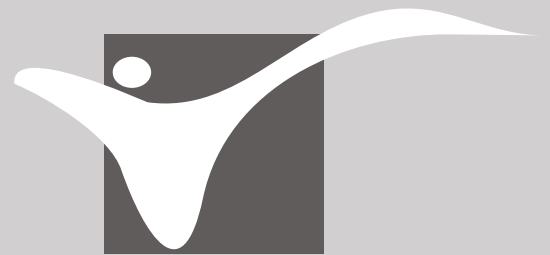


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# Women Representation in Pakistan's Parliament

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Pakistan's Parliament





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## FOREWORD

**W**omen form about 50 per cent of the population but they are under-represented in parliaments in the world in general and parliaments in Pakistan in particular. If parliaments are meant to truly reflect the masses they represent, women need to be proportionally represented according to their size in population. Pakistan, for the first time in its history, has increased the women representation in its parliament in 2002 General Election to surpass the world average of around 15 per cent. This quantum leap has created a host of opportunities and challenges not only for the women representatives but also for democracy, democratic institutions, political parties and the country as a whole. Are we conscious of the responsibilities which this increased representation squarely places on our shoulders?

Pakistani Parliament and Provincial Assemblies have or are about to complete their first year since the revival of democracy and increase in the women representation. Although one year and especially the first year is relatively a short period to assess the impact of increased women representation, it gives us a good opportunity to pause and reflect on the experiences of the past one year both to address the issues which have been faced in this period and plan for the future.

It is in this backdrop that Pakistan Legislative Strengthening Consortium PLSC has organised a dialogue on the subject of "First Year of increased Women Representation in Parliament: Lessons, Reflections and the way Forward". It is a reflection of the high degree of importance which the consortium attaches to the subject of women representation in the parliament that a dialogue on this subject has been chosen to launch the 3-years project of Strengthening National and Provincial Legislative Governance in Pakistan.

This background paper has been prepared by Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency PILDAT to put this dialogue in context and to make this dialogue more focussed, productive and result-oriented. The paper has been prepared to promote an informed and serious discourse on the subject in the society. We hope that this brief paper can achieve its intended objective.

We wish to thank the United States Agency for International Development USAID for its support to the project for Strengthening National and Provincial Legislative Governance in Pakistan under which this dialogue is being organised and this background paper has been prepared.

We have tried to be as accurate as possible while preparing this document but PLSC, PILDAT or its supporters are not responsible for any error as it is not intentional. The views expressed in this paper do not necessarily reflect the position of USAID.

**PILDAT**  
**January 31, 2004; Lahore**





**BACKGROUND PAPER**  
**Women Representation in Parliament**

## INTRODUCTION

**G**eneral Election of October 2002 saw an unprecedented increase in the number of reserved seats for women in the Parliament and the four Provincial Assemblies of Pakistan. At the completion of the first year of the induction of women in such proportions, there is a need to assess the impact of the first year of increased representation of women in the Parliament and Provincial Assemblies and evaluate female legislators' performance to derive lessons for the future. A dialogue, thus, is being held involving veteran political leaders and legislators including a select number of male and female legislators belonging to the Parliament and the four Provincial Assemblies to initiate a process of examining the subject. It is believed that initiation of a dialogue on the issue is crucial for addressing the issues in the way of effective representation of women in parliament.

This background paper has been prepared to put the issue of women representation in perspective for the dialogue. It covers the status of women representation in parliaments around the world including the status of women representation in the Muslim World and South Asia. The background paper also traces the history of reserved seats for women in Pakistan, while it presents issues cited as major concerns associated with the representation of women in legislatures.







## WOMEN IN PARLIAMENTS: THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE

### ■ The World at Large

The international scene depicts that average percentage of women representation in the parliaments of the world stands at 15.1 per cent. Table 1 presents the breakup of this average.<sup>1</sup> These averages have been derived from the status of World Parliaments as of October 30, 2003.

