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Women's Representation
in Local Government in Pakistan:
Impact Analysis and
Future Policy Implications

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FOREWORD

The legislative affirmative action of reservation of 33% seat for women in the local government under Devolution of Power Plan 2000 has had mammoth effects not only on the political landscape of Pakistan but on women as well, both as political aspirants and voters. Military government's intervention in the political arena in October 1999 has been unfortunate for the democratic processes in the country but opened a window of opportunity by establishing political equity of the women of Pakistan. Musharraf's government deserves to be appreciated for the act, which civil democratically elected governments could not undertake. An equal credit for the same goes to the decades old struggle of the civil society of Pakistan.

It's very difficult to write about something, which has been intellectually and passionately so close to one's academic and professional life that one can feel it growing with and within oneself. It has been the case with me while conducting this research. This was my first experience of writing an academic paper of this magnitude. Going through this process has broadened my academic horizons and groomed my professional and analytical skills. It has provided me with opportunities to share my experiences with the national and international world and being recognized accordingly. I am indebted to the Open Society Institute, Center for Policy Studies, Budapest for providing me the opportunity of being an International Policy Fellow. It's an honor and privilege for me to be part of the policy fellows family.

I am indebted to my mentors Ms. Ann Keeling, Mr. Zaheer Gillani and Ms. Viola Zentai who have advised and guided me throughout to fulfill my objective. On personal front I am thankful to my family & friends for being with me and bearing me during my hours' of stress. I could not have completed my assignment without unflinching support of my husband, Aazar Ayaz, who has been my anchor and gave me the strength to go on.

**Fauzia Yazdani
21st June 2004
Islamabad,
Pakistan**

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Pakistan is an interesting mix of diversity and disparity, with its respective reasons, which is visible between the status of men and women in Pakistani society. Society is organized on the basis of gender and gender relations are pronouncedly based on sexual division of labor. Society perceives women in the private sphere of the home, primarily as mothers and wives, and men in the public sphere as breadwinners. This translates into watertight compartments in attitudinal mindset where one loses the focus, need and rational of their mutual dependence on each other. This consequently gets reflection in all spheres of life and has practical and material implications for both men and women. Families and societies prioritize to invest in boy child from food to education to luxury than in girl child because traditionally they are to move out by getting married, are to perform domestic work, reproduce and not contribute to economic income of the family. Consequently, women tend to have lower levels of education, professional and vocational skills than men. The low level of investment in women's human capital, compounded by cultural norms, make women subordinate to men. Thus the social and economic dependence of women on men becomes a basis for male power over women in all-social relations.

Devolution of Power Plan 2000 has been a key development in the history of governance in Pakistan. Initially skeptics viewed it with caution and even dismissed the idea as old wine being merely presented in a new bottle. However, as the events have unfolded over the past couple of years the seriousness of the intent behind the agenda of administrative and political reform have become evident. Actions have spoken louder than words. The status quo has not just been challenged but it has in fact been substantially altered. As is the case with the implementation of all new ideas on ground, most of the problems are faced in the initial stages. This is the time when support is required the most, as the difference between success and failure might depend on the performance during this point in the process of change. Administrative strengthening and capacity building initiatives can plug the existing gaps and the worth of such value added should not be underestimated.

The Government in March 2000 launched decentralization, under Local Government Ordinance (LGO). 33% quota for women at the District, Tehsil and Union councils was adopted, creating a critical mass of almost 40,000 women councillors in Pakistan, an unprecedented event in the political evolution in the country. This opened up not only an enormous political space but a strategic opportunity for women to make a difference in setting and implementing the agenda of local governments. With the devolution process, this level of government was expected to have the most impact on people's lives and offered the greatest hope for social change. The basic question was how women could use this critical mass to affect public policy, particularly policies affecting gender issues especially related to poverty reduction, the biggest challenge in Pakistan and mainstream them selves in political arena. It is a known fact that women in Pakistan have always been more deprived than men; more than half are plagued by poverty of opportunities to income, health and education; and even where overall poverty of opportunity has been steadily declining, the male-female gaps have actually widened.

This policy research was undertaken with the objective to bring out the policy effects of devolution on women and recommend in light of women's experience with the new system and implementation issues. 33 districts of Pakistan were taken as sample and 846

elected women district councilors, approximately 40%, were identified as target population. They were approached through a detail questionnaire. The number of respondents was 594, which is 70% of the target population. Besides data input and policy comment & feedback was received through Focus Group Discussions, personal interviews, field visits, interviews with political leadership, bureaucracies, related NGO/CSO and donors.

The system has a principle paradigm of being “non political party based” which excludes the major actor of the political field i.e. political party. It underscores in creating linkages and synergies within the different tiers of local government as well as with provincial and national legislatures as the later two are party based. Between the national level standstill between the government and opposition camp, devolution was one of the main irritants. Legislators are threatened by the devolution as it takes away the “constituent touch” and changes the patron client relationship from personal to community focused. Provincial government take it as a threat to provincial autonomy as fiscal decentralization is yet to materialize from federal to provinces.

