Article

Gender and local governance in Pakistan: Representation vs. participation

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Women's participation in governance is extremely important for an even human resource development, poverty alleviation and good governance. In, Pakistan, a concerted and collaborated effort has been made in this regard by providing women 33% representation in local governance through the current local government ordinance, 2000. However, the traditional cultural values and societal norms that ascribe women domestic roles and accord them a lower status as compared to men are not compatible with their professional roles in politics. These cultural norms are reflected in the systemic, organizational and personal practices and constrain their participation in governance. The paper applying a holistic gender, organization system (GOS) perspective analyzes the diverse societal, institutional and individual factors that account for low participation of women in governance in Pakistan. Since women's passive representation in governance has critical implications for gender sensitive legislation, resource allocation, utilization of human resources and poverty reduction the paper recommends measure such as review of LG policies; gender awareness and mainstreaming, capacity building, networking and mentoring etc. to facilitate their effective participation.

Key Words: Gender, local governance, representation, participation, Pakistan.

INTRODUCTION

In line with universal trends, the development framework of Pakistan is evolving in the context of governance and administrative reforms. Since 1980s a wide range of governance reforms have been introduced in the country in the form of liberalization, democratization and decentrali-zation to achieve objectives of economic growth, poverty reduction, participation, transparency and accountability. This new wave of governance reform reflects the gradual shift in development thinking over time on political, eco-nomic, social and economic roles of state and society. The governments under the new mode of governance have the responsibility to steer, facilitate and guide for effective governance as opposed to their traditional roles of command and control and sole provider of public ser-vices. Both civil society and private sector organizations are recognized as potential partners in the process of go-vernance. Since all development is people related their participation and involvement irrespective of gender is considered crucial in a nation's development.

There is a great realization that seeking citizen partici-pation on various social and public policy issues is important to enhance their confidence in governing insti-tutions. Democratic means such as, expression of public opinion on various policy issues, involvement of commu-nity in policy formulation and their representation and par-ticipation on different decision making bodies and policy implementation forums are commonly adopted as initia-tives to promote peoples participation for their own deve-lopment (Haque and Zafarullah, 2006; Rondinelli, 2006; Cornwall and Gaventa, 2006; Haque, 2003; 2002; Mohan and Stokke, 2000).

In this regard, equality in terms of women representa-tion and their participation in various governing institu-tions has also gained global attention. In fact, the concept of governance which is based on certain universally ac-cepted values such as equity, accountability, transpare-ncy, efficiency, participation and responsiveness acknow-ledges contribution of both women and men in various development efforts and incorporates gender into it (Kaufmann and Kraay, 2007; UNDP, 2003, 1995a; Hyden et al, 2004; World Bank, 1992; UNESCO, 1997). Gender equality and equity of opportunities on the basis of gender

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of gender are recognized as the key strategies of the development framework of the international development community as a goal of sustainable good governance (UNDP, 2008; ADB, 2008; MDG, 2006; Cheema, 2000).

It is widely believed that without including women that constitute nearly half of the world's population in the process of governance nations can not reach their full human potential (Kamal, 2000; IPU, 1997; www.onlinewomen.org, 2007). Kofi Annan, secretary of the United Nations reaffirmed his belief to equity in terms of gender development and empowerment and said that "It is impossible to realize our goals while discriminating against half the human race" (Kofi Annan, 2006 quoted in DFID, 2007). Thus, the greater significance of female participation is not only due to the democratization, liberalization and modernization processes around the world it is rather a matter of human development for eradication of poverty and sustainable governance.

Realizing the importance, gender concerns have received greater importance in the last 3 decades of the 20th century resulting in an expanded role for women in the economy and changing their traditional roles and relationships to the work and family. This phenomenon has occurred not only in developed countries but also in developing countries including Pakistan where women have been given greater representation in different spheres of the economy. In politics alone women have been given 33% representation at local government level through a new system of devolution of powers plan 2001 to enhance their political participation (NRB, 2006; Anjum, 2001; Bari, 2001). The substantial representation of women in local governance is a mile stone in the history of Pakistan which is expected to open new windows of opportunities for Pakistani women in terms of organizing themselves at the grass roots level and voicing their concerns in policy arenas. It is also anticipated that this plan will empower women to take part in political, economic and social decision making process on equal basis which may in turn eliminate gender biases in-built in Pakistani society (ADB, 2008; GRAP, 2006; UNDP, 2007, 2000; World Bank, 2005).

Nevertheless, what makes gender participation more interesting in the context of Pakistan is that although women have been given a remarkable representation in the local governance the requisite social, economic and political changes have not yet been made in the tradition bound Pakistani society. Several anecdotes and reports point to the construed social power structure, low women status, their lack of access to basic development opportunities including education, health and employment, misinterpretation of Islamic injunctions and over ride of traditional cultural norms in the society as major impedements constraining women's full participation in governance. Therefore, quantitative and numerical representation of women alone is not a sufficient condition to bring forth their qualitative participation in the governance process.

Building on the above argument, the article attempts to explore the issues relating to women's participation in local governance in the cultural specific context of Pakistan. More specifically, it addresses the following aspects:

i) Significance and trends in women's participation in governance.
ii) From local government to local governance in Pakistan.
iii) State of women in contemporary local governance.
iv) Major challenges to women's participation at systemic, institutional, familial and personal levels and its implications.
v) Policy measures to enhance women's participation.