**Table 1: REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN PARLIAMENTS  
WORLD AVERAGE<sup>2</sup>**

House or Chamber	Average Percentage of Women
Single House or Lower House	15.3%
Upper House or Senate	14.0%
Both Houses Combined	15.1%

1 Courtesy: CLD: <http://www.cld.org/waw5.htm>

2 Courtesy: IPU: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>

**Table 2: REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN PARLIAMENTS (2003)<sup>3</sup>  
THE TOP TEN COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD**

Rank	Country	LOWER OR SINGLE HOUSE		SEATS HELD BY WOMEN	
		Election Dates	Total Seats	Number	Percentage
1	Rwanda*	09 2003	80	39	48.8 %
2	Sweden	09 2002	349	158	45.3 %
3	Denmark	11 2001	179	68	38.0 %
4	Finland	03 2003	200	75	37.5 %
5	Netherlands	01 2003	150	55	36.7 %
6	Norway	09 2001	165	60	36.4 %
7	Cuba	01 2003	609	219	36.0 %
8	Belgium	05 2003	150	53	35.3 %
9	Costa Rica	02 2002	57	20	35.1 %
10	Austria	11 2002	183	62	33.9 %

3 Courtesy: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm> (IPU)

\* As of March 2003, Sweden topped the ranks but after the elections in Rwanda, it enjoys the highest representation of women in its parliament.



## ■ Asia

Asian average of women representation in parliaments is slightly lower than the world average, but not significantly different from the rest of the world. Table 3<sup>4</sup> shows the average percentage of women representation in the Asian parliaments.

**Table 3: REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN PARLIAMENTS  
REGIONAL AVERAGE OF ASIA**

House or Chamber	Average Percentage of Women
Single House or Lower House	15.0%
Upper House or Senate	13.8%
Both Houses Combined	14.8%

<sup>4</sup> ibid

## ■ The Muslim World

Average representation of women in the parliaments of 42 Muslim countries is significantly lower than the world or the Asian average of women representation in parliaments. Table 4 carries the percentage of representation in the lower or popular chambers of these Muslim countries. The average percentage of women in these countries works out to 8.42 per cent.

## ■ South Asia

The South Asian region, which has witnessed the emergence and rule of maximum number of female leaders in the World such as Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan, Indira Gandhi of India, Khalida Zia and Haseena Wajid of Bangladesh and Sirivamo Bandranaike and Chandrika Kumaratunga of Sri Lanka, has been rather slow in political empowerment and representation of its women. Table 5<sup>5</sup> shows the average representation of women in the lower or popularly elected chambers of the South Asian countries.

<sup>5</sup>. Courtesy: IPU: [http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2145\\_A.htm](http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2145_A.htm)

**Table 4: REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN PARLIAMENTS  
THE MUSLIM WORLD (Lower Chamber)<sup>6</sup>**

Sr.No	Country	Total Seats	SEATS HELD BY WOMEN	
			Number	Percentage
1	Albania	140	8	5.71%
2	Algeria	389	24	6.17
3	Bahrain	40	0	0%
4	Bangladesh	300	6	2%
5	Benin	83	6	7.23%
6	Burkina Faso	111	13	11.71%
7	Cameroon	180	16	8.89
8	Chad	155	9	5.81%
9	Djibouti	65	7	10.77 %
10	Egypt	454	11	2.42 %
11	Gabon	119	11	9.24 %
12	Gambia	53	7	13.21 %
13	Guinea	114	22	19.30 %
14	Guyana	65	13	20%
15	Indonesia	500	40	8.00%
16	Jordan	110	6	5.45 %
17	Kazakhstan	77	8	10.39%
18	Kuwait	65	0	0%
19	Kyrgyzstan	60	6	10%
20	Lebanon	128	3	2.34 %
21	Libya	760	0	0%
22	Malaysia	191	20	10.47%
23	Maldives	50	3	6.00 %
24	Mali	147	15	10.20 %
25	Mauritania	81	3	3.70 %
26	Morocco	325	35	10.77 %
27	Mozambique	250	75	30.00 %
28	Nigeria	346	17	4.91 %
29	Pakistan	342	74	21.64 %
30	Saudi Arabia	120	0	0%
31	Sudan	360	35	9.72 %
32	Syrian Arab Republic	250	30	12.00 %
33	Tajakistan	63	8	12.70 %
34	Togo	81	6	7.41 %
35	Tunisia	182	21	11.54 %
36	Turkey	550	24	4.36 %
37	Turkmanistan	50	13	26.00 %
38	Uganda	304	75	24.67 %
39	UAE	40	0	0%
40	Uzbekistan	250	18	7.20 %
41	Yemen	301	1	0.33 %
		<b>8251</b>	<b>689</b>	<b>Average: 8.05 %</b>

