents**	**Total**
National Assembly	41	31	**72**
Provincal Assemblies	37	83	**120**
Total	**78**	**114**	**192**

Women's political participation: expectations and challenges

By Anis Haroon

Women's equitable participation in politics and governance of the State has been a long standing objective and demand of the women's movement in Pakistan. Women's political participation is a fundamental requirement for building and sustaining democracy. Furthermore, with women comprising half of the population of Pakistan, it is necessary for their voices to be adequately heard in the Government and politics at all levels through their own representatives.

Women have increasingly made spaces for themselves in politics not just through the continuation of reserved seats for women in the legislative bodies of Pakistan, but also with a number of women aggressively fighting for their spaces, taking strong stances and demanding their inclusion and participation as well as consistently working for their constituencies, including women and to improve their performances through constant learning. It has become increasingly clear that women can no longer be silent spectators and non participants in the legislative assemblies.

Nevertheless, the positive strides that have been taken by various women in different segments of politics in pushing the agenda of women's political participation, there still leaves much to be desired. While a number of women have worked towards proving themselves, there are an equal number of women who have not been open and participatory. Furthermore, while the socio-cultural and political environment can no longer completely ignore women, it continues to be unsupportive and unwelcoming to women, working to minimize their space.

With the elections having been conducted in May 2013, an analysis of the legislative assemblies and its final formation upon culmination of by-elections etc, provides an overall actual picture of women's representation. Simultaneously, it becomes important to re-visit some of the principles of women's political participation in order to remind ourselves of the basic concepts of the importance, expectations of women in politics and identify obstacles they face.

Women's Reserved Seats

Women's reserved seats remain a critical element in improving women's political participation. As noted above, with approximately half of the world's population and approximately half of Pakistan's population, consisting of women, it is essential to have women's presence and voices in the assemblies through their chosen representatives.

There is no denying the fact that democratic political systems have always been patriarchal and have excluded women's presence and participation. This has been reflective of society's own biases against women participating in public and political life. This issue has been time and again picked up at international level with specific clauses in the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action amongst others. With approximately half of the population of most countries, including Pakistan, being women, it is essential for their voices to be heard in the legislative assemblies through their own representatives.

The main objective of reserved seats for women in Pakistan is to correct the historical imbalance in a democratic political system. The core idea is to put in place temporary special measures mandating the recruitment and inclusion of a minimum number of women in legislative assemblies to ensure women's representation and the raising of women's voices and issues in the assemblies. It is envisaged that reserved seats for women will pave the way for women to enter into direct politics with the support and trust of the electorate.

Women's reserved seats have been a priority objective and demand of the women's movement in Pakistan. Currently, 17% seats in the Senate, National and Provincial Assembly have been reserved for women on the basis of proportional representation.

The original and continued demand of the women's movement is 33% reserved seats for women in all legislative assemblies: Senate, National Assembly, Provincial Assembly and local government.

There is a logical reason behind this specific demand. 33% would allow women to have a viable majority in legislative bodies to have a positive and actual impact in bringing and passing laws and overall gender mainstreaming. A decreased percentage results in women remaining in minority and not being able to support each other in a voting bloc and would therefore require support from male colleagues - support which is difficult to get and is often not forthcoming, especially on women's rights issues.

The demand of the women's movement has also been to identify women-only constituencies to allow women to participate in elections on direct election basis in order to give them the experience of elections, as well as encourage public confidence on women politicians and political representatives. This has not been granted, with seats being distributed amongst women candidates proposed by political parties in proportion to the number of seats won by each party in each legislative body on the basis of the first past the post system.

The women's movement in Pakistan continues to demand for 33% reserved seats for women in all legislative bodies and for women to contest on direct elections in women-only constituencies. The women's movement also demands for political parties to give a minimum of 10% tickets to women to fight on general seats.

This demand was supported by the National Assembly Women's Parliamentarian Caucus, who held a meeting with all political parties in 2012 with these exact demands. The political party heads and members all agreed to give this serious consideration but have never seriously addressed these demands.

The 17% quota for women currently in place in the Senate, National and Provincial Assemblies in Pakistan has nevertheless had positive results with women continuing to create spaces for themselves with actively participating in legislative functions despite all obstacles. It is important to keep this momentum going and further support and confidence to be placed in women to allow them to transcend into general politics.

"The decrease of women in the legislative assemblies, the reduction of women's reserved seats in local government and the decrease of women in senior positions such as ministers, speaker, advisors and cabinet members in the federal and provincial governments are all symptoms and evidences of the backward movement of Pakistani society in the context of gender equality and reforms."

It is extremely unfortunate to see that the reserved seats for women in local governments have been lessened in all provinces. The previous national law on local governments made an allocation of 33% women in local government. This proved to be successful with the large amounts of women participation and successful performances. It is difficult to comprehend why each province has since then reduced the reserved seats for women.

The need for continued and enhanced percentage of reserved seats becomes clearer with an examination and analysis of the election results for 2013 in comparison with the previous two elections. While the number of women in the legislative bodies in 2002 and 2008 remained steady, there has in fact been a decrease of women's representation in 2013 by 6 women. This means that instead of a hoped for increase of women successfully winning elections on general seats, their chances have in fact reduced. This does call for further examination as to whether it is the society's lack of trust of women candidates or the lack of support from political parties to give women tickets for winnable seats - it becomes clear that the need for reserved seats is as important as ever.

In terms of our social environment, Pakistan has gone backwards instead of forward. There has been more hostility towards women; there is an onslaught of extremism as a whole. This makes society more dangerous for women, with women more vulnerable as politicians when they go for campaigning and their work; as public figures, in the general mounting discrimination against them and increasing violence - to which women are more prone to.

The decrease of women in the legislative assemblies, the reduction of women's reserved seats in local government and the decrease of women in senior positions such as ministers, speaker, advisors and cabinet members in the federal and provincial governments are all symptoms and evidences of the backward movement of Pakistani societyin the context of gender equality and reforms. With this environment, reserved seats for women are extremely important and must be increased!

Expectations of Women in Legislative Assemblies

One of the primary objectives of inclusion of women in the legislative bodies is to have representatives of women in the society and the vocalization of women's issues. Therefore the biggest expectation of women political representatives is to consistently and regularly focus and raise women's issues in the legislative bodies.

It is important to emphasize that the expectation does not mean women political representatives should not be taking up and be involved in other topics such as economics, terrorism or foreign affairs, but that they should ensure a gender focus. Gender is a cross-cutting issue and must be raised on all themes, topics and forums.

Women politicians must familiarize themselves with issues and needs of women from every point of view and in all aspects. They must not only be focusing on the issue in laws and policies, but must also push the women's agenda within their own meetings, their assemblies and their own political parties.

My own experience has shown me that women who have been part of the women's movement or involved in social activism have played a key role in bringing progressive laws on women and have been successful in

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Women's political participation: expectations and challenges

From Page 4

bringing positive focus on women's issues. It is important for political parties to also focus on their selection process of women they nominate on reserved seats. It is essential that these women also have the capacity, knowledge and awareness to raise pertinent issues from a gender perspective.

Women politicians and political parties must realize the importance of the role of these women and carrying the women's agenda. A number of women often state that they do not have time to focus on women issues and choose to focus on development work in their districts. However, they must be reminded that their primary function is legislation and advocacy. There is a great importance and value of a member of the legislative assemblies raising an issue in the assembly. Raising women's concerns will therefore receive more credibility, support and focus when raised and legislated on by women political representatives.

Importance of the Women's Caucus

One of the most successful and important tools used by the last National Assembly was the formation of the Women's Parlimentarian Caucus. Women from all parties came together in a cross party alliance to work together on women's issues. The women's caucus proved to be extremely successful with women recognizing that gender issues cross all lines of party ideology and the only way to be truly successful was to be unified. They recognized that with unity comes action. The MNAs started raising gender issues together in the public eye and individually within their own parties and this bore fruit with the largest number of progressive pro-women laws being passed by the 13th National Assembly.

This experience of coming across party lines on women's issues also proved successful in Sindh in the passage of a law on domestic violence, which was unanimously supported by women MPAs from all parties under the leadership of the Women Development Department.

This mechanism is an extremely successful and supportive tool for women in legislative assemblies. The National Assembly and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly are reportedly forming their caucus and it is hoped that the women in the rest of the Assemblies will all follow.