Both primary and secondary sources of information have been utilized to put this discussion into proper perspective. While secondary sources of information included published and unpublished reports, records, documents and discussions, primary sources included the authors' involvement with Canadian international development agency (CIDA) towards its devolution support program and interaction with women and men councilors during various training programs. All these sources together, provided an insight into the problems, issues and dilemmas that women face towards their effective participation in local governance.

An overview of significance and trends in women participation in governance

The last 3 decades of the 20th century have witnessed a significant change in terms of women's share in political, economic, social and administrative arenas. They have now expanded role to play in every sphere of life though variations are there in terms of their representation from region to region and country to country. The level of development of countries is now expected to be measured by the role of women's participation in governance.

The growing representation and participation of women which is a global phenomenon is considered as one of the most remarkable developments of the late 20th century. The global trends in women's accelerated representation in governance exhibit that during 1975 to 1997 the number of women legislators rose in almost all regions with an exception of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Their share doubled in developed countries and Nordic countries and discerned a visible increase in Latin America, the Caribbean countries and Asia with a global increase from 7.4% to nearly 11% as shown in the Table 1.

The inter -parliamentary union (1997) reported that during 1987 to 1995, the number of countries without any representation of women ministers dropped from 93 to 47 with 10 countries reporting women holding more than 20% of ministerial level positions. The human development report (2000) also reported progress in terms of women's

Table 1. % of women in national legislatures, by region, 1975 - 1997.

Regions	1975	1987	1997
Arab States	3.5	2.8	3.3
Asia	8.4	9.3	13.4
Central and Eastern Europe and former Soviet union	23.3	23.1	11.5
Developed countries	5.1	9.6	14.7
Latin America and the Caribbean	6.0	6.9	10.5
Nordic countries	16.1	28.8	36.4

Source: Democracy still in the making: A world comparative study, Geneva: Inter parliamentary union, 1997 and the world's women, 1970 - 1990: Trends and statistics, the United Nations, 1991.

representation in governance at various levels while ranking 130 countries of the world on a global scale using the gender-related development index (GDI) (Gender-related development index (GDI) is a composite of gender development and gender empowerment Indices. It adjusts the human development index (HDI) for gender equality in life expectancy, educational attainment, income and poli-tical participation. For more details on female participa-tion and progress in governance see human development report (2000. See also www.undp.org/hd) apart from the fact, that the report also pointed to wide gender gaps on various indicators of human development (UNDP, 2000). Today, women account for 15.4% of parliamentary membership around the world, compared with 11.7% in 1997 (IWDC, 2007) . The international development organizations such as the world bank, the united nations, Asian development bank, DFID and other developing bodies believe that without having equal participation of women in all spheres of life the goal of gender development and empowerment could not be achieved.

In line with the universal trends south Asian countries including Pakistan have also made progress in terms of representation of women in governance. Women in this region can be seen in governance structure holding the parliamentary seats, cabinet positions, judicial, civil services and local government positions though their share is quite low at present. According to the data provided in the human development report (2000) women in south Asia occupy 7% of the parliamentary seats, 9% of the cabinet seats and 6% of the judicial positions. They represent 9% of the civil services and 20% of the local government seats (UNDP, 2000). In Pakistan alone women's proportion in the national parliament has doubled with 9.7% in 1985 to 18.1% in the year 2002 (FBS, 2003). At the local level too their share in representation has increased from 10% in 1993 to 33% through reservation of seats for women (Reyes, 2002).

The universal increase in women's representation and participation in political, economic, administrative and social arenas can be attributed to a number of developments including the historical events such as, the industrial revolution, the emergence of capitalism, the socialist revolution, decolonization and shift in development thinking after the second world war which brought a gradual change in the approach towards gender issues. The change in development thinking which can be classified into 4 major approached namely:

1) The welfare approach during the 1950s.
2) The equity approach during the 1970s.
3) The efficiency approach during the 1980s.
4) The empowerment approach during the 1990s gradually shifted the focus of gender development (Hyden et al., 2004; Neft and Levine, 1997; Moser, 1989; Buvinic, 1983).

While the welfare approach focused on development for people through technical assistance with the assumption that benefits of growth will trickle down, women under this approach largely remained recipient of state welfare projects without having their sufficient involvement in development process. However, the empowerment approach during the early 1990s shifted the focus of development from development for or of the people to development with and by the people (Haque and Zafarullah, 2006; Jolly, 2002; Prasad and Sahay, 2000). This view lead to the emergence of human development through people's involvement, participation and empowerment and recognized potential of both women and men with an emphasis on provision of opportunities more equitably (Sen, 2001; UNDP, 1999).

The global importance of female representation is also due to the various efforts of the international development organizations, institutions and donors including the united nations, CIDA, DFID, the world bank, IMF and WTO for over all gender equality and elimination of discrimination on the basis of gender. Besides these, civil society organizations that are considered as partners in development under the new mode of governance and governments' own commitments to various international conventions and policies to promote gender equality for reducing poverty and sustainable human development have also played pivotal role in this regard. For instance, the united nations convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) (1979) (CEDAW defines discrimination and possible areas it may take place including political life, international affairs and national concerns relating to education, employment, health care, law and family life etc. The convention also suggests measure to be taken by states to address discrimination in the above areas. It is a comprehensive convention widely ratified by 160 countries of the world including Pakistan), the U.N. decade for women, (1976 – 1985), the declaration on the ending of violence against women (DEVAW) (1993) (DEVAW particularly focuses on gender based violence and its various forms in social, political and domestic life, which CEDAW does not address explicitly. For more details see UNDP, gender equality

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strategy, 2007), the Vienna declaration, (1993) (The Vienna declaration emphasized on equal enjoyment of human rights by both women and men and was widely ratified by 171 countries at the world conference on human rights in June 1993, mentioned in the UNDP report on the revolution for gender equality, 2006), the Beijing declaration and platform for action (BPFA) (1995), security council resolution (CSR 1325) (2000), the millennium declaration (2000) and the U.N. gender mainstreaming policy and strategy (2006) are some of the path breaking international conventions to define charter for women's legal, political, economic, social and human rights.