6. Situation as of October 30, 2003; Courtesy: IPU

**Table 5: REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN PARLIAMENTS  
THE SOUTH ASIAN REGION (Lower Chamber)**

Sr.No	Country	Total Seats	SEATS HELD BY WOMEN	
			Number	Percentage
1	Pakistan	342	74	21.64 %
2	India	543	48	8.84 %
3	Srilanka	225	10	4.44 %
4	Nepal	205	12	5.85 %
5	Bangladesh	300	6	2.00 %
6	Bhutan	150	14	9.33 %
7	Maldives	150	3	6.00 %
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1982</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>8.43 %</b>

## Selected Case Studies

### a. The Case of India

India does not have constitutional quota for women seats in national parliament. It does not have an election law quota or regulation for facilitating increase of women seats in the parliament. Certain political parties, such as Indian National Congress and Asom Gana Parishad, however, have a quota for women candidates which stands at 15 per cent for Indian National Congress and 35 per cent for Asom Gana Parishad.

**Table 6: REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN PARLIAMENTS  
THE CASE OF INDIA**

House/Chamber	Election Year	Total seats	SEATS HELD BY WOMEN	
			Number	Percentage
Lower House	1999	543	48	8.84 %
Upper House	2000	242	22	9.1 %
Combined		785	70	8.92 %



## b. The Case of Indonesia

Indonesia does not have a constitutional quota for women seats for National Parliament but has an election law facilitating the increase in women representation. Article 65 of the election law states that “Each participating political party may nominate candidates for the DPR, Provincial DPRD, and Regency/City DPRD, for each electoral district, giving consideration to representation of women of at least 30 per cent.

**Table 7: REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN PARLIAMENTS  
THE CASE OF INDONESIA**

House/Chamber	Election Year	Total seats	SEATS HELD BY WOMEN	
			Number	Percentage
Lower House	1999	500	44	8.8%

## c. The Case of South Africa

South Africa does not have a constitutional quota, election law quota or regulation for women's seat in the national parliament. However, it has a political party quota for electoral candidates. In South Africa's first democratic election in 1994, the African National Congress (ANC) adopted a 30 per cent quota for women on political party lists. As a result, the representation of women increased from below 3 per cent to 27 per cent in one election in 1994. In the 1999 election, women were placed in every third position on the national party list. At the local level (with a mixed electoral system) the ANC has adopted a 50 per cent quota for women on party lists.

The Municipal Structures Act of 1998 specifies that political party should “seek to ensure” that 50 % of candidates for lists elections at the local level are women. There is no penalty if this is not adhered to.<sup>7</sup>

**Table 8: REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN PARLIAMENTS  
THE CASE OF SOUTH AFRICA**

House/Chamber	Election Year	Total seats	SEATS HELD BY WOMEN	
			Number	Percentage
Lower House	1999	400	119	29.8%

7. <http://www.idea.int/quota/displayCountry.cfm?CountryCode=ZA>



#### d. The Case of Rwanda

Rwanda has a constitutional quota for the seats of women in the national parliament provided by article 76 of the constitution. There is also an election law/regulation quota through which 80 members of the Chamber of Deputies are elected as follows: 53 members elected in closed List PR; 24 women with two from each province and from the city of Kigali (by an electoral college with a women only ballot); 2 members elected by the youth council; 1 disabled representative. However, there is no political party quota for appointing women electoral candidates.