National and Provincial Commissions on the Status of Women

From my experience, women politicians and the Government prefer to rely upon government institutions when possible as opposed to reaching out to civil society for support and assistance. The National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) has played a key role in the progressive work and focus on women's issues at the national level.

It is extremely important that an independent and technically strong Provincial Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) be formed in all provinces. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is the only province which has a PCSW, but reservations to its formation and its independence remain. It is vital to advocate and lobby for the formation and support of PCSWs in all provinces.

Obstacles Faced by Women Political Representatives

While placing all these expectations on women political representatives, it is also important to recognize obstacles that women face. Women continue to be discriminated against due to social biases. Furthermore, with the current methodology of the reserved seats, women are considered to be on 'charity' seats and therefore are not given the respect and power to that of male colleagues. In many cases, their funds are taken away from them and used by other party members, leaving them unable to work in their districts or on issues they wish to focus on. Furthermore, without a sizable majority in the legislative bodies, they are bound to constantly negotiate with their male colleagues and senior party members for their support. It is akin to campaigning, when these women have to go 'door to door' to ask for support.

There is often a lack of capacity of women who have been nominated on reserved seats. As discussed above, women who have been active in the women's movement or social activism and movement have been seen to be more successful due to their understanding and appreciation of the issues. Many women are at a lose end without the capacity and without requisite training from their political parties or through the Government. As a result, they remain silent and non-participatory. It is necessary for political parties to firstly set a standard and criteria for women whom they nominate on reserved seats and secondly to provide them adequate training and support for their work as legislators.

The lack of electoral reforms and the large constituencies make it difficult for women to contest elections on their own and as a result the playing field is not level for women to have a fighting chance in elections and winning seats on their own in the legislative bodies.

There has been little support from political parties to women politicians. Political parties support and include women only when pressurized. There is a tokenism in including women's wings and women workers, but no real and actual changes have been made to state that political parties actively support women. Women do not hold senior positions in the parties, are not always members in key committees, including decision making committees. All political parties are primarily male dominated and there is a hesitation and reluctance to offer positions and space to women.

There is a continuing demand from the women's movement that the concept of reserved seats and quota must also be mandatory for political parties as well.

Conclusion

It is unfortunate to see that the current social and political environment cannot be seen to support women and creating women's spaces. The current federal Government has only two female ministers. Government structures such as the NCSW, the Sindh Human Rights Commission and Gender Crime Cells remain unsupported financially or in kind and are not a priority for this Government. The merger of the Ministry of Human Rights with the Ministry of Law demonstrates the priority of the Government to human rights as a whole. Other provincial Governments, such as the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government has clearly stated and demonstrated that women is not a priority concern for them.

In this scenario, the role of women political representatives is even more important. It falls to them to draw more and more attention to women's issues and demand the federal and provincial Governments are not allowed to back pedal on promises made and in fact start a forward movement on the protection and empowerment of women in Pakistan.

—The author is a women's rights activist, member Board of Governors of Aurat Foundation and ex-Chairperson, National Commission on the Status of Women.

Table 8: Women Runners-up on General Seats for National Assembly in 2013 Elections

Sr No	Name of the women candidate	Party Affiliation	Constituency	Votes secured	Position
1	Ms. Tahmina Daultana	PML-N	NA-169 Vehari	72956	Second
2	Ms. Hina Manzoor	PTI	NA-54 Rawalpindi	68687	Second
3	Dr. Rahila Gul Magsi	PML-N	NA-223 Tando Allahyar	68118	Second
4	Bibi Yasmeen Shah	PML-F	NA-225 Badin	65258	Second
5	Dr. Yasmin Rashid	PTI	NA-120 Lahore	52354	Second
6	Dr. Firdous Ashiq Awan	PPPP	NA-111 Sialkot	51046	Second
7	Ms. Ayesha Nazeer Jat	IND	NA-167 Vehari	43703	Second
8	Ms. Natasha Daultana	PPPP	NA-168 Vehari	42292	Second
9	Ms. Saima Akhtar Bharwana	PML-N	NA-90 Jhang	41620	Second
10	Ms. Zartaj Gul Akhwand	PTI	NA-172 Dera Ghazi Khan	38643	Third
11	Ms. Amjad Ali Warraich	PMNL	NA-92 Toba Tek Singh	36871	Third
12	Ms. Shafeeqa Bagum Rao	PPPP	NA-144 Okara	36723	Second
13	Ms. Samina Khalid Ghurki	PPPP	NA-130 Lahore	32569	Second
14	Ms. Mehtab Akbar Rashidi	PML-F	NA-2 Larkana	32006	Second
15	Ms. Khushbakht Shujat	MQM	NA-250 Karachi	30365	Second
16	Ms. Ghinwa Bhutto	PP-SB	NA-207 Larkana	28195	Second
17	Ms. Sadia Bano	IND	NA-138 Kasur	26441	Third
18	Ms. Maryam Batool	PTI	NA-195 Rahim Yar Khan	18374	Third

LEGISLATIVE WATCH

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AAWAZ National Conference on 'Women, Peace and Social Harmony' calls for gender reforms

Staff Report

There is not much to celebrate while commemorating '16 days of Activism on Ending Violence against Women' in 2013. Things have deteriorated more than they have improved, generally in the context of women's overall condition in the society, and in particular, with regards to state responsiveness on women's concern. This was the crux of the national moot 'Women, peace and Social Harmony' held on 9 December 2013, at National Council of Arts, Islamabad, to conclude the 16 days of activism campaign by AAWAZ-Voice and Accountability Programme. The 16 Days of Activism is an international campaign on ending violence against women.

AAWAZ, consortium of five well known civil society organizations of Pakistan including Aurat Foundation, South Asia Partnership-Pakistan, Strengthening Participatory Organization, Sungi Development Foundation, and Sustainable Development Policy Institute with DAI being the managing partner organised series of activities across 45 districts of Punjab and Khyber Pukhtunkhwa, on this occasion.

A documentary titled 'Aawaz and Aurat' was shown on the occasion. Ms. Kishwar Naheed, renowned poet and rights activist, spoke briefly after the screening of the documentary. She had recited her poem in the short film. Mr. Harris Khalique, Team Leader of AAWAZ, presented her a bouque for her services to the women's rights movement. Ms. Rabeea Hadi and Ms. Feroza Zahra moderated the event.

The National conference was chaired by Ms. Khawar Mumtaz, Chairperson, National Commission on the Status of Women. Other speakers included Barrister Zafar Ullah Khan, Federal Secretary, Law Justice and Human Rights, Justice (R) Nasira Javed Iqbal, Allama Tahir Ashrafi, Chairman, Pakistan Ulema Council, Ms. Neelam Toru, Chairperson, Provincial Commission on the Status of Women, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Mr. Naeem Mirza from Aurat Foundation and Mr. Sajid Mansoor Qaisrani from Sungi Development Foundation.

The speakers at the conference demanded gender reforms, implementation of pro-women laws and enactment of legislation on domestic violence. The conference started with the welcome note by Mr. Sajid Mansoor Qaisrani. In his remarks he said that justice can never be established in society unless women who constitute half the population are freed from violence. Ms. Anbreen Ajaib gave a brief history of 16 days of activism campaign and its relevance with current socio-political situation of women in Pakistan.

Barrister Zafar Ullah Khan addressing the conference; (L-R) Ms. Rabeea Hadi, Mr. Sajid Mansoor Qaisrani, Ms. Khawar Mumtaz, Justice (R) Nasira Javed Iqbal, Ms. Neelam Toru, Allama Tahir Ashrafi and Mr. Naeem Mirza.

A view of the theatre performance.

Mr. Naeem Mirza said that since the women's ministry has been devolved, NCSW must be represented in the cabinet and the National Commission of Human Rights should be established without any further delay. He regretted that ministry of human rights has been downgraded to a wing in the Ministry of Law, Justice and Human Rights. He pointed out that the gender crime cell was an ineffective body as only two out of twenty two vacancies have been filled. The representation of women in the parliament and local governments had been reduced which is worrisome. Though the local government in Balochistan has retained 33% women seats yet women were not allowed to vote in some areas. Why there is no follow up of GRAP recommendations, the National Plan of Action 1997 and National Policy of 2002, he asked. He demanded that all discriminatory legislation against women and religious minorities must be repealed.