Women specifics, nature of gaps have been categorized as (a) administrative and implementation constraints (b) ideological & psychological constraints (c) socio-economic constraints and (d) political constraints. Both women and political parties unanimously take it as a window of opportunity for women to voice themselves. It has socially elevated their status and recognized their political equity. It has raised their role in family and extended family’s decision-making. Donor, NGO, NRB and provincial government to orient women with the new system have exposed them to number of training opportunities. The outreach of training has been limited due to its qualitative and quantitative limitations. The ambiguity of roles and responsibilities in the LGO, lack of administrative support & set up, non conducive council environment, non award of honorarium, slow operationalization of LG mechanisms, inability to access development funds and consequently inability to deliver serves as a damper on their spirits. Political party, on the other hand, remains evasive of integration and mainstreaming of women within their party ranks on the pretext that the system does not sketch a role for them.

To make best of the devolution it should take a more decentralized approach in implementation, which means that federal government should devolve envisaged functions completely to provinces to enable them to share the same with local governments. The LG should be changed to party based system for extended out reach, integration and coordination among tiers of government. This would strengthen women’s role tremendously as it will help them improve their status from detachability to holistic within the party and contribute to build capacities of the existing local government structures.

However with devolution in its last year there is a noticeable difference in the mind-set and comprehension of the clients of the system as it is slowly gaining momentum, certainty and confidence to mainstream and settle complex matters of governance relating to respective domains as district, tehsil and union councils. However, the focus on gender, with more emphasis on women’s and other human rights issues, and holistic integration of gender specific issues across sectors in policy formulation and implementation still need scaffolding from private (NGO, CSO, Donor) and public (Federal & provincial government, NRB) sector support. Such support should specifically focus issues relating to the job descriptions and role of councilors, budgeting and finance,

approval of by-laws proposed by the district government, taxation matters, short and long term development plans, election of monitoring committees, approval of social policies and plans relating to the area. Building synergies and inclusion of relevant departments in training and educating councilors is essential to enhance professional growth and development.

The district governments should have local support building strategy for women within their districts, both to ensure that they are not isolated, as well as to build on the training given and sustaining continued support. It should focus on strengthening the internal linkages between women councilors, while actively linking up and cooperating with other civil society organizations, institutions, governmental projects and support structures at the federal, provincial and local levels to provide women councilors with access to other facilities (e.g. other trainings; credit/loan, charitable, education and health facilities; appropriate technology services; support services like shelters, legal aid/crises and counseling services; and other projects and local resource pools like teachers, health workers etc.). A collaborative and more proactive strategy must also be developed for linking up with and utilizing/strengthening the facilities of existing resource and information centers set up by other organizations and institutions and institutions at the provincial and district levels.

II. INTRODUCTIONS

Context of policy issue: Decentralization & Women Empowerment

The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan provides protection for the rights of its citizens among which is equality of political rights for men and women in terms of voting and contesting all elective offices. Constitution¹ guarantees equality of all citizens before the law and forbids discrimination on the basis of sex alone, yet provides space for affirmative action by the State for women. It further states that steps will be taken to ensure the full participation of women in all spheres of national life. There has been some negligible provision for reservation of seats for women in the legislatures, which lapsed in 1988 at national and provincial level. The same in Local Government (LG) has been further marginalized.

Decentralization has been a legitimacy gaining mechanism, predominantly for, military governments. The earlier attempts did not recognize women as an equal or necessary stakeholder in the process. The Devolution Plan 2000 redesigned the political landscape of Pakistan especially at the grass root level through a reformatory policy intervention under Local Government Order (LGO). This reorientation of Local government politics provided 33% reservation of seats for women through a combination of direct and indirect elections. This resulted in politico-cultural transformation of society as 67,000 women filed their nomination establishing massive support from their families and dispelling the misconception non-existence of women in political arena is due to their own lack of interest. This resulted in election of 36,105 women councilors.

Local Government (LG) has tenure of 4 year. Its first tenure was to finish in August 2004 but the same has been extended till August 2005 to compensate phased elections (2000-2001). 33% seats i.e. 39,964 seats were reserved for women. This was a result of decades old civil society movement in Pakistan and in pursuance of Pakistan's commitments under CEDAW and Beijing +5 plans of Action. The rationale behind this affirmative legislative action was that presence of a critical mass of women at grass root political decision-making would lead to creation of a powerful pressure group that can influence policy making and political party level to incorporate gender concerns in manifestos, policy formulation and its implementation. Besides this it envisioned to alleviate their social standing and mainstream them for future progress to national level political decision-making along with recognition within political party's hierarchy and internal decision-making.

On empowerment scale this policy has provided women an opportunity to be socially acceptable in a public role. It's a progressive step from earlier lip servicing initiatives to more concrete integration of women in political decision making as they were directly and indirectly elected rather being nominated. Economically, being a State functionary it is to provide some financial relief. Besides, there are various committees in LGS where women can be members and they also have an opportunity of access to development funds.