There is a parallel system of women's councils and women-only elections guaranteeing a women's mandate for all elected bodies. There is a triple ballot system at the sector and district levels: a general ballot, a women's ballot and a youth ballot. Through indirect elections a district council is chosen guaranteeing women 20 per cent of councilors at that level.

**Table 9: REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN PARLIAMENTS  
THE CASE OF RWANDA**

House/Chamber	Election Year	Total seats	SEATS HELD BY WOMEN	
			Number	Percentage
Lower House	2003	80	39	48.8 %
Upper House	2003	20	6	30.0 %
Combined		100	45	45 %

## WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT: THE CASE OF PAKISTAN

The representation of women in the National Assembly of Pakistan has been varying since 1947 to date. The constitutions of 1956 and 1962 provided for six (6) reserved seats for women in the national assembly, while the 1973 constitution reserved ten (10) seats for women for a period of 10 years from the commencing day of the constitution or the holding of the third general election to the National Assembly, whichever occurred later. Later these seats were increased to twenty (20) in 1985. However, these seats lapsed and elected governments of both Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif could neither revive these seats nor increase their number. These seats have been revived and substantially increased to the number of sixty (60) by the government of General Pervez Musharraf in 2002.

**Table 10: REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN PAKISTAN'S LEGISLATURES**

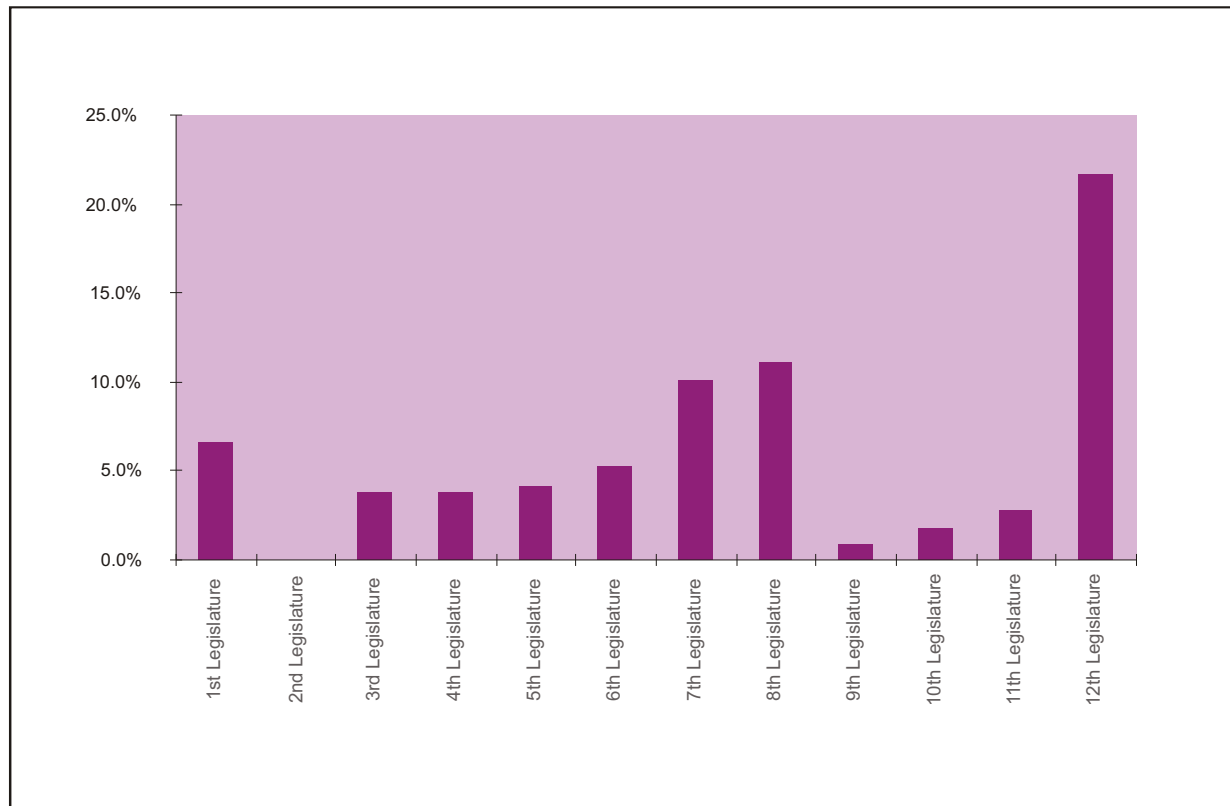
Sr.No	Legislatures	Total seats	Women Elected Directly	Women Elected on Reserved Seats	SEATS HELD BY WOMEN	
					Number	Percentage
1	1st Legislature Aug10,47-Oct24,54	30	-	-	2	6.7 %
2	2nd Legislature May02,55-Oct07,58	80	-	-	0	0 %
3	3rd Legislature June08,62-June12,65	156	6	-	6	3.8 %
4	4th Legislature June 12,65-Mar25,69	156	6	-	6	3.8 %
5	5th Legislature Apr14,72-Jan 10,77	144	6	-	6	4.2 %
6	6th Legislature Mar26,77-July05,77	210	1	10	11	5.2 %
7	7th Legislature Mar20,85-May29,88	217	1	21	22	10.1 %
8	8th Legislature Nov30,88-Aug06,90	217	4	20	24	11.1 %
9	9th Legislature Nov3,90-July17,93	217	2	-	2	0.9 %
10	10th Legislature Oct15,93-Nov5,96	217	4	-	4	1.8 %
11	11th Legislature Feb15,97-Oct12,99	217	6	-	6	2.8 %
12	12th Legislature Nov16,02-to date	342	13	61**	74	21.64 %