Barrister Zafar Ullah while agreeing that they were still many areas which need improvement expressed the view that on many levels things had improved. There were more women lawyers and judges and women were more active in public life in general. He stressed that unless we have justice for all there will be no justice in society. He said the role of law is limited as compared to customs, values and norms. His ministry was working to push forward the bills related to laws of marriages and divorce for Christian and Hindu citizens. He was also keen that domestic violence bill should be adopted by the parliament as soon as possible.

Allama Tahir Ashrafi said that peace and social harmony is not possible in a country where religion becomes a tool to achieve personal and political gains. The state is also silent about those elements who have occupied mosques and are using religion as business. He also criticized the government for appeasing banned organizations. There are laws present to discourage hate speech and promote religious tolerance in Pakistan but are not implemented. Things will not improve untill the citizens stand up and reclaim the space that has been appropriated by ignorant and retrogressive forces who use religion for political purposes. He said that it was difficult for him to stand up against Salman Taseer's assassination, marriages of Hindu girls and DNA issue in CII, but he opposed these actions and such courage needs to be shown by all of us. Pakistan Ulema Council is trying to reclaim the true spirit of Islam which stands for peace, tolerance and equality of men and women.

He said that Islam dictates that there should be no violence against women, children, the elderly and non-combatants, yet women and children are murdered in Lahore, Peshawar, Quetta and Karachi in the name of Jihad.

Mr. Harris Khalique presenting bouquet to Ms. Kishwar Naheed.

Justice Nasira threw light on the history of Qisas and Diyat laws. She said that in 1990 FSC gave a ruling that 'Currently offences against body' in PPC are against the Islamic injunctions. Consequently, Qisas and Dyat law was introduced. As a result, murder became a private matter and relatives of victim have been given the authority to decide whether to punish or waive an offense of murder. In the whole world, punishment is authority of the state but in case of Pakistan the law has been distorted and the authority is given to individuals. Samiya Sarwar case of early 90s is the glaring example of the atrocities of Qisas and Diyat laws. In 2004, law on honour killing was introduced but this law has some lacunae which need to be addressed. Qisas and Diyat law has also been reviewed by NCSW which also suggested its repeal.

Ms. Neelam Toru said women face a lot of socio-political barriers in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa. The literacy rate among girls is very low. They are afraid to go to schools following the militant attacks on schools in KP. Provincial Commission on the status of women is seeking to have nikah nama registered and raising awareness on the importance of the right of the women to divorce.

Ms. Khawar Mumtaz said that inspite of present difficulties especially from terrorism the struggle for women rights will continue. Laws were important but awareness at the local and national levels was also necessary. She commended the AAWAZ consortium for raising awareness on these issues in 7000 villages and urban settlements. She said that there is an inter-provincial ministers coordinating committee which needs to be strengthened and must play a more active role. Concluding her remarks she said the women will continue to struggle without fear and face all challenges that lie in the way.

A stage play on Pakistan's political history titled 'Musical Chairs' was also presented in the end by the Interactive Resource Centre.

Maximum representation of women and excluded groups in local governments demanded

Staff Report

Islamabad: Calling local governance a missing tier of democracy in Pakistan, Parliamentarians and human rights activists and local government experts have called for introducing local government system that is 'democratically representative' and ensure meaningful and participation of citizens. They were discussing the issue at a national conference on 'Local Governments Legislation and Citizens' Concerns' here on Thursday, August 1, 2013.

The conference held under the auspices of AAWAZ Voice and Accountability Programme adopted a charter of demands calling for a minimum of 33 percent representation for women, 10 percent seats for peasants and 5 percent for minorities at all tiers of local government, filled through party based and constituency-based direct election in a joint electorate.

The charter presented by Ms. Feroza Zahra from Aurat Foundation demanded that union council to be comprised of at least 20 members to ensure meaningful participation of citizens, along with a constitutional protection of local government, fiscal and administrative autonomy and an end to the rural-urban divide. AAWAZ consortium partners include Strengthening Participatory Organization (SPO), Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Aurat Foundation (AF), South Asia Partnership-Pakistan (SAP-Pk) and Sungi Development Foundation.

(R-L) Dr. Shahzad Waseem, Dr. Farooq Sattar, Ms. Khawar Mumtaz, Mr. Naseer Memon, Mr. Danyal Aziz, Ms. Tahira Abdullah and Ms. Rehana Hashmi.

Ms. Khawar Mumtaz, Chairperson, National Commission on Status of Women (NCSW) was the chief guest on the occasion while Mr. Naseer Memon, Chair AAWAZ Steering Committee and Executive Director SPO presided over the function. Mr. Younas Khalid, Chief Strategy and Policy Officer, Aurat Foundation, moderated the conference proceedings. Ms. Naghma Imdad, Deputy Team Leader of AAWAZ programme, described the focus of the AAWAZ programme and its objectives of advocacy and research.

Speakers of the conference included Mr. Daniyal Aziz, MNA PML-N, Dr. Farooq Sattar, Parliamentary Leader, MQM in the National Assembly, Dr. Shahzad Waseem, Advisor to Chairman PTI and human rights activits Ms. Tahira Abdullah, Ms. Rehana Hashmi, Mr. Naeem Mirza and Mr. Sajid Mansoor Qaisrani. Political party leaders presented the viewpoint of their parties with forceful arguments and Ms. Tahira Abdullah, Ms. Rehana Hashmi spoke from women's rights prespective.

A candle-light vigil at Rawalpindi.

16 Days of Activism commemorated

The 16 Days of Activism on Ending Violence against Women were commemorated by AAWAZ Voice and Accountability programme's consortium partners across 45 districts of Punjab and Khyber Pukhtunkhwa. The campaign led by five civil society organizations - Aurat Foundation, SAP-Pk, SPO, Sungi and SDPI - started with provincial conferences in Lahore and Peshawar. The issues of legislation on domestic violence and reforms in Qisas and Diyat laws were discussed in these conferences. These events were attended by AAWAZ communities, lawyers, jurists, members of provincial assemblies and students. Radio being an effective tool and accessible to maximum target communities was used to disseminate messages on ending violence against women and raising demand for legislation on domestic violence.

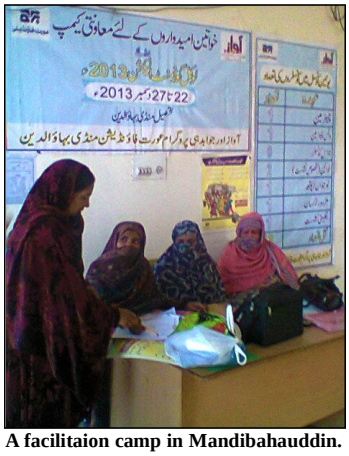
A voter facilitation camp at Okara.

A legal aid camp at Rawalpindi.

A view of awareness session in Mardan.

AAWAZ UTHA Campaign on local governments

In pursuance of the Supreme Court's order and developments on legislation for Local Government system by provincial governments, AAWAZ programme started its second phase of AAWAZ Utha Campaign in November 2013 to mobilise communities to ensure participation of women and excluded groups in the LG elections as voters and candidates. The activities of this campaign included awareness sessions at village and UC level, facilitating women and representatives of excluded groups to participate in elections through facilitation camps and information dissemination. The analyses of proposed local government legislation in both provinces were also developed and published. The campaign is being run in all 45 districts of AAWAZ. Other activities at the field level included seminars, rallies, dialogues, theater performances and awareness sessions in more than 400 union councils. The main themes discussed in these events were the issues related to women's participation in local governance.



A facilitaion camp in Mandibahauddin.

A view of an election monitoring cell at Sargodha.

A new generation of women legislators arrives

From Page 1

the first time out of a total of 21. The percentage of newcomers on general seats is around 57%.

On seats reserved for religious minorities only two women were elected out of a total of 33, which is a minimal 6% of the total.

In the National Assembly, there are 70 women parliamentarians in total, of which 37 are new entrants (35 on seats reserved for women, 2 on general seats). These women parliamentarians are beginning their parliamentary career for the first time in the 14th National Assembly (2013-2018), and would be performing legislative business for next five years.

Of these 37 newcomers in the National Assembly, 19 are politically affiliated with PML-N, 6 are affiliated with PTI, 4 with the PPPP, 2 each from MQM and JUI-F, and 1 each from PMAP, PML-F, NPP and JI.