The growing importance of women's representation and participation in governance is also due to the world wide gender awareness campaign through media, femi-nist movements around the world, better access to opportunities, that is, education, health and employment and above all, women's self fulfillment in contributing to the democratic means of governance. Since the 1980s several conferences, workshops, symposiums and debates have been organized at the international, regional and national level to address gender issues and devise action plans. Realizing that gender issues are social issues and no universal strategy can be adopted for complex gender problems the role of indigenous search has also been recognized to understand the phenomenon in a country's own unique context. Academicians, researchers, scholars and professionals have also put in their efforts to bring gender issues in spotlight through research and publications.

In order to ensure implementation of various conventions, laws, policies and resolutions international donors and development bodies such as, the world bank, ADB and UNDP are regularly undertaking governance assessment of countries through world governance indicators (WGI) (World Bank, 2006), world governance assessment (WGA) (UNDP, 2002) and human development index (HGI) (UNDP, 1999). They have also tied international support for developing countries with adoption and implementation of governance reforms of which participation and equity on the basis of gender is a key criteria. At the national level too special ministries of women affairs, commissions on status of women and bodies such as gender reform action plans (GRAPs) have been established to strengthen implementation and integration of gender in governance reforms. In Pakistan too, various policies and plans, that is, the national plan of action, 1998, the national policy for development and empowerment of women, 2002 and 10 Year perspective plan (2000 - 2011) incorporate the country's commitment to promote participation of women in all spheres of life. The ministry of women development, the national commission on status of women and GRAPs have been established at national and provincial level to ensure smooth implementation of reform. All partners in development including the public, private and civil society organizations are putting in concerted efforts to fulfill promises of gender inclusion and participation at all levels.

Nevertheless, despite all of the above global, regional, national and local level efforts to enhance women's representation and participation they are still underrepresented in governance with wide gender inequalities and subtle discriminatory practices around the world. According to the IWDC, statistics, 2007 women account for only 17% of the world's parliament seats, with only 12 women heads of the states out of over 180 governments. While the number of sovereign states has increased 7-fold during the years 1945 - 1995, women's share in parlia-ments have increased only 4-fold. More interestingly, women ministers through a process of gender streaming are concentrated in social areas (14%) as compared to the legal, economic, political and executive areas with 9.4, 4.1, 3.4 and 3.9% representation respectively (IWDC, 2007). The online women statistics (2007) reported women holding only 9% of the top management jobs and 21% of senior management positions according to the United Nations record (www.womenstatisticson-line.com., 2007). The human development report (1995b) also revealed women living in an unequal world as com-pared to men, finding lesser opportunities of develop-ment, working for longer hours with lower earnings and sharing the major burden (70%) of the world poverty. The report found south Asia one of the lowest ranked regions on gender related development index with a weighted average of 0.415 as compared to the 0.564 for develop-ing countries and Pakistan having a weighted average of only 0.399 pointing to the wide gender gap in the region (www.hdr.undp.org/HDR 95) . The above gross represent-tation of women across the world points to the need for more serious consideration of the issue of women en-gagement and their participation in governance.

Form local government to local governance in Pakistan

The history of local government system in Pakistan can be traced back to the all India municipal act of 1850 which set the basis for local government legislation at a broader scale. Subsequently, several acts and resolutions were made during the colonial rule to strengthen the system including, the lord Mayo's resolution in 1870 on administrative and financial decentralization, lord Ripon's resolution in 1882 on local self-government, Minto-Morley reforms in 1909, Montagu Chelmsford reform proposals, 1919 which ultimately took the shape of the government of India act and the government of India act 1935, which allowed provinces autonomy and power to frame legislation on local government systems (NRB, 2006). However, the colonial local government system was largely designed to serve the colonial interests such as collection of land revenue and maintenance of law and order. Bureaucratic elitism, state dominance, centralization and command and control of administration over local institutions were the main features of the system.

After its inception in 1947, Pakistan inherited a system

of local government from its colonial past with unbalanced institutional development which perpetuated in the post-colonial period. Despite the realization and need for an indigenous local government system suitable to the local requirements several acts and laws such as, the land revenue act, 1967, police act, 1861, criminal procedure code and Pakistan penal code continued to be implemented as in the colonial past and a status quo was maintained regarding powers of the commissioners, deputy commissioners, police superintendents and officers in other line departments. It was also observed that despite its western orientation the system deviated from the basic principals of bureaucracy such as, rule of law, merit, accountability, impersonality and public service delivery.

