

Women's Empowerment in Local Government System of Pakistan: A Case Study of Musharraf Era

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ABSTRACT

Pakistan is a democratic country but unfortunately has a poor political background especially in local government system. The assumption of Local Government Ordinance, 2001 is to involve community in decision making process through vibrant civil society, creating locally efficient bureaucracy, control expenditure related to service delivery, safeguard the rights of people, elimination of poverty and end of corruption. In addition, this system also emphasize on women's representation in the government. This paper is about the empowerment that has granted to women and its impacts and issues on economics, social and political aspect. This study also made an attempt to unearth the gaps in the local government system which fail to fulfill general requirements.

Keywords: Empowerment, good governance, service delivery, utilization

INTRODUCTION

Democracy involves such an expression of public involvement in social, economic and political matters and their participation in decision making bodies. On the same hand the concept of good governance also discussed such certain rules as equity, effective participation, strong legal structure and consider contribution of both men and women in different developmental activities and incorporates gender into it. Local government is an integral part of democratic process acts as a political nursery to facilitate common mass with active and real participation in socio-economic activities (Abid, 2004). Without democratic norms local self-government institution cannot exist. As described: "Local self-governing institutions perform the functions of political socialization. They install the individual into politics and political cultures and subcultures". (Haque and Zaffarullah, 2006) This phenomenon is well established in DCs as well as in UDCs along Pakistan.

Pakistan, inherited a colonial system of local government with unbalanced institutional development with a state of ruined and disregard especially the areas which formed Pakistan, had no advanced system of local government (Quddus, 1981).

IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION

Out of 146million population of Pakistan, women comprises of 48% of the total population (FBS, 2003). The constitution of Pakistan encourages the women to have equal opportunities for their rights and boosted women's awareness about vote and contest elections. As in the preamble of article 25 of the constitution has stated, being the citizens of Pakistan all are equal before law and have equal protection of law without any sexual discrimination.

The constitution of Pakistan, article 32 described as "Local institutional comprised of legislator as representing the electorate of the concerned area will be encouraged by the state with special representation to workers, farmers and women. Article 34 Of the constitution

proves that state has promised to facilitate the women in all spheres of national life (Zaidi, 1999).

Women participation in administrative activities is highly significant for even human resource development, elimination of poverty, best utilisation of resources and good governance.

REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEM

Despite the constitutional provisions no serious effort has been observed in this connection. Three attempts have been made by three military regimes.

1. Basic Democracy Ordinance, 1959 by General Ayub Khan.
2. Local Government Ordinance, 1979 by General Zia-ul-Haque.
3. Devolution Plan, 2001 by General Pervez Musharraf.

The reforms made by military rulers have two common features:

- Aimed at to strengthen their political base at local level.
- Each new system had no relation with the old one. Therefore local institutions suffered a great set back in the absence of harmony of policies (Paracha, 2003).

In Ayub era, the right of women representation was totally neglect in first local bodies elections, held in 1959 under the Basic Democracy Ordinance. Nevertheless in the following local government ordinance introduced by Zia-ul-Haque in 1979 special representation was given to women (i-e) two seats at UC and 10% for other tier under the Local Government Ordinance of Punjab, 1979, Local Government Ordinance of Sindh, 1979 and Local Government Ordinance of Balochistan in local bodies elections except NWFP (Batti, 1990). During the regime of Zulfikhar Ali Butto (1971-1977) and Benazir Butto (1988-1990), and (1994-1996), neither special seats were reserved for women nor local bodies elections were held. Nawaz Sharif (1990-1993) supported local government system by giving 10.4% representation to women and again Nawaz Sharif government (1997-1999) granted special representation to women in each province (i-e) 68	Ayub Khan	No special seats were reserved under Basic Democracy Ordinance
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Nevertheless this reservation ratio was very low and varies between 5% to 10% and loss its weight in 1988, has negative impact on women's political decision making as representatives. (Aurat Foundation, 2011).

Moreover Pakistan ruling elites used their power without ethical check ultimately resulted in corruption, deterioration in the provision of public service. The inefficient and dishonest political leaders led to the failure of governments (NRB, 2000). Due to these reasons there was lack of coordination and harmony between administrative settlements and political agreements in the first ten years of Pakistan's existence.

A planned and collaborative exertion has been done by the military government of General Pervez Musharraf by introducing Local Government Ordinance, 2000. He put forth his seven point agenda. The sixth point of the agenda was about the introduction of a new system of local government. Consequently, on November 16, 1999, a retired general was handed over a responsibility to supervise the National Reconstruction Bureau, undertake the series of multiple aims of reorganising of political and administrative structure. According to the report of World Bank 2004, Pakistan's for reaching devolution originate of 2001 has been designed with three long lasting and inter-relating objectives:

1. To inspire a new wave into a political system regarding the scope historically engulf with interest.
2. To adopt positive measures enabling marginalised citizen's (i-e) peasants, women and workers to participate in formal politics.
3. To present the stability measures into a disorderly political sense by drawing a hard margin of punitive between new politicians and local electorates.