There are 23 women parliamentarians who have returned to the Assembly for their second term (20 on seats reserved for women and 3 on general seats), whereas 8 have made it for the third time (4 on seats reserved for women, 3 on general seat and 1 on seats reserved for minorities).

Ms Tahmina Daultana, the veteran politician from PML-N, has returned to the 14th National Assembly for the fifth term on seats reserved for women. She is the only women parliamentarian so far who has made it to the National Assembly for the fifth term - she won her seat in 1993, 1997 and 2002 on general seats from her traditional constituency of Vehari in Punjab, whereas in 2008 and in 2013 elections, after losing on general seats, she returned to the Assembly on seats reserved for women.

Former Speaker National Assembly Dr Fahmida Mirza from PPPP has returned to the National Assembly for her fourth term, each time winning on general seat from her traditional seat of district Badin in Sindh.

On the 10 seats reserved for minorities in the National Assembly, there is only one women, Ms Asiya Nasir from JUI-F, who has returned to the Assembly for the third term.

In the Provincial Assembly of Punjab, there are a total of 76 women legislators, of which, 66 are on seats reserved for women, 1 on minority seat and 9 are elected on general seats. Of all the seats held by women, there are 60 newcomers which means the Punjab Assembly is presenting an almost new look vis-à-vis women parliamentarians.

On the 66 seats reserved for women, 52 are starting their first term as public representative, mostly belonging to PML-N. All 6 PTI MPAs are also new entrants to the assembly. The one who has been elected on seat reserved for minorities is also a newcomer.

There are 12 MPAs who have returned to the assembly for the second time whereas 4 have made it to the assembly for the third term.

Interestingly, 7 out of 9 women elected on general seats are also newcomers and all of them belong to PML-N.

In the Provincial Assembly of Sindh, which comprises 168 members, there are 31 women MPAs. Among these, 29 are on reserved seats and 2 are elected on general seat. Of these, 20 are newcomers, including both the women who were elected on general seats. Five have returned to the assembly for second time, and 6 have been elected for the third tenure.

In the Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which comprises 124 members, there are 22 women who have been elected on reserved seats. Of these, 18 are newcomers, two have returned to the assembly for the second time and two have made it for their third term.

In the Provincial Assembly of Balochistan, which comprises 65 members, there are 12 women MPAs, 11 on seats reserved for women and 1 on general seat. Of these six are newcomers. Out of 11 on reserved seats, five are newcomers, two have returned for the second time whereas four have made it to the assembly for the third time. The one elected on general seat has made it for her first term.

(The Table 9 below provides names, party affiliation and number of term of these MNAs and MPAs)

Table 9: Women Members National Assembly on reserved seats, party affiliation and term

From Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (8)

S.No.	Name	Party	Term	S.No.	Name	Party	Term
1	Ms. Nafeesa Inayatullah Khan Khattak	PTI	First (2013)	5	Ms. Shahida Akhtar Ali	JUI-F	Second (2013, 2002)
2	Ms. Mussarat Ahmadzeb	PTI	First (2013)	6	Ms. Naeema Kishwar Khan	JUI-F	First (2013)
3	Ms. Sajida Begum	PTI	First (2013)	7	Begum Tahira Bukhari	PML(N)	First (2013)
4	Ms. Aaisha Gulalai	PTI	First (2013)	8	Ms. Aisha	JI	First (2013)

From Punjab (35)

S.No.	Name	Party	Term	S.No.	Name	Party	Term
1	Ms. Anusha Rahman Ahmad Khan	PML(N)	Second (2013, 2008)	20	Ms. Shaheen Shafiq	PML(N)	Second (2013, 2008)
2	Ms. Zeb Jaffar*	PML(N)	Second (2013, 2008*)	21	Ms. Iffat Liaqat*	PML(N)	Second (2013, 2008*)
3	Ms. Tahira Aurangzeb	PML(N)	Second (2013, 2008)	22	Ms. Shazia Ashfaq Mattu*	PML(N)	Second (2013, 2008*)
4	Ms. Parveen Masood Bhatti*	PML(N)	Third (2013, 2008, 2002*)	23	Ms. Romina Khurshid Alam	PML(N)	First (2013)
5	Ms. Ayesha Raza Farooq	PML(N)	First (2013)	24	Ms. Zahra Wadood Fatemi	PML(N)	First (2013)
6	Ms. Shaista Pervaiz	PML(N)	First (2013)	25	Dr. Asma Mamdot*	PML(N)	Second (2013, 2008)
7	Ms. Nighat Parveen	PML(N)	Second (2013, 2008)	26	Ms. Marriyum Aurangzeb	PML(N)	First (2013)
8	Begum Majeeda Wyne	PML(N)	Second (2013, 1990)	27	Ms. Sabiha Nazir	PML(N)	First (2013)
9	Ms. Khalida Mansoor	PML(N)	Second (2013, 2008)	28	Ms. Amra Khan	PML(N)	First (2013)
10	Ms. Asyia Naz Tanoli	PML(N)	First (2013)	29	Ms. Phyllis Azeem	PML(N)	First (2013)
11	Ms. Rida Khan	PML(N)	First (2013)	30	Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja	PML(N)	First (2013)
12	Ms. Seema Mohiuddin Jameeli	PML(N)	Second (2013, 2008)	31	Ms. Tahmina Daultana	PML(N)	Fifth (1993, 1997, 2002, 2008, 2013)
13	Ms. Shahnaz Saleem Malik	PML(N)	First (2013)				
14	Ms. Leila Khan	PML(N)	First (2013)	32	Dr. Shireen Mehrunnisa Mazari	PTI	First (2013)
15	Ms. Arifa Khalid Pervaiz*	PML(N)	Second (2013, 2008*)	33	Ms. Munaza Hassan	PTI	First (2013)
16	Ms. Surriya Asghar	PML(N)	First (2013)	34	Ms. Belum Hasnain	PPPP	Third (2013, 2008, 2002)
17	Ms. Shazadi Umarzadi Tiwana*	PML(N)	Third (2013, 2008*, 2002)	35	Ms. Shakila Luqman	PML(N)	First (2013)
18	Ms. Maiza Hameed*	PML(N)	Second (2013, 2008*)				
19	Ms. Farhana Qamar	PML(N)	First (2013)				

*** She was elected MPA that year.**

From Sindh (14)

S.No.	Name	Party	Term	S.No.	Name	Party	Term
1	Ms. Shagufta Jumani	PPPP	Third (2013, 2008, 2002)	8	Ms. Kishwer Zehra	MQM	Second (2013, 2008)
2	Ms. Nafisa Shah	PPPP	Second (2013, 2008)	9	Ms. Tahira Asif	MQM	Second (2013, 2002)
3	Ms. Surriya Jatoi	PPPP	Second (2013, 2008)	10	Ms. Saman Sultana Jafri	MQM	First (2013)
4	Ms. Mahreen Razaque Bhutto	PPPP	Second (2013, 2008)	11	Dr. Nikhat Shakeel Khan	MQM	First (2013)
5	Ms. Alizeh Iqbal Haider	PPPP	First (2013)	12	Ms. Reeta Ishwar	PML-F	First (2013)
6	Ms. Musarat Rafique Mahesar	PPPP	First (2013)	13	Ms. Shahjehan	NPP	First (2013)
7	Ms. Shahida Rehmani	PPPP	First (2013)	14	Ms. Marvi Memon	PML(N)	Second (2013, 2008)

From Balochistan (3)

S.No.	Name	Party	Term	S.No.	Name	Party	Term
1	Ms. Kiran Haider	PML(N)	First (2013)	3	Ms. Aliya Kamran	JUI-F	First (2013)
2	Ms. Naseema	PMAP	First (2013)				

Women Members National Assembly on general seats

S.No.	Name	Party	Term
1	Ms. Ghulam Bibi Bharwana	PML-N	Third (2013, 2008, 2002)
2	Ms. Saira Afzal Tarar	PML-N	Second (2013, 2008)
3	Ms. Shazia Mubashar	PML-N	First (2013)
4	Ms. Sumaira Malik	PML-N	Second (2013, 2002)
5	Ms. Faryal Talpur	PPPP	Second (2013, 2008)
6	Dr. Azra Fazal Pechuho	PPPP	Third (2013, 2008, 2002)
7	Dr. Fehmida Mirza	PPPP	Fourth (2013,2008, 2002, 1997)
8	Ms. Shazia Marri*	PPPP	Second (2013, 2008*, 2002*)
9	Ms Shamas-un-Nisa	PPPP	First (2013)

*** She was elected MPA that year.**

Women Member National Assembly on reserved seat for minorities

S.No.	Name	Party	Term
1.	Ms Asiya Nasir	JUI(F)	Third (2013, 2008, 2002)

She was elected on reserved seat for Minorities for the third consecutive time.