\*\*Including 1 woman elected from seats reserved for non-muslims





**Table 11: PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN IN PAKISTAN'S LEGISLATURES**



### ■ Constitutional Quota for National Parliaments (1947-2003)

The 1956, 1962, and 1973 constitutions all provided for reserved seats for women at both the National and Provincial Assemblies. The allotment of seats ranged from three to ten per cent and was affected only through indirect elections by the members of the assemblies themselves. In 1956 a 3 per cent quota for women in parliament was approved. The 1956 constitution under Article 44(2)(1) provided for the reservation of 10 seats for women for a period of 10 years, equally divided between East and West Pakistan. The 1973 constitution provided for 10 seats for women for 10 years or three elections, whichever occurred later. These seats were increased to 20 in 1985. Reservations lapsed in 1988 after three general elections (1977, 1985 and 1988) as provided for in the Constitution.

8. "Global Database of Quotas for Women" A joint project of International IDEA and Stockholm University, <http://www.idea.int/quota/displayCountry.cfm?CountryCode=PK>



**Table 12: REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN THE 12TH LEGISLATURE OF PAKISTAN**

House/Chamber	Election Year	Total seats	SEATS HELD BY WOMEN	
			Number	Percentage
National Assembly	2002	342	74	21.64 %
Senate	2003	100	18	18.0 %
Combined		442	92	20.81 %

Before the October 2002 General Elections, 60 of the 342 seats in the National Assembly (17.5 %) were allocated to women, which is three times higher than the previous reservation of 20 seats for women. Based on a list system, these seats were allocated to the political parties according to the proportion of their general seats in the Assembly. For the four provinces, the same quota was applied for seats for women.