Over the years, every initiative to bring local democracies closer to the people through changing laws, policies, acts and manuals in fact contributed to further increasing the gap among the masses and administration and elected officials due to the strong hold of cultural practices such as, nepotism, feudalism, elitism, corruption and absence of rule of law. For instance, in 1956 and 1962 an effort was made to introduce constitutional changes with regard to local government system and the basic democracies system was introduced in 1959 through promulgation of basic democracies ordinance 1959. In 1960, the municipal administration ordinance was introduced to facilitate implementation of basic democracies ordinance. However, both of the ordinances could not be implemented due to the mounting political unrest and instability in the country [Basis democracies system 1959 was introduced by the Ayub Khan regime after disbanding the national and provincial system of local government, as part of the military government's efforts to engage people in local affairs. All modalities of the new system were devised, however, after the fall of Ayub Khan the system could not be implemented as designed (local government department, Sindh, 2004)]. Similarly, an altogether new system of local government was formed by the first democratically elected government of the country in 1975 through promulgation of people's local government ordinances (1975), which remained unimplemented as local government elections were not held and bureaucrats and politicians continued their control over local institutions throughout the period.

The current local government system in Pakistan, envisaged by the military government of general Pervez Musharaf was introduced in the country on 14th August 2001 through promulgation of local government ordinance, 2000. The system reflected the paradigm shift in development thinking over time and was a major transformation from administratively controlled centralized local government system to people centered system of local governance. National reconstruction bureau (NRB), a newly established federal agency was given the responsibility to craft and lead the plan. NRB formulated devolution of power plan which provided conceptual and legal framework for the new system of local governance for each of the 4 provinces. The official goals of devolution included devolving political power of elected politicians, decentralization of administrative authority, distribution of resources to districts, de-concentration of management functions and diffusion of power-authority nexus for checks and balances through monitoring by citizens.

In other words, a gradual shift took place from local government to local governance by the year 2000. The new system clearly defines the functions of each of the 3 tiers of local governance, that is, district, Tehsil (sub-district) and union council and their relationship which is not hierarchical but is geographically and politically integrated. More important is that the system has a provision for 33% representation of women through reservation of seats and 20% representation of workers/peasants at all levels of the local government. Devolution represents a major governance reform which is expected to bring dramatic and fundamental changes to the political, social and administrative system of Pakistan.

Nevertheless, devolution, after completion of its first term has taken the second term in 2005, but, is still facing many institutional, organizational and human resource challenges. Political decentralization has not been adequately followed by administrative and fiscal decentralization to ensure quality in public service delivery at local level. Citizen participation including participation of women in local governance and their engagement in decision making has been also very low. The operational autonomy and enabling environment required for realizing full potential of people and community empowerment have yet to be created.

In the context of current local governance reform, 2001 the section below specifically discusses the status of women's representation at various levels of local governance in the country.

State of women in contemporary local governance of Pakistan

Women constitute 48% of the total 160 million population of Pakistan (www.womenstatisticsonline.org, 2007; Coleman, 2004; FBS, 2003). The constitution of Pakistan ensures equal status to women and provides protection for their rights including the rights to vote and contest elections. Article 25 of the constitution states "All citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law and there shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex alone". Article 27 provides protection from discrimination in employment and states, "No citizen otherwise qualified for employment in the services of Pakistan shall be discriminated against on the basis of race, religion, cast or sex". Article 34 of the constitution further indicates the state's commitment to ensure full participation of women in all spheres of national life and provides room for affirmative action (Khosa, 1992).

Despite these constitutional provisions minimal effort was made to enhance representation of women in governance in the past. The previous constitutions, 1956, 1962, 1970,

Table 2. Women representation in local governance.

Time period	Regime	Representation
1958 - 1968	Ayub Khan	No special representation under basic democracies ordinance
1971 - 1977	Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto	No special representation was provided
1977 - 1985	Zia-ul-Haq	2 seats at UC and 10% for other tiers except NWFP
1988 - 1990	Benazir Bhutto	Local government elections were not held
1990 - 1993	Nawaz Sharif	10.4%
1994 - 1996	Benazir Bhutto	Local government elections were not held
1997 - 1999	Nawaz Sharif	12.7% in Punjab, 25.8% in Balochistan, 2.9% in NWFP and 23% in Sindh
1999 - to date	Pervez Musharaf	33% at all levels

Source: Adapted from Aurat publication and information services foundation, 2001.

Table 3. Status of women in local governance.

Local government level	No. of seats reserved for women	No. of elected women
Union councils	36,066	32,222
Tehsil council	1,749	1,675
Town councils[1]	161	161
District councils	1,988	1,905
Total	39,964	35,963
Women elected on reserved seats for Minorities		126
Women elected on Nazim/Naib Nazim seats		16
Total No. of elected women		36,105

Source: Adapted from Reyes (2002) and Naz (2001).

1973 and 1985 all provided for reservation of seats for women at both the provincial and national assemblies through indirect election. However, this reservation remained very low and limited from 5 to 10% only and lapsed in 1988 which further deteriorated women's representation in political decision making. It is only the devolution of power plan (2000) which provided women 33% representation at all 3 tiers of local governance through special quota. Table 2 illustrates representation of women in local governance through allocation of reserve seats/quotas in various local government elections of Pakistan.

Table 2 shows that first time in the history of Pakistan women were provided a visible representation in local governance through reservation of 33% seats. It was expected that nearly 40,000 women to be elected on reserve seats, however, the actual results of the elections 2000 - 2001 showed that 36,105 women were elected as representatives at various levels of local governance (the value of 33% reserved seats was calculated on the basis of base number seats in each of the district, Tehsil, town and union council instead of the gross number of seats at each level which decreased women reservation to 27.7% and declined their representation from 39,964 to 36,105). The Table 3 illustrates status of women in terms of the number of seats reserved for them at the union, Tehsil and district levels and their representation against the seats at each level.