Women Members Punjab Assembly on reserved seats

S. No.	Name	Party	Term
1	Dr. Alia Aftab	PML(N)	First (2013)
2	Dr. Ayesha Ghaus Pasha	PML(N)	First (2013)
3	Ms. Ayesha Javed	PML(N)	Second (2013, 2008)
4	Ms. Azma Zahid Bukhari	PML(N)	Third (2013, 2008, 2002)
5	Ms. Azra Sabir Khan	PML(N)	First (2013)
6	Ms. Baasima Chaudhary	PML(N)	Second (2013, 2002)
7	Begum Khola Amjad	PML(N)	First (2013)
8	Ms. Bushra Anjum Butt	PML(N)	First (2013)
9	Ms. Faiza Ahmad Malik	PPPP	Third (2013, 2008, 2002)
10	Ms. Farha Manzoor	PML(N)	First (2013)
11	Ms. Farhana Afzal	PML(N)	Second (2013, 2008)
12	Ms. Farzana Butt	PML(N)	First (2013)
13	Dr. Farzana Nazir	PML(N)	Second (2013, 2002)
14	Ms. Fozia Ayub Quresh	PML(N)	First (2013
15	Ms. Ghazala Shaheen	PML(Z)	First (2013)
16	Ms. Gulnaz Shahzadi	PML(N)	First (2013)
17	Ms. Haseena Begum	PML(N)	First (2013)
18	Ms. Hina Pervaiz Butt	PML(N)	First (2013)
19	Ms. Iram Hassan Bajwa	PML(N)	First (2013)
20	Ms. Jayeda Khalid	PML	First (2013)
21	Ms. Joyce Rofin Julius	PML(N)	Second (2013, 2008)
22	Ms. Kaneez Akhtar	PML(N)	First (2013)
23	Ms. Kanwal Nauman	PML(N)	First (2013)
24	Ms. Kiran Imran	PML(N)	First (2013)
25	Ms. Lubna Faisal	PML(N)	First (2013)
26	Ms. Lubna Rehan	PML(N)	First (2013)
27	Ms. Madiha Khan	PML(N)	First (2013)
28	Ms. Mary Gil	PML(N)	First (2013)
29	Ms. Mehwish Sultana	PML(N)	First (2013)
30	Ms. Nabela Hakim Ali Khan	PTI	First (2013)
31	Ms. Nabira Indleeb	PML(N)	First (2013)
32	Ms. Naheed Naeem	PTI	First (2013)
33	Dr. Najma Afzal Khan	PML(N)	First (2013)
34	Ms. Najma Begum	PML(N)	First (2013)
35	Ms. Naseem Lodhi	PML(N)	Third (2013, 2008, 2002)
36	Ms. Nasreen Jawaid	PML(N)	First (2013)
37	Dr. Nausheen Hamid	PTI	First (2013)
38	Ms. Nighat Sheikh	PML(N)	Second (2013, 2008)
39	Ms. Parveen Akhtar	PML(N)	First (2013)
40	Ms. Raheela Anwar	PTI	First (2013)
41	Ms. Raheela Naeem	PML(N)	Second (2013, 2008)
42	Ms. Raheela Yahya Munawaar	PML(N)	First (2013)
43	Ms. Rukhsana Kokab	PML(N)	First (2013)
44	Ms. Saadia Sohail Rana	PTI	First (2013)
45	Ms. Saba Sadiq	PML(N)	Third (2013, 2008, 2002)
46	Ms. Sadia Nadeem Malik	PML(N)	First (2013)
47	Ms. Saira Iftikhar	PML(N)	First (2013)
48	Ms. Salma Shaheen Butt	PML(N)	First (2013)
49	Ms. Shabeena Zikria Butt	PML(N)	First (2013)
50	Ms. Shah Jahan	PML(N)	First (2013)
51	Ms. Shaheen Ashfaq*	PML(N)	Second (2013, 2008*)
52	Ms. Shameela Aslam	PML(N)	Second (2013, 2008)
53	Ms. Shamim Akhtar	PML(N)	First (2013)
54	Ms. Shazia Kamran	PML(N)	First (2013)
55	Ms. Shazia Tariq	PML(N)	First (2013)
56	Ms. Sobia Anwar Satti	PML(N)	First (2013)
57	Ms. Sultana Shaheen	PML(N)	First (2013)
58	Ms. Sumaira Sami	PML(N)	First (2013)
59	Ms. Surriya Naseem	PML(N)	First (2013)
60	Syeda Uzma Qadri	PML(N)	First (2013)
61	Ms. Tahia Noon	PML(N)	First (2013)
62	Ms. Tamkeen Akhtar Niazi	PML(N)	First (2013)
63	Ms. Tehseen Fawad	PML(N)	First (2013)
64	Ms. Zakia Shah Nawaz Khan	PML(N)	First (2013)
65	Ms. Zeb-un-Nisa Awan	PML(N)	First (2013)
66	Ms. Zill-e-Huma	PML(N)	Second (2013, 2008)

*** She was elected MPA that year.**

Women Members Punjab Assembly on general seats

S.No.	Name	Party	Term
1	Ms Iffat Miraj Awan	PML-N	First (2013)
2	Ms. Hameeda Waheed-ud-Din	PML-N	First (2013)
3	Ms. Naghma Mushtaq	PML-N	Second (2013, 2008)
4	Ms. Samina Noor	PML-N	First (2013)
5	Ms. Nadia Aziz	PML-N	First (2013)
6	Ms. Nazia Raheel	PML-N	Second (2013, 2008)
7	Ms. Rashida Yaqoob Sheikh	PML-N	First (2013)
8	Mohtarma Riaz Amanat Ali Virk	PML-N	First (2013)
9	Ms. Shamoona Anbreen Qaisrani	PML-N	First (2013)

Women Member Punjab Assembly on reserved seat for minorities

S.No.	Name	Party	Term
1	Ms. Shunila Ruth	PTI	First (2013)

Women Members Sindh Assembly on reserved seats

S.No.	Name	Party	Term
1	Ms. Aisha Khatoon	MQM	First (2013)
2	Ms. Bilqees Mukhtar	MQM	Third (2013, 2008, 2002)
3	Ms. Farhat Seemi	PPPP	Second (2013, 2008)
4	Ms. Ghazala Siyal	PPPP	First (2013)
5	Ms. Heer Soho	MQM	Third (2013, 2008, 2002)
6	Ms. Iram Khalid	PPPP	First (2013)
7	Ms. Irum Azeem Farooque	MQM	First (2013)
8	Ms. Khairunisa Mughal	PPPP	First (2013)
9	Ms. Kulsoom Akhtar Chandio	PPPP	Third (2013, 2008, 2002)
10	Ms. Mahtab Akbar Rashdi	PML(F)	Second (2013, 2008)
11	Ms. Naheed Begum	MQM	Second (2013, 2008)
12	Ms. Naila Munir	MQM	First (2013)
13	Ms. Nusrat Bano Sehar Abbasi	PML(F)	Second (2013, 2008)
14	Ms. Nusrat Sultana	PPPP	First (2013)
15	Ms. Rana Ansar	MQM	First (2013)
16	Ms. Rehana Leghari	PPPP	First (2013)
17	Ms. Rubina Saadat Qaimkhani*	PPPP	Third (2013, 2008*, 2002*)
18	Ms. Rukhsana Shah	PPPP	Second (2013, 2002)
19	Ms. Saira Shahliani	PPPP	Second (2013, 2002)
20	Dr. Sajeela Leghari	PPPP	Third (2013, 2008, 2002)
21	Dr. Seema Zia	PTI	First (2013)
22	Ms. Shaheena	PPPP	First (2013)
23	Ms. Shahnaz Begum	PPPP	First (2013)
24	Ms. Shamim Mumtaz	PPPP	First (2013)
25	Ms. Sharmila Sahebah Faruqui	PPPP	First (2013)
26	Ms. Shazia Jawaid	MQM	First (2013)
27	Ms. Sorath Thebo	PML(N)	First (2013)
28	Ms. Sumeta Afzal Syed	MQM	First (2013)
29	Syeda Shehla Raza	PPPP	Second (2013, 2008)