**Table 13: PROVINCIAL REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

Province/Territory	General Seats	Reserved Seats for Women	Reserved Seats for Non-Muslims (Nation-Wide)	Total
Punjab	148	35	-	183
Sindh	61	14	-	75
NWFP	35	8	-	43
Balochistan	14	3	-	17
Federally-Administered Tribal Areas (FATA)	12	-	-	12
Islamabad	2	-	-	2
Non-Muslims	-	-	10	10
Total	272	60	10	342

## Women in Provincial Assemblies

Quota for women representation is also applied in the provincial assemblies. Table 14 presents the number of women in each provincial assembly of the country.

**Table 14: WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN THE PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLIES**

Province	Total Seats	SEATS RESERVED FOR WOMEN	
		Number	Percentage
Punjab	371	66	17.8 %
Sindh	168	29	17.3 %
NWFP	124	22	17.7 %
Balochistan	65	11	16.9 %
Total	728	128	17.6 %

## Procedure for Election of Women to the Reserved Seats

Women are elected to the reserved seats in the national parliament and provincial assemblies by a system of proportional representation. Each province is considered a district, and seats are distributed to the women candidates proposed by the parties in proportion to the number of seats won by those parties in the generally contested seats, which are elected from single-member districts by the first-past-the-post system.<sup>9</sup>

## Women in the Cabinets

At present the federal cabinet of Pakistan has only one woman as federal minister while the provincial cabinets have also given certain portfolios to women as provincial ministers. Table 15 and 16 highlight the federal and provincial cabinets and the percentage of women in those.

**Table 15: REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN THE FEDERAL CABINET**

Total No. of Federal Ministers and Ministers of State	WOMEN MINISTERS	
	Number	Percentage
25	1	4%

9. Increasing Women's Representation in Government: Pippa Norris, Harvard University

**Table 16: REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN PROVINCIAL CABINETS**

Provincial Cabinet	Total No. of Provincial Ministers	WOMEN MINISTERS	
		Number	Percentage
Balochistan	30	2	7 %
Punjab	42	5	12 %
Sindh	21	1	5 %
NWFP	13	0	0 %

### ■ Women as Parliamentary Secretaries

Women legislators also form a part of federal and provincial parliamentary secretaries responsible for various ministries. Following tables present the percentage of women as federal and provincial parliamentary secretaries.

**Table 17: WOMEN AS FEDERAL PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES**

Total No. of Federal Parliamentary Secretaries	WOMEN PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES	
	Number	Percentage
28	5	18%

**Table 18: WOMEN AS PROVINCIAL PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES**

Total No. of Parliamentary Secretaries for Punjab*	WOMEN PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES	
	Number	Percentage
52	12	23%

\* Only Punjab Province has parliamentary secretaries at present.



## 1. SOME ISSUES REGARDING THE INCREASED WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT IN PAKISTAN

In the following paragraphs, some issues have been identified which concern the increased women representation in parliament in Pakistan. The list of issues is not exhaustive and the objective of raising these issues is to promote a healthy debate and reflection on these issues with the ultimate objective of making women representation more effective in future. PLSC or PILDAT do not take a position on these issues and opinions expressed below are based on our inter-action with legislators and other stakeholders over the past one year.

### a. Perceived Discrimination against the women elected on the reserved seats compared to the directly elected members

While constitutional quota of women for national parliaments has added significantly to the number of seats for women in the Pakistani legislatures as well as legislatures of other countries of the World, it is also cited as a problem area. It is argued that the system of quota delivers as a temporary special measure to achieve gender balance in legislatures, but it does not facilitate the real political empowerment and democratic participation of women. Some people have argued that women legislators are treated as mere fillers for statistics without real political and economic power. In effect, it is said, the system provides only symbolic representation to women. Instead of working on policy issues with independence, the women elected through this system are beholden to the political parties, compared to the directly elected legislators who have their constituencies as their real power base. This factor, it is believed, comes into play in the power politics where political weight is associated with directly elected legislators compared to indirectly elected candidates or those elected on reserved seats.