On an overall basis, the affirmative action opened a new window of opportunities for a critical mass of 36,000 women to organize themselves and voice their concerns at grass roots level of local governance (Alam, 2004; Yazdani, 2002, 2003; Anjum, 2001).

At the national and provincial level too women were provided representation through reservation of 17% seats (60 and 128) at each level. Tables 4 and 5 present status of women in each national and provincial assembly.

The same 17% quota was maintained at the provincial level with seats reserved for technocrats as well as seats to be contested in open as exhibited below.

Although, women representation in both the national and provincial assemblies doubled during 2002 as compared to 9.7% representation in the year 1985, however, it remained very low from gender equality point of view. The government also ignored its commitment to the various international and national treaties and conventions to provide women at least 30% representation at all levels of governance (Pakistan is a signatory of both the convention on all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) 1979 and the Beijing platform for action (BP-FA), 1995 that recommend adoption of quotas to increase women representation to at least 30% in politics and employment).

With regard to profile of elected women councilors expected to make a strategic change in the socio-political landscape of Pakistan the existing data show that majority

Table 4. Women representation in the national assembly in Pakistan, 2002.

Province/Territory	General Seats	Seats Reserved for Women	Seats Reserved for Technocrats	Total
Punjab	148	35	15	198
Sindh	61	14	6	81
NWFP	35	8	3	46
Baluchistan	14	3	1	18
Federally-Administered Territory (FATA)	12	N/A	N/A	12
Islamabad	2	N/A	N/A	2
Total	272	60	25	357

Source: Reyes, international IDEA, 2002. (http://www.idea.int).

Table 5. Women representation in provincial assemblies in Pakistan, 2002.

Province	General seats	Seats reserved for women	Seats reserved for technocrats	Total
Punjab	297	66	27	390
Sindh	130	29	12	171
NWFP	99	22	9	130
Baluchistan	51	11	5	67

Source: Reyes, international IDEA, 2002. (http://www.idea.int).

of the women 60% were relatively younger, (less than 45 years), 75% had never been elected before, 73.7% were housewives and half of them were illiterate (CIET, 2004 - 2006; Bari, 2000). The existing studies also indicate to the low participation of women in their respective councils during the first term of the local government system (CIET, 2004 - 2006; Alam, 2004; Yazdani, 2002 - 2003). These findings have critical implications on how the elected women conduct themselves to cope with challenges of the new system.

While increasing women's representation in local decision making through affirmative action was an important first step, enhancing their participation to make a differrence requires more qualitative improvements. Taking into account, the political history and context of local governance in Pakistan the section below identifies major systemic, institutional and individual challenges to women's effective participation in local governance.

Major challenges to women's participation

It is evident from the above discussion that although Pakistan has made significant progress in terms of women's representation in local governance over the years, their participation still remains low and limited in decision making process. The equality of development opportunities, an enabling environment and acceptance of women in their emerging leadership roles necessary to bring forth full participation of individuals have yet to come. Pakistani women face diverse political, legal, administrative and social challenges in their quest towards penetrating in the grass roots governance.

The discussion below examines major factors at systemic, institutional and personal level that account for low participation of women in governance using a holistic gender, organization, system (GOS) approach [the gender, organization, system (GOS) framework was originally proposed by Fagenson (1993) to study progression of women in organizations. It assumes that women's advancement to organizational leadership is influenced by the interaction of their own gender, organizations and the broader system that shapes values, attitudes and behaviors of people in organizations (Fagenson, 1993, 1990). The concept was later utilized by Jabeen (2000) to develop an indigenous model for investigating under-representation of women in federal civil services of Pakistan (Jabeen, 2001)]. It assumes that women councilor's own gender, the institutional context and overall societal norms, legal environment and culture may influence their participation in democratic means of governance.

Systemic factors

The systemic factors including the legal, political and cultural factors pose challenges for women and constrain their participation in governance. These societal factors accord a low status to women vis-à-vis men which is reflected in all spheres of life including politics.

Legal factors

While the constitution of Pakistan provide for equal treatment to both women and men in terms of their access to

development opportunities and protection from discrimination on the basis of sex alone legal practices are quite contradictory. There are several discriminatory laws in existence that deny women of equal rights and status and limit their opportunities in public arena. Even at times the positives provisions of laws regarding fundamental rights of women including the right to vote, freedom of movement and choice of profession are ignored using the cultural and religious interpretations [in several parts of interior Baluchistan and NWFP women are not allowed to vote and contest election with this apprehension that male electoral staff may hold their thumbs to get the vote cast or they may have to go out and interact with male members for election campaign. According to the report by Aurat foundation (a local NGO working for women advocacy) 2001, in some areas of NWFP and FATA not a single vote was cast in the 1997 elections while in Jamrud only 37 out of 6.600 registered women voted (Naz, 2001)]. For instance, the very concept of "reserve seats" for women in politics is viewed negatively placing women to an inferior status as compared to men who are directly elected on open seats. Women in reserve seats are viewed as passive vote bank and proxy representation of male members pursuing their political interests (Reyes, 2002; Drage, 2001; Jaquette, 1997). They are denied equal support of political parties, access to information and organizational resources that restrict their participation in governance.