*** She was elected MNA that year.**

Women Members Sindh Assembly on general seats

S.No.	Name	Party	Term
1	Ms Saniya Naz Baloch	PPPP	First (2013)
2	Ms Parveen Aziz Junejo	PPPP	First (2013)

Women Members KP Assembly on reserved seats

S.No.	Name	Party	Term
1	Ms. Aamna Sardar	PML(N)	First (2013)
2	Ms. Aisha Naeem	PTI	First (2013)
3	Ms. Anisa Zeb Tahirkheli	QWP	Second (2013, 1988)
4	Ms. Bibi Fozia	PTI	First (2013)
5	Ms. Dina Naz	PTI	First (2013)
6	Khatoon Bibi	AJIP	First (2013)
7	Ms. Maliha Tanveer	PTI	First (2013)
8	Ms. Meher Taj Roghani	PTI	First (2013)
9	Ms. Meraj Hamayun Khan	QWP	First (2013)
10	Ms. Nadia Sher	PTI	First (2013)
11	Ms. Nagina Khan	PTI	First (2013)
12	Ms. Najma Shaheen	JUI(F)	First (2013)
13	Ms. Nargis	PTI	First (2013)
14	Ms. Naseem Hayat	PTI	First (2013)
15	Ms. Nighat Orakzai	PPPP	Third (2013, 2008, 2002)
16	Ms. Rashda Riffat	JI	First (2013)
17	Ms. Romana Jalil	JUI(F)	First (2013)
18	Ms. Ruqia Hina	PML(N)	First (2013)
19	Ms. Sobia Shahid	PML(N)	First (2013)
20	Ms. Uzma Khan	JUI(F)	Second (2013, 2008)
21	Ms. Yasmeen Pir Muhammad Khan	ANP	Third (2013, 2008, 2002)
22	Ms. Zareen Riaz	PTI	First (2013)

Women Members Balochistan Assembly on reserved seats

S.No.	Name	Party	Term
1	Ms. Samina Khan	PML(N)	First (2013)
2	Ms. Raheela Hameed Khan Durani	PML(N)	Third (2013, 2008, 2002)
3	Ms. Spozmai Achakzai	PMAP	Second (2013, 2002)
4	Ms. Masooma Hayat	PMAP	First (2013)
5	Ms. Yasmeen Lehri	NP	First (2013)
6	Dr. Shama Ishaq Baloch	NP	Second (2013, 2002)
7	Ms. Hussan Bano	JUI(F)	Second (2013, 2008)
8	Dr. Ruqaya Saeed Hashmi	PML(Q)	Third (2013, 2008,2002)
9	Ms. Kishwar Ahmed	PML(N)	First (2013)
10	Ms. Arifa Siddiq	PMAP	First (2013)
11	Ms. Shahida Rauf	JUI(F)	Third (2013, 2008, 2002)

Women Members Balochistan Assembly on general seat

S.No.	Name	Party	Term
1	Ms. Rahat Bibi Jamali	PML(N)	First (2013)

Political party manifestos - commitments made to women

This article is a consolidation of a study by NOW Communities and Aurat Foundation research. The sections on ANP, PPPP, PML-N, JI, PML-Q and PTI have been taken from 'Terrorism, Extremism, Law and Order Crisis, and 2013 Elections in Pakistan: What do the Political Parties Offer', a NOW Communities report by Syed Jaffar Ahmed, May 2013. The sections on MQM, PMAP, NP, PML-F and JUI-F have been authored by Aurat Foundation

At the time of elections, political parties revise their manifestos and commitments to the citizens of the country. It is important for civil society to recognize that the political parties must be pushed to fulfill the commitments made in these manifestos throughout the term of the Government and not just refer back to it at election time. For this purpose, the commitments with regards to women made by all the main political parties have been summarized below. It is hoped that this summary in one place will make it easier for civil society in demanding for women's rights with the support of the manifesto commitments. This also allows for a comparison of commitments made to women between the different parties.

Pakistan Muslim League (N)

The PML-N has chalked out a program for women of the country which refers to the position of women in Islam, and hence promises to ensure respect and protection for women granted by Islam. It pledges to the women to: enhance their participation in national development process, and to empower them socially, politically and economically; prefer women teachers at the primary school level; promote female education, skill training and health care programs to bridge existing gender gaps: enact or legislate to control violence against women, child abuse, illegal unjust practices or discrimination and harassment at the workplace; increase women's participation in financial institutions, higher judiciary, health and educational establishments, and law enforcement agencies at the executive level; boost the micro-credit programs for females, and house building loans for widow in particular; improve female literacy, launch population welfare programs, safeguard women's inheritance ad property rights, introduce dat care facilities; and initiate Women Entrepreneurship Financing Scheme for promoting business activities of women.

Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians

PPPP recognizes women as a disadvantaged and vulnerable segment of society. Women have suffered not only, due to the patriarchal and often male chauvinist values of the society, but in an environment plagued with extremism and intolerance, they have increasingly become vulnerable. PPPP unfolds its agenda for women, pledging to: further strengthen the Benazir Income Support Programme; institute special quota for women in political parties to increase their participation. It announces to propose a law for political parties to commit to an additional ten per cent quota for women while selecting candidates on general seats; increase the job quota for women to 20 per cent; ensure representation of women in all private and public sector boards; engage the National Commission on Human Development with the task to target one million women for literacy and education programs; introduce a special program to provide safe medical support to a woman giving birth to a child and every child will be provided protection, nutrition and vaccination until the age of five years; and ensure through parliament, a quota of women judges to make women an integral part of the judicial process at all levels.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf

PTI has provided substantial provisions in its manifesto with respect to its gender policy, workers and minorities, As regards its gender policy it has been suggested that: it will eliminate all discriminatory laws and provisions in the Constitution in order to make sure equal legal status of women; it will restore Federal and Provincial ministries for women. PTI will set up Insafgah, One Step Women's Centres at the union council level; it will provide incentives for girls' education by providing uniforms, textbooks, meals, scholarships, transportation, and sibling day-care; PTI will also revise and improve the textbooks and curricula to remove gender based stereotypes; and PTI will show zero tolerance for any and all agreements barring women from participation in voting.

Muttahida Qaumi Movement

The MQM states measures to be put into place including effective legislation and implementation of strict punitive measures including for socio-political harassment; social ailments like gender discrimination; sexual harassment; discouragement of female education and their full participation in society as equal citizens; domestic violence; child abuse; rape in vengeance and otherwise and forcing opponent's womenfolk to march naked on public streets; honour killings; child marriage; Karo Kari, Vinee, marriage to the Holy Quran, acid victims, bonded labour and child labour. It stated an aim to launch massive public awareness campaigns to educate the masses of their fundamental human rights and means to address violation. It emphasizes the intention to repeal all discriminatory laws against women and non Muslims, to gradually increase the representation of women to 50 percent in all walks of life, particularly in the Parliament and provincial assemblies and in the government and semi-government offices. It also states the intention to establish "women shelter homes" to provide them State protection and security to adult couples who marry at free will but end up facing severe consequences for challenging centuries old customs, particularly in some rural areas. It emphasizes the State's duty to ensure no harm comes their way.

Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F)

The JUI-F manifesto states the intention to ensure women are treated as equals of men. It states that employment opportunities will be provided to every citizen of Pakistan and women will get equal opportunities as men. It lays down a plan to establish a network of dispensaries and mother-child healthcare units across Pakistan. In a specific chapter on women's rights, it states that women will be made equal citizens and be treated as equals of men in all state affairs and achievements. It also emphasizes that women's rights will be protected in line with Islamic principles and the constitution. Women's right to livelihood will be endorsed in all departments/ areas. Their dignity will be preserved.

Pushtoonkhwa Milli Awami Party

The PMAP manifesto states that all discriminatory laws against women will be repealed.

Awami National Party

ANP's program for the uplift of women and their empowerment is also fairly long. It wants to increase women's participation in all walks of life and a minimum of 33 per cent representation in political parties, parliament, provincial assemblies, local government, public services, superior judiciary, public commissions and boards etc. It ensures to repeal all discriminatory laws and policies infringing on the equal rights of women and their participation in decision-making within the state and society. ANP also undertakes to continue efforts for the promulgation of pending domestic violence legislation and trafficking in women. ANP is committed to taking concrete steps to combat Gender-based Violence (GBV).