The women groups and organisations who have held a view against the quota system for women seats in the parliament also argue that due to lack of actual participation of women in politics, political parties, with essentially patriarchal structures, have awarded the reserved seats in large numbers to their family members strengthening the web of family-centred dynasty politics in the country. With no real knowledge of the political process, and lack of ideological independence or clarity, these women merely serve as dummy legislators looking towards their male political masters for direction. In effect, they say, the quota system has served to strengthen the patriarchal system of political parties.

On the other hand, no such discrimination is practiced against the members elected on a list system in those countries which have a longer history of using proportional representation list system. For example the current Chancellor of Germany was elected on a list system but it did not impede his election as the Chief Executive of the country.

### b. Family and Public Life

It is argued that it is difficult for women to lead politically active lives as legislators putting their family lives on the backburner in preference to their public life. Women legislators, it is said, have complained about the demands of public life on their time essentially devoted to their families. The culturally accepted principle that women must first fulfil their responsibility at home and to their families hinders their entry to and progress within legislative politics.<sup>10</sup> This argument is also used by male legislators or parties with a certain cultural orientation that the increase in the number of women seats is, in effect, harmful for their family lives. In fact, debate on this issue is also going on in the west and the dilemma is faced both by men and women. The issue is also not specific to women legislators; it is applicable, at least to some degree, to all career women. Balancing family and career is a challenge to both men and women but the degree of severity probably increases in the case of legislators in general and women legislators in Pakistan in particular. Special sessions to guide women legislators on how to balance the two spheres of

10. The Quota System: Women's Boon or Bane? <http://www.cld.org/waw5.htm>



life may be of help but the subject needs a continuous and serious examination.

### **c. Women Legislators for Women Issues or Issues in General?**

It is generally argued that should women devote themselves to addressing women's issues only or they should get involved into general issues and policies beyond gender like other legislators. Gender, it is said, is a cross-cutting theme. However, reducing women to address only women's issues is seen as a marginalization of their role in the parliament. Should women legislators devote more effort to women's issues or they should treat all issues including women's issues equally important? The question needs deeper discussion.

### **d. Women's Caucus or Caucus on Women's Issues?**

Stitched to the earlier issue, the point is raised whether female parliamentarians should form a Women's caucus dealing with women's issues or should such a caucus be open to male legislators. It is argued that women have a natural and deeper understanding of women issues and can highlight those issues in the best manner. Another view suggests that women's issues are a product of a male dominated society generally. Women, on their own, should not be expected to resolve their issues. A strategic alliance of like-minded and active male and female legislators may be an ideal combination for addressing women's issues, they say. Similarly, women should actively participate in other multi-party groups or caucuses that base their activities over general issues as well.

### **e. Need for Capacity Building**

Women's political participation is not only about increasing their numbers but about effectiveness and impact. Women should be able to participate in open, transparent accountable decision making not as objects but as agents of change and development. Denied the conducive environment to be politically active and experienced, women generally lack the expertise and knowledge of political process, policy making and public relationing, it is said, and require thorough capability building before embarking upon their duties as elected legislators. The current parliament has a large number of first-time elected legislators requiring capacity development towards discharge of their responsibilities. Not having the experience of running campaigns, raising finances and a general lack of awareness of legislative practices, women elected on reserved seats are considered better contenders for capacity development than any other.

### **f. Sustainable women Representation in Parliament: How other Countries have done it?**

The most crucial issue raised with the application of quota system is that while it may ensure a certain percentage of women representation as a stop-gap arrangement but it may not facilitate sustainable women representation in the parliament. Without having real constituencies, the women elected on reserved seats may not have the option to direct their energies towards developing a mass base for themselves. On the other hand, the marginalisation of women legislators elected on reserved seats also hinders them to play an active role in parliament. The large number of women presently elected to parliament in Pakistan need to focus their energies towards finding a solution to this issue.