While local governance provides for 33% representation of women the same has not been maintained at provincial and national level. Laws also not ensure their representation in decision making committees and higher forums such as local government commission, finance and management committees, monitoring committees etc. Absence of women in such committees has critical implications for women and their political participation. The CIET, social audit report 2002 - 2004 revealed that during the first term of local governance women were neither encouraged to submit development proposals nor did their development schemes got acceptance as compared to the men's. Women councilors also complained subtle forms of discrimination against them in terms of attitudes of male colleagues, lack of facilitative environment, absence of honorarium and their relegation to the areas that are traditionally perceived as extension of female roles. Ironically, laws again do not define any penalties for such hostile practices, offensive behaviors and harassing attitudes that adversely affect women's participation in political governance.

Political factors

There are various political factors that affect women's effective participation in governance. Some of the major factors include political instability, insecurity, corruption, violence, lack of political awareness, lack of political skills and poor implementation of policies. Pakistan's political history includes several periods of institutional crises and instability. Since inception, the country has witnessed 4 military coups and experienced 5 disrupted elected governments besides 2 wars and internal ethnic and sectarian crises. The frequent suspension of the constitutions and the elected governments has given rise to insecurity, frustration and disassociation from politics among masses over the years.

Politics in Pakistan is often viewed as a dirty business and is associated with corruption, nepotism, favoritism, rivalry, enmity and violence. Furthermore, it has been dominated by feudal mind set and tribal value system that offered political opportunities to the elite only and deprived common people in general and women in particular from politics. Sharp gender role divisions in Pakistani society further put women at a disadvantageous position in politics by providing men more prominent roles in governance.

Until the new system of local governance 2000 women's roles in politics confined mainly to the political campaigns, election canvassing and facilitation of voting process for men. Their limited access to development opportunities, that is, education, employment and political participation deprived women of the political skills and knowledge required to effectively contribute towards decision making, policy formulation, policy implementation, project submission and resource allocation at local level. The complex procedures of election system, starting from registration for voting till election of the candidates, lack of political party support and behavior of male colleagues further hindered their effective participation in grass roots governance.

Cultural factors

In Pakistani society status of women is largely determined by the cultural norms, societal traditions and customary behaviors. These cultural norms ascribe different roles to men and women and place women in subordinated positions. While men are ascribed breadwinning responsibilities and more prominent roles in public sphere women are more valued in their domestic roles as wives, mothers and family helpers.

This role division has implications for women not only in terms of opportunities available to them for development but also for their own aspirations to join professional positions in public arena. There are several reports that indicate women's low access to basic indicators of development, that is, education, health, employment and political representation (FBS, 2003; UNDP, 2000; 1995b; Naz, 2001; Drage, 2001). Despite the fact that progress has been made to reduce gender disparities in the past, women still face inequality on indicators of gender development and empowerment. For instance, the human development report 1998 ranked Pakistan 131 on a list of 163 countries on gender development index (GDI) and 100 on a list of 102 countries on gender empowerment

measure (GEM) (UNDP, 1998). The data further revealed that while number of illiterates has doubled in Pakistan since 1951 it has tripled in the case of women (Coleman, 2004; Kamal, 2000). There are considerable gender disparities in health, labor force participation and representtation in the national parliament (UNDP, 2000, 1995b). Women's lack of power to choose their occupation and their immobility further restrict their chances to become at par with men in politics.

Once created, such perceptions are sustained through gender stereotyping and result in gender biased behaviors and discriminatory work practices. The above cultural traditions have such a strong hold on public perceptions that even state sponsored gender development initiatives are undermined sometimes. Since, politics in Pakistan has always remained male dominated and women's entry in local governance through a visible representation is only a recent phenomenon this social change is perceived as uncustomary and non traditional and hence has less acceptance.

Organizational factors

The organizational and institutional practices of local governance are mirror image of the systemic factors discussed above. Some of the administrative and cultural factors that impede women's participation in governance include gender streaming, limited training opportunities, lack of women friendly policies, absence of women from decision making bodies and lack of net working and mentoring opportunities.

Gender streaming

In Pakistan, the phenomenon of male dominance in politics is so pervasive that despite a visible representation of women in local governance they are streamed into projects and roles considered appropriate for them. Since, education, health and social welfare are viewed as extension of female roles more women councilors are represented in these areas. This segregation ghettoize women in few areas and devoid them of having variety of experience in other important areas including finance, budgeting, development works and maintenance etc. dominated by male councilors. Gender streaming has implications for representation of women issues and concerns in all areas, variety of experience and cross gender learning through interaction with colleagues. Recognizing the issue, the UNDP, ADB, CIDA and various national and civil society organizations are putting in serious efforts towards promoting gender mainstreaming at different levels and areas of governance [the United Nations office of social advisor on gender issues and advancement of women (OSAGI) defines gender mainstreaming as a globally recognized strategy for promoting gender equality. It emphasizes on incorporation of gender perspectives in all activities including policy development,

research, advocacy, resource allocation, legislation, policy implementation and monitoring of programs and projects to achieve equality (www.un.org/osagi)].