Pakistan Muslim League (F)

The PML (F) manifesto provides focus on women in a separate section on women while also mainstreaming it through the entire manifesto. It also works to be in line with international conventions ratified by Pakistan including CEDAW and CRC while also keeping in mind the Millennium Development Goals. It states it will look at innovative models of education and will look to partner with national and international civil society organizations and educational institutions. It also will seek to increase the age of marriage to 18 for both boys and girls. The manifesto condemns gender based violence and discrimination and identifies exceptional corrective and preventative measures to eliminate GBV which includes increasing women's courts, women's police stations. All laws will be reviewed to ensure focus on international State obligations and on the effect they have on women, specifically the Ordinances enacted by General Zia-ul-Haq. Laws on women specific issues will be enacted and strengthened including laws on domestic violence, honour killings, giving away of women and girls as compensation to resolve disputes in accordance with landmark reports of Pakistan Commission of Inquiry on Women (COIW) and National Commission on Status of Women (NCSW) and abolish traditional illegal and unjust dispute resolution entities, e.g. Jirgas, Punchayats and others.

Jamaat-e-Islami

Jamaat holds that it would ensure the inheritance and ownership rights as provided by Islamic Sharia. It will discourage non-Islamic social customs, like big dowries, negligence towards widows' marriage, marriage with Quran, wani, exchange marriages, karo kari and honour killing. It will provide opportunities to seek education from primary to the higher levels. Separate medical college and universities will be established for women in every province. Jamaat will see that through education and effective communication, the practice of three divorces at a time is discouraged. Crimes against women will be curbed through social and legal means. Working women will be provided peaceful and dignified environment Women in special circumstances such as widowhood and divorce would be provided special relaxation in age for employment in public and private sectors. Moreover, women working in the public sector will be provided four month maternity leave with full salary, and the right to have leave with half salary for the upbringing of the child.

Pakistan Muslim League-Q

PML-Q pledges to protect, restore and strengthen the rights of women. In order to ensure their political participation, PML-Q holds that it would work for gender equality and the expansion of women's political representation. It also undertakes to establish Women Protection Centers for the destitute, old age and displaced women.

National Party

The NP manifesto reiterates that the protection of political and economic rights of women will be ensured. All discriminatory laws against women shall be repealed by encouraging women's participation in every sphere of life. Special arrangements will be made for the provision of pick and drop service to girls from their door step to educational institutions.

Women and voting in KP: history and current status

By Waseem Ahmed Shah

The participation of women in the political process has always been a thorny issue in Pakistan especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). Whether it was the introduction of the reserved seats for women in the Parliament and provincial assemblies or exercising the right of franchise by the women voters, these issues were always made controversial by the vested interest groups propagating for the maintenance of status quo with regards to women's political participation giving reasons such as in the name of religion, or in line with traditions and customs etc.

The disenfranchisement of women in the May 2013 elections and the bye-elections in KP 22-08-2013 was therefore not an exception, but a common practice which has been ignored by the State. It is important at this point to examine the history of the issue and the current scenario to make concrete recommendations to ensure women's participation in the local government elections and future political processes.

Background: One of the most important developments for women's political participation has been the women's reserved seats in the National and Provincial Assemblies and the local governments.

When the first local government elections were held in different phases by the end of 2000 and in 2001, the conservative forces took upon themselves to stop women. Hurdles were created to stop women from filing nomination papers: agreements in several areas barring women from casting votes during elections and threats of violence. In District Dir Lower, stick wielding workers of religious groups and political parties, who had banned the nomination of female candidates, roamed the premises of the Districts Courts where nomination papers for the local government elections had to be filed. Due to the threats, no one filed for the reserved seats in the district.

During those polls several religious edicts were issued ruling the participation of women in elections and the casting of votes as un-Islamic and a sin. People were advised to avoid female polling. In certain districts, people were directed not to offer a funeral prayer for those females who participated in local government polls; a social boycott was initiated of families whose women participated in elections; in other districts, agreements were reached between contesting candidates as well as elders of the area deciding the female voting would not be held. Several agreements were reduced to writing on stamp papers so that the parties should not back out of their commitments. A penalty for Rs. 100,000 was agreed as a penalty for violation of the agreement. Agreements were also signed deciding that women would not be allowed to contest elections nor exercise their right of franchise in the polls. Subsequent to those agreements in around 13 out of the total 56 union councils in District Swabi female voters did not cast vote on 21-03-2001.

The situation remained the same in the Local Government elections in 2005. Women were banned from voting in Mardan, Charssada, Swat, Swabi, Buner, Bannu, Dera Islamil Khan, Upper and Lower Dir districts.

The issue persisted in the general elections of 2002, 2008 and 2013. In May 2013, there were reports of no women voting in at least eight of the districts of KP. Prior to the polls there were reports of an agreement in Lower Dir and details on more agreements later surfaced. ["More Agreements Surface Barring Women from Voting", Zahir Shah Sherazi, 16th May 2013, Dawn]. In the National Assembly constituency of Upper Dir only a single female voter cast her vote in Darora area. Similarly, in 17 union councils out of 27 no women voting took place.

Efforts by Civil Society: Aurat Foundation and other women's rights and human rights organizations have regularly approached the Government and the Election Commission challenging this scenario, demanding the prohibition of agreements disallowing women from voting, that elections in areas where women are barred from voting must be declared void and penal action must be taken against those who perpetuate and implement such agreements.

In 2004, several female voters with the support of Aurat Foundation filed 4 writ petitions before the Peshawar High Court (PHC). The petitioners alleged that they were stopped from voting through different coercive measures in Swabi including agreements reached between contesting candidates. The petitioners requested the PHC to declare polls in those union councils as null and void. Although, the court dismissed the petitions on technical grounds, it condemned and pronounced that the practice of barring women from voting as unconstitutional, declaring such actions to be void, illegal and criminal. The judgment also reiterated the Constitutional and inherent right of all persons, irrespective of gender to be allowed to vote, a right which cannot be taken away by an agreement.

Current Scenario: Upon being informed of the barring of female voters in the by-elections on 22-08-2013, Honorable Chief Justice Dost Mohammad Khan of Peshawar High Court converted the report presented to him by his PSO, Sofia Waqar into a writ petition. He directed the ECP not to issue gazette notifications of the returned candidates and not to make official or unofficial announcements about the results until the next order. He took exception to the issue and observed that around 50 percent of the population could not be deprived of their constitutional right of casting vote. Despite the court orders, efforts to convince elders to allow women to vote during the extended time period, the majority to declined to give permission. The results provided by them showed zero percent result in at least 54 female polling stations whereas in many other stations the percentage was nominal.

The PHC bench ruled that those who denied the fundamental right to the female voters of both the constituencies relating to many female polling stations had contravened the provisions of the Representation of the People Act 1976 (RPA) and the code of conduct issued and notified by the ECP. The court left it to the ECP to decide on how many polling stations re-polling should be held after conducting an inquiry in this regard. The court also stated that those found to be involved in denying fundamental rights of the female voters, may be booked under penal provisions and be prosecuted & brought to justice.

Recommendations of the PHC: The PHC gave concrete recommendations to the ECP: bringing amendments in the RPA 1976 to provide for punishment to those who deliberately or indirectly restrain females from voting; to withhold the notification of the result of constituencies where votes polled by women are found negligible and much less in percentage than those polled by men and are of no use and utility until a reasonable and convincing target of women's votes is achieved to enable more than 50% of the population to actively participate in the national building and national politics; and they are given full protection and indefeasible right to exercise their right with free-will and choice and all corrupt practices in this regard are guarded against.

Supreme Court's Judgment: However, the happiness of CSOs proved to be short lived as the Supreme Court of Pakistan initially stayed the said order of the PHC and subsequently on 17-09-2013, set aside the order on technical grounds following which the ECP issued notification of the two successful candidates. ["SC sets aside PHC order on by-polls", 18th September 2013, Dawn]. The Supreme Court however did not touch the factual points involved in the case but restricted the suo moto powers exercised by the PHC's Chief Justice.