Gender quotas, both established by national legislation and by political parties, are usually introduced in many countries to enhance the participation of women in politics. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, there are at least 56 political parties in 24 countries that recognise the use of quota system. Some countries have been successful in maintaining the quota system over the years while others have abolished it. In France and Italy, the quota system was abolished because they believe that it denies the fundamental right of equal access to elective offices. Electoral laws should not be subjected to special treatment on the basis of sex, they maintain. Similarly, there is a belief, particularly in Columbia, that a quota law could serve to widen what

has already become a trend, that is, women are elected or appointed to office only to keep their husband's, father's or brother's dynasty intact.

Most developed democracies have democratic political parties which are a key to a healthy democracy. Parties have used campaign finance facilities for women candidates while women's capacity has also been built to run effective campaigns and win elections. The legislatures in Pakistan need to analyse the question as to how effective and sustainable representation of women in parliaments can be ensured.

Alternative approaches to have sustainable women representation in parliament suggest sensitisation of political parties to allocate a certain number of seats for women electoral candidates. Efforts towards the passage of such legislation should also be made while political parties should be sensitised to engage women effectively into political system. Some women organisations also demand direct election of women by a joint electorate of women and men in enlarged constituencies created through the fusion of two normal-sized constituencies. For the general seats, the normal-size constituency should be operable. All eligible voters should have two votes: one for the reserved seat in the enlarged constituency and another for the general seat in their normal constituency.<sup>11</sup> Another possible way of addressing this issue is to adopt the system of proportional representation both for men and women for around 50 per cent seats of the assemblies, and parties are then made legally bound to nominate a certain minimum percentage of women in their list system. This system may ensure that women elected through the list system are not considered lesser than their directly elected counterparts in any way.

### **g. Role of Civil Society Especially Women Organisations**

As agents of change, it is believed, the civil society organisations have a large role to play in enhancing effectiveness of the role of women legislators. Civil Society Organisations working in the area of gender have worked to highlight the issue of women's representation. Civil society organisations can provide a support to legislators on many issues. It is up to both sides to work out as to how a mutually beneficial relationship can be carved out in this regard.

### **h. Role of Universities especially Women Study Centres**

Universities as centres for research and training have a large role to play in guiding policies in many areas. Universities in Pakistan can provide the crucial policy options for effective and sustainable women representation in legislatures. Pakistani universities have recently established centres for women studies across the country which are as follows:

- Department of Women Studies, University of Punjab, Lahore
- Women Study Centre, University of Peshawar, Peshawar
- Women Study Centre, University of Karachi, Karachi
- Women Study centre, University of Balochistan, Quetta
- Institute of Women Development Studies, University of Sindh, Jamshoro
- Women study Centre, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad
- Department of Women Studies, Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad

In addition, Women Universities, especially Fatima Jinnah Women University, located close to the seat of parliament, can play a very prominent role in creating a synergy between academia and women legislators and the related issues. Fatima Jinnah Women's University and the Women Studies Centres can provide the much-needed research base for addressing these issues while they can also serve as support/advocacy resource to women legislators on issues relating to women.

11. "Possible Election Modalities". Legislative Watch. Issue No. 15 and 16, November-December 2001.



## CONCLUSION

We believe that Representation of Women in the Parliament is a serious national subject. It should not be taken lightly or branded just a women's issue. It is important that the impact of women legislators should be seriously examined and ways should be found to make their representation more effective. A continuous and serious research should be carried out at universities, especially Women Studies Centres on various aspects of women representation. These centres should also create a mechanism of inter-action with women legislators for mutual benefit. These centres should become focal points of providing research based feedback to women legislators on national issues in which women's point of view is articulated. The increased number of women representation in the country's legislatures provides an opportunity to analyse the hindrances in the way of women's effective political role and find ways and means to address those issues.

The current level of women's representation in the national and provincial legislatures of Pakistan may not be ideal but it is satisfactory when compared to the World at large. The main issue which needs our consideration at present is the effectiveness of representation of women legislators apart from their number.





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