Limited training opportunities

The current system of local governance 2000 was introduced in Pakistan by the military government within a short period of 20 months [The military government of general Musharaf unfolded its devolution of power plan in March 2000 and opened it for public debate. On 14 August 2001 the new system was installed after a hectic deliberation of the national reconstruction bureau (NRB)]. Without being pilot tested as part of its governance reforms and to gain political legitimacy. A comprehensive and integrative training program incorporating all the needs of the new system from pre- election, to election and post election was not adopted to build capacity of the elected women councilors. Though some training was offered to women by the government, civil society organizations and political parties however, the training effort was one short besides being limited in terms of outreach (At government level ministry of women development through its women political participation program (WP3), devolution trust for community empowerment (DTCE) and national commission for human development (NC-HD) organized training programs. At political parties level Jamat-I-Islami (religious political party) initiated a training program for women to encourage their participation in election. Some civil society organizations including Aurat Foundation, Pattan, Sungi, SAP-PK and Savera also collaborated their efforts to orient women to the new system and encourage their participation thorough advocacy and lobbying. For more details see CIET, 2004-2005 and Aurat foundation, 2001).

The training was designed on the basis of perceived needs of the newly elected councilors without assessing the actual needs of the participants through TNA. Women councilors who attended the training found it useful apart form the complexities involved in terms of difficulty of the contents, their inability to relate it to the context, location and duration of the training and absence of any financial incentives including TA/DA (Alam, 2004; Yazdani, 2002 - 2003). Recognizing the fact that majority of the women councilors (75%) were newly elected with nearly half of them being illiterate a comprehensive and customized training would have been more meaningful.

Lack of gender friendly policies

Lack of gender friendly policies that include timings, duration and location of meetings and trainings, absence of child care facilities during the meeting hours, lack of financial incentives and supportive environment are major obstacles that constrain women's effective participation in governance. Besides the above, women councilors also complained of being discouraged by the behavior of their

male colleagues who dominated discussions most of the time by ignoring women and pushing their views aside (Naz, 2001; CIET, 2004 - 2006).

Absence of women from decision making bodies and important meetings

As discussed earlier women are under-represented in decision making bodies and policy making forums. It has negative implications for women as their concerns are not properly presented and addressed by all male decision making boards. Results of the local government elections 2000 - 2001 corroborate theses findings in terms of negligible representation of women as district Nazims, Naib Nazims and members of the local government commission, finance commission and various monitoring committees under LGO (Bari, 2000). Women's presence is also not ensured in important budgetary and decision making meetings by sending timely notification of meetings and linking their presence with quorum requirement (CIET, 2004 - 2006; Yazdani, 2002 - 2003). Women because of their very low representation in decision making bodies and important meetings remain in token status in local governance. They being tokens are more visible among colleagues and have more pressure for performance which makes women more vulnerable and conscious. These subtle forms of gender biased practices marginalize women and constrain their participation in governance.

Mentoring and net working

Women's under representation in political leadership and decision making committees means that there are a few women available to act as mentors for other women in local governance. Considering the traditional tribal norms and cultural context of local governance it is rare for women to have cross gender mentoring. Women councilors' dual roles in domestic and professional arenas restrict them to join informal meetings and get-togethers that are an important source of learning and networking and ultimately affect their participation.

Personal factors

At personal level women councilors face barriers mainly due to demographic factors such as education, employment and age and familial factors that include their dual roles and family support etc. These factors affect women councilors' self confidence and motivation and limit their representation and participation in governance.

Demographic factors

Education is widely considered as key to human development. World wide data on women and their representation in politics shows that women's greater access to education is positively correlated with their increased public participation (Kaku, 2001; Neft and Levine, 1997, UNDP, 1995a; World Bank, 2001). Unfortunately women in Pakistan do not have an equal access to this basic indicator of human development as compared to men. The country has over the years invested less in education and when resources are short women suffer the most due to certain structural and cultural constraints discussed earlier.

Statistics on education and employment suggest that while overall, literacy rate in the country is 44% female literacy is less than 30%. Similarly, women's share in employment is also as low as 8.4% in urban areas and 16.3% in rural areas with their 26% share in total income of the country (Economic Survey, 1999 - 2000; UNDP, 1999). The world bank report (2004) pointed to serious literacy gap between women and men which was 11% vs. 36% in 1975 and slightly changed in 2001 from 29% for women to 58% for men (World Bank, 2004).

With regard to local governance, existing data on demographic variables exhibit that more than half of the women are illiterate (53%), the majority are young under the age of 45 (57%) and house wives (73.7%), very few women own land and a large majority have been elected for the first time (79%) (IDEA, 2002; Bari, 2000). These demographic characteristics of women councilors have implications for women regarding their new roles and the system which itself is evolving. The findings not only indicate to the women's lack of understanding of the system but also determine the need for a sustained effort towards designing content and methodology of the capacity building programs accordingly.

Familial factors

The above demographic profile of women councilors points to their dual roles in domestic and professional arenas and economic dependence as potential barriers restraining their participation in local governance. Since majority of the women councilors are young their child bearing and child rearing responsibilities may restrict their out side mobility and affect their true participation. The lack of child care support and egalitarian family attitudes may further add to their burden of responsibilities. Moreover, in the absence of any financial incentives in the form of salaries, allowances and honorariums women councilors find it harder to attend all council meetings and training programs.