While setting aside the impugned order a short order was released by the apex court on 17-09-2013, the court ruled that any party/ person aggrieved from the election process/ polling in the constituencies of NA-5 Nowshera and NA-27 Lakki Marwat held on August 22 2013 may approach the competent authority in accordance with law for agitating his grievance in this regard.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that the Supreme Court overturned the PHC judgment, the judgment itself is hoped to go a long way in improving the situation of female voting in general elections as it has highlighted this important issue and raised extremely important issues.

Recommendations: Keeping in view the existing scenario, it is vital that steps be taken by the federal and provincial governments, ECP, political parties, media and civil society organizations. Following are some of the recommendations.

- Suitable amendments should be made in the Representation of Peoples Act 1976 and specific provisions should be included in it for dealing with the issue of disenfranchisement of women. Barring women from casting vote should be declared a penal offence.
- Barring women from casting vote should be declared a penal offence.
- Amendments should be made in the RPA and the ECP should be empowered to declare null and void polls in a particular constituency if a specified percentage of women voters do not turn up to cast vote.
- In the existing legislative framework the ECP should monitor elections in a proactive manner so as to review election results for ascertaining the turnout of women and to respond to it if it was proved that in certain polling stations the turnout is nil or negligible.
- The ECP should stop polls at any stage if it receives information that coercive, intimidating and other tactics have been used for preventing women from voting.
- The ECP should actively prosecute elements involved in corrupt practices which also include calling upon any person to vote, or to refrain from voting.
- The female polling stations should be separate and well located so that voters do not face problem in reaching there. The practice of setting up of male and female polling stations in same premises, which is in vogue in certain areas, should be avoided.
- Political parties should take appropriate action against its leaders and members on local level who are found involved in any sort of written or verbal agreement aimed at preventing women from voting.
- The CSOs should keep a vigilant eye on elections especially the polling day activities so as to check any illegal practice aimed at barring women from voting. The CSOs should also start awareness drive specially focusing the areas where the problem of women disenfranchisement is a persistent phenomenon. ***— The author is associated with Daily Dawn.***

EDITORIAL

Re-visiting the importance of women in senior decision-making positions

Women's participation in decision making and leadership roles in politics is not just a basic principle of human rights but also of democracy, requiring participation and representation of persons from different groups and all walks of life. From the perspective of democracy, groups with specific interests and requirements must have direct participation in decision-making in order to ensure that their issues are on the agenda and all decisions made should incorporate their views.

The importance of women's participation stems from the recognition that women form a specific section of population that is separate from men. Women have needs, interests and priorities that are unique and different from men. Men representing women, even when aware of women's issues, cannot have the same experience and understanding of the issues as women and are therefore unable to capture the specific needs and perspectives. It is also important to realize that that while women's perspectives also reflect their roles as mothers, wives and caregivers, their concerns do not just extend to these roles. Women, as constituting almost 50% of population in both the world and in Pakistan, are directly impacted from all decisions made regarding the State and therefore have as an equal interest as men. The failure to incorporate women's concerns in decision making represents a major loss for society as a whole. Therefore incorporating women's perspectives in decision making is not just pragmatic but is also necessary.

A right's based perspective demands the inclusion of women as a right itself to participate in all process of decision-making, especially where it has a direct impact on them. Due to the patriarchal set-up of Pakistani society, women remain in a position of inequality in society, which is reflected in the political scenario. This is further exacerbated by the fact that their situation, needs and concerns do not reach the priority agenda in politics and are not properly considered in current decision-making. It is extremely important that women must participate in setting the agenda, determining the issues on which decisions should be made and not allow men to set the agenda and decide on women's issues, as men cannot truly embody and appreciate women's perspectives of concerns which affect them.

The overall decrease of women in the legislative bodies in Pakistan causes concern with regards to the disappearance of women's voices and perspectives. The further decrease of women in senior positions from 2008 to 2013 is a greater concern.

The basic concept of reserved seats for women is meant to allow the society, community and the existing political parties to see and recognize that women can be true and effective leaders. While the decrease of women winning on general seats, coupled by a slight increase in awarding of tickets to stand for elections reiterates the importance and necessity of reserved seats for women. It also highlights the need to revive the women's movement's demand for 33% reserved seats for women in all the legislative bodies.

The lack of women in senior decision making positions reveals the reluctance and bias of political parties with regards to women. With a large number of qualified women in the legislatures, it is incomprehensive and unacceptable that such few women have been granted positions across the nation. The women's movement and civil society must stand up and demand the increase of women in all senior positions in the Government and in bureaucracy.

Women in decision-making positions

In the National Assembly

There are currently 17 Federal Ministers, 10 Ministers of State, 3 Advisors and 2 Special Assistants appointed by the Federal Government. Of these, only 2 women in the National Assembly hold positions of Minister of State.

Ms. Anusha Rehman

Minister of State for Information Technology and Telecommunication

Ms. Saira Afzal Tarar

Minister of State for National Health Services, Regulations and Co-ordination

This is a reduction of women in senior positions from the scenario in 2008 which, were already criticized as being too few. In 2008, women held the positions of Speaker of the National Assembly (Dr. Fahmida Mirza), Minister of Information (Ms. Sherry Rehman and Ms. Firdous Ashiq Awan) and Minister of Social Affairs and Women's Development (Ms. Firdous Ashiq Awan and Ms. Samina Khalid Ghurki) and 2 Special Assistants for Finance, Revenue and Economic Affairs (Ms. Hina Rabbani Khar, who later took over the post of Minister Foreign Affairs, and Begum Shahnaz Wazir Ali as Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Social Sector).

In the Punjab Assembly

In the Punjab Assembly, out of 21 Ministers and 2 Special Assistants, 2 women have been appointed in senior positions.

Begum Zakia Shahnawaz

Minister for Population Welfare

Ms. Hameeda Wahid-ud-Din

Minister for Women Development

This is the only Assembly that has shown improvement in terms of appointment of women in senior positions. In 2008, only 1 woman was appointed as a Minister and Adviser: Neelam Jabbar as Minister for Population Welfare and Begum Zakia Shahnawaz as Adviser to CM. However, this remains unrepresentative of women parliamentarians in the Punjab Assembly, although the increase has been positively noted.

In the Sindh Assembly

In the Sindh Assembly, out of 15 Ministers, 2 Advisors and 8 Special Assistants, only 3 women have been given senior positions.

Syeda Shahla Raza

Deputy Speaker

Ms. Rubina Qaimkhani

Minister for Women Development Department, Social Welfare and Special Education

In 2008, out of 42 Ministers, 5 women were appointed as Ministers: Ms. Shazia Marri as Minister for Information, Ms. Saussi Pulijo as Minister for Culture and Tourism, Ms. Tauqeer Fatima Bhutto as Minister for Women's Development, Ms. Nargis N.D.Khan as Minister for Social Welfare; Ms. Nadia Gabol as Minister for Information Technology and Syeda Shahla Raza as Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Sharmila Farooqi

Special Assistant to CM on Culture.

In the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, out of 14 Ministers, 5 Advisors and 7 Special Assistants, only 1 woman has been appointed as a Special Assistant. In 2008, out of 27 Ministers, only 1 woman was appointed as Minister, Ms. Sitara Ayaz, Minister for Social Welfare and Women Development. In 2008 it was lamented that there was only 1 female Minister, but in 2013, instead of moving forward, the situation has gone backwards.

Ms. Mehar Taj Roghani

Special Assistant to Chief Minister, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Social Welfare Department

In the Balochistan Assembly

In the Balochistan Assembly, out of 14 Ministers and 5 Advisors appointed so far, there has been no female appointed in any senior positions. However, as a result of the protests of civil society against the lack of women in senior positions and absence of women in the cabinet, the Government has announced the intention to include women soon, especially in the extended provincial Cabinet. This has not happened to date. In 2008, the situation was encouraging. Out of 44 Ministers, 5 women were appointed as ministers: Ms. Rubina Irfan as Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs, Ms. Ghazala Gola as Minister for Social Welfare and Women's Development, Ms. Rahila Durrani and Minister of Prosecution, Ms. Ruqqaya Hashmi as Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination, Ms. Nasreen Rehman Khan Khetran, and Ms. Shama Parveen as Minister for Information Technology and Provincial Coordination on NGOs Programe (National and International) and Universities. Along with this, Ms. Uzma Piralizai was appointed as Advisor to the Chief Minister on Education, Health and Social Welfare.