The new system gives new directions to policy administrative to motivate common mass to involve them in decision making at grass root level (World Bank, 2004b).

The local government plan 2000 envisaged 33% reservation of seats at all levels of the local government and 17% quota in legislative assemblies. The basic aims to empower the women were:

- To remove gender biases, resulted gender equality in all economic, social and political arena.
- Best allocation of resources for development and good planning results by ensuring women's participation. No doubt, in the political governance structure of Pakistan, this measure is concerned as an elevation in the status of women (NCSW).

Under the Local Government Ordinance 2001, elections were held however, the women's participation as a percentage of the total strength in each of the councils, particularly the district\tehsil\town councils were less than stated 33% of reserved seats (Khan, Zubair, 2008).

The actual results of the elections 2000-2001 realised ed that 36,105 women got seat as representatives by elections at different sections of local governance, out of which 23,222 elected through constituency based direct election at union level, 3741 selected at district and tehsil level. 16 of them were elected as nazim and naib nazim at various levels of local government. Two of them were elected as nazim from district Khairpur and Nawabshah in the Sindh province. 126 women were on reserved seats of minorities (Pattan Development, 2001).

Table 1. Seats in Local Government System 2001 at all levels

<i>Level of Institution</i>	<i>No. of Councillors</i>	<i>Total Seats</i>	<i>Seats Reserved for Women</i>	<i>Women's Seat as Percentage</i>
Union councils	6,022	126,462	36,066	28.5%
Tehsil councils	305	8,192	1,749	21.3%
Town councils	30	773	161	20.8%
District council	96	8,806	1,988	22.6%
Total	6,453	144,233	39,964	27.7%

The previous table show the status of women in Local Government as percentage of total seats. On the whole, out of 33% the reserved seats for women consisted 27.7% of the total seats in the entire local government system. Women were elected directly on the adult franchise bases. On the other hand middle (tehsil\town council) and the highest (district councils) tiers were to be elected by the electoral college of the tehsil councillors and district councillors respectively (Khan and Zubair, 2008).

IMPACT OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

The traditions, cultural values and behavioural standard that belong to women's domestic roots in politics, expressed in the organizational, systematic and personal practices that hinder their involvement in governance affairs. A report on social audit governance and delivery of services proves reasonable improvement in delivery of services. It is observed that quality of service in both health and education departments as satisfactory particularly by women. Women councillors had worked a lot in facilitating the poor to access safety nets such as Zakat and Bait-ul-mal. They had served their community by arranging funds for dowry, marriage; enhance literacy and getting identity cards (Pattan Development, 2006).

They allocate their resources in building carpeted roads, schools, vocational institutions and brick lined streets. They also distribute sewing machines to deserving women. Socially, they got a position of role model as agent of social welfare. A survey pointed out those 57% women calls for women councillors in solving their concerned matters (Jabeen, 2009).

SOME ISSUES RELATED TO WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Devolution introduced the major governance reforms emphasized to clean politics from corruption, formation of an impartial accountability, community participation and capacity building (Khan,2005).The women were elected as councillors of the local body had not enough skills to accomplish their role. The training was much necessary to understand the role of local self-government. In this context, some related social, political and economic issues are discussed here:

Social Issues

Our cultural sexual division is the key structure barrier to participate women in public affairs (i-e) women enclosed with home affairs and man's role in public sector. Due to social concerned of women's initiative roles as mother and wives in the reproductive sphere. The male members of their family are determinant of their vote power. The family and state does not take interest to spend on women's human capital as compared to man. Some other social problems were:

- I. Discouraging attitude of community.
- II. Lack of information.
- III. Lack of power.
- IV. Domestic work.
- V. Children.
- VI. Family pressure (World Bank, 2002).

Political Issues

Women's political participation was strictly dominated by male politics. Their participation at decision making level did not consider much. Political parties did not encourage the women for election campaigns. Some other related issues were:

- I. Discouraging attitude of male councillors.
- II. Absence of power.
- III. Limited information.
- IV. Hostile behaviour of Nazim and Naib Nazim (NCSW).

Economic Issues

Women's specific developmental suggestions did not pay any heed while allocating the resources as male councillors were in majority. They were not encouraged to supervising the civil work of their schemes. Moreover,

- I. Lack of T.A, D.A funds to attend council meetings.
- II. Lack of basic infrastructure.
- III. Limited involvement in economic activities (World Bank, 2002).

CONCLUSION

The devolved system of governance provides favourable chance for citizens' participation and offers unprecedented opportunities with challenges. Progress in the empowerment of women depends upon the improvement of some related objects as timing, location, duration, sitting facilities, training facilities and financial incentives. Keeping in view, specific requirements of Pakistani women, meetings should be organized. Finally, to get significant results a behavioural variation must be adopted to face the existing sexual biasness.

Keeping in view of above stated institutional and social barriers, an adherent environment is essential to enhance women participation with their full capacity.

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