The findings of the existing reports on local governance suggest that despite the fact that the local government ordinance provided for a monthly honorarium of Rs. 5000 ($83) and transportation allowance of Rs. 300 ($3.5) for councilors only one third of the women could actually get the honorarium while 18% reported receiving the travel allowance (CIET, 2004 - 2006; Yazdani, 2002 - 2003). Women councilors identified number of difficulties and invisible obstacles in getting such monetary compensations. Since, a large majority of the women councilors are house

wives, economically dependant and lack any political party affiliation the absence of financial incentives and work family conflict make them more vulnerable and limit their attendance in official meetings. Besides, these, women's restricted mobility, absence of reliable transportation and lack of social and familial support weaken their self confidence and lower their future aspirations for political participation.

The above discussion has analyzed a number of factors at the systemic, organizational and personal level that influence women councilors' roles and responsibilities and account for their low participation in governance. Since, women's effective representation and involvement in governance is extremely important for gender sensitive legislation, efficient resource allocation, effective delivery of public services and above all, for best utilization of human resources and poverty alleviation, it is imperative to take steps that enhance their participation. The section below briefly discusses some suggestions and recommendations to facilitate women in this regard.

Suggestions and recommendations

The proposed measures discussed below aim at facilitating women to cope up with diverse systemic, organizational and demographic challenges discussed earlier. The suggested measures if adopted will not only enhance women's political participation but will also contribute towards increasing their involvement in economic, administrative and social arenas through promoting a conducive environment for women in Pakistan.

Review of local government policies

Local government policies should be reviewed to ensure that gender perspectives are an integral part of the legislation. The LGO should provide job description of women and men councilors in their new roles and clarify any misperceptions attached to the concept of reserve seats. Women councilors' participation in important meetings should be ensured by linking their presence with quorum requirement, assigning them a certain % of representation and allocating specific amount of funds for their development plans. The system should monitor strict implementation of the rules and define mechanism for taking action against those who do not follow the rules in letter and spirit.

Gender awareness raising and mainstreaming

A nationwide gender awareness campaign should be launched highlighting the importance of including both women and men in decision making process by linking it with human resource development, poverty reduction and good governance. Information should be spread regarding the positive social change women can bring to the

the all male corridors of local governance through their transformational, nurturing, more inclusive and consensus oriented work styles (Reyes, 2002; Drage, 2001). A concerted effort should be made towards gender mainstreaming at all levels and in all activities through involvement of new partners in governance including political parties, civil society organizations, corporate sector and international development community.

Capacity building

A continuous development plan should be envisaged to build capacity of new entrants in local governance based on their specific needs to comprehend the system, skill development and attitudinal requirements. The training should be imparted at various stages of the term of local governance and incorporate basic understanding of the LGO in terms of its content and context; developing political, administrative, financial, legislative and interpersonal skills and inculcating self confidence required to perform their professional roles more effectively. Proper feedback and evaluation must be conducted to make need based improvements in capacity building programs. Gender sensitivity training should be mandatory for all members including the political representatives and bureaucracy and incorporate topics such as human rights, domestic violence, sexual harassment, gender relations and egalitarian attitudes etc.

Representation of women in decision making committees and meetings

Women's under representation in decision making bodies, monitoring committees and important meetings is the cause as well as the effect of their low political participation. While affirmative action and quota may improve their representation at entry level it may not increase their participation unless women are given due representation at influential decision making forums. A parity principle should be introduced to enhance women's representation in local government commission, public safety commission, finance, management and monitoring committees. Women's presence at such forums will have a buffering effect to counter gender biased attitudes in important decision making policies and processes.

Networking and mentoring

For efficient and effective council functioning women alliance should be strengthened through networking. The networks at all three tiers of local governance will not only provide an inter linkage in the system but will also serve as social safety net for women to organize themselves around their key concerns, better present their issues and mobilize support. Specific examples and success stories of women representatives should be shared with newly

elected women councilors through case studies to enable them to perform their governance roles more effectively. While experienced women can act as mentors and role models for new entrants and provide them necessary support and guidance towards their professional development civil society organizations can facilitate such linkages through professional networking. Exploring networks at national, regional and international levels can also help women understanding the best practices to get their issues on local and national agenda.

Supportive environment

Considering the various structural and cultural barriers discussed earlier a supportive environment needs to be created to encourage women to come up with their full potential and genuine participation in governance. Timings, location, duration, code of conduct and overall facilities for training and meetings (separate toilets, sitting room/office, child care etc.) should be arranged according to the cultural specific needs of Pakistani women. They should be encouraged to express their view points and participate in developmental work through promoting a conducive work environment. The members should also be provided financial incentives such as honorarium and TA/D irrespective of their gender and political party affiliation.

Political will and commitment

Finally, to get the meaningful results an attitudinal change must be initiated to challenge the long held gender biases and subtle forms of discrimination against women in Pakistani society. The process involves a lot of commitment, collaboration and political will on the part of all stake holders including the government functionaries (NRB, federal, provincial and local governments), civil society organizations, academicians, media, international development organizations and citizens including women and men.

Conclusion

To conclude, realizing the importance of women's participation in governance a concerted effort has been made in Pakistan by providing women 33% representation in local governance through local government ordinance (2000). However, despite these efforts their participation in governance has remained low during the first term of the local government system. It is mainly because the traditional cultural values and societal norms that ascribe women domestic roles and accord them a lower status as compared to men are not compatible with their professsional roles in public arena. These cultural norms are reflected in the systemic, organizational and personal practices. The paper analyzes the diverse societal, insti-

tutional and individual factors that account for low participation of women in local governance in Pakistan. The measure such as review of LG policies; gender awareness and mainstreaming, capacity building, networking and mentoring etc. are recommended to enhance women's participation in governance.

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