¹ Article 25, 27 & 34 of the Constitution Islamic Republic of Pakistan 1973

Definition of policy issue

The Devolution Plan 2000 is landmark recognition for women to be part of political decision making yet it demands them to maintain balance between family obligation and procedural technicalities of professional life. On the flip side it exposes women to face of the fields of planning, financial management and government procedures and political exposure itself, which are alien to the majority. Besides, the LGO & LGS itself lack a support mechanism for gender inclusion, mainstreaming and the capacity building of councilors. Community is observing the performance of these elected councilors with a critical angle to judge that can women be accepted in the role of a public leader. Women of the community relate to them, with hope, for the solution of their specific issues and evaluating to follow suit if their peers prove to be effective and respected. The civil society with international donor assistance is facilitating them to establish their professional and personal writ under LGS. For the researchers & academia it's a phenomenal experience, which needs to be analyzed and documented.

The Local Government Election (LGE) was the first stage for women's acquaintance with the political system starting from their understanding of electoral process, mobilization as candidates, canvassing for elections. The civil society supported this phase with their capacity building for effective participation, representation and developing their political strength in the post election scenario as a powerful pressure group that can impact policy formulation and at political party level.

The generalized anticipation was that inclusion of a critical mass (33%) of women at grass root level in the political decision-making will lead to their socio-political recognition and effective incorporation & redressal of gender concerns in policy formulation and implementation. Secondly, being almost 48% of the population, this inclusion will facilitate their upward political mobility and mainstreaming to provincial and national level politics and their consequent representation in political party's decision-making hierarchy.

It remains a key assumption that influx of a large number of women to LGS for the first time will not necessarily change the socio-political agenda or culture as these elected women councilors lack both in capacity and support to be effective.

Statement of intent

Following is the focus of my policy study:

“Women's representation in local governments in Pakistan: Impact analysis & future policy implication”

The objective is to study the impact of governmental policy of introduction of 33% women in Local Government and their role in policy formulation, implementation and political decision making in terms of their:

- (a) Social, economic and political empowerment
- (b) Presence in mainstream politics
- (c) Role & representation in internal political party hierarchy

(d) Effect in policy formulation on women specific issues

These objectives will be researched to:

- (a) Study the emerging class of women politicians at grass root level
- (b) Study their relationship with & within political party hierarchy
- (c) Analyze the policy framework available to them under devolution plan 2000
- (d) Analyze their role in conception, design and implementation of policy interventions and development programmes in general and on gender specific issues in particular
- (e) Identify the policy gaps in their political education and capacity building
- (f) Compare related local government interventions in Asian Region
- (g) Develop policy guide lines for the Government of Pakistan, Donors and NGOs to suggest improvement in the present system, facilitate political empowerment of women and strengthen their role at Local Government Level

Methodology and limitation of study

The project has relied heavily upon primary data collection being a policy study paper. The secondary data resource base on the subject has not only been scattered but in the process of being developed as well. Therefore, one had to go through a lot to read between the lines to understand the ongoing trends and projections.

The total number of female district councilors is 2087. The target **sample population** was total number of elected women District councilors in 33 Districts of Pakistan i.e. 846 equally selected from the each province. A comprehensive information collection survey was designed to bring out need, issues and achievements focusing their social, economic, political empowerment, working of District council focusing development working & monitoring mechanism, training and future political aspirations. Secondly, series of interviews, dialogue and focus group discussions have been held with broad range of stakeholders.

- ✓ Collection of secondary data
 - Books & publications on the subject
 - Attendance of seminars, workshops, etc
 - Newspapers – National & Regional
 - Newsletters
 - Media watch
 - Related donor project reports
 - Related CSO projects reports
- ✓ Collection of primary data through:
 - Survey questionnaire for District Councilors
 - Interviews with first tier political leadership of national & provincial political parties
 - Interviews with select Nazims, MPAs, MNAs
 - Focus Group Discussions with select women councilors
 - Interviews with concerned bureaucracy members i.e. NRB & Provincial Local Government Departments
 - Series of discussions with independent researchers & national/international experts

- Series of discussions with national & international CSO, donors, academia

For the primary data collection through questionnaire² following are the details:

S. No	Area	Questionnaire sent	Questionnaire received
Punjab:			
1	Lahore	50	50
2	Multan	42	30
3	Mianawali	19	16
4	Khushab	20	11
5	Okara	38	34
6	Faisalabad	95	40
7	Gujrat	40	38
8	Rawalpindi	56	40
9	Bhawalpur	36	32
10	Chakwaal	23	18
Sindh			
1	Karachi	59	38
2	Badin	16	7
3	Hyderabad	34	28
4	Mir Pur Khas	22	18
5	Thatta	20	14
6	Sukkur	16	13
7	Khairpur	26	15
8	Nawabshah	17	10
Balochistan:			
1	Quetta	22	15
2	Loralai	13	9
3	Khuzdar	11	7
4	Naseerabad	17	12
5	Mastung	5	2
6	Sibi	6	4
7	Chagi	6	3
8	Zhob	8	5
NWFP:			
1	Peshawar	24	21
2	Mansehra	19	12
3	Kohat	9	7
4	Mardan	24	15
5	Swat	21	13
6	Swabi	19	10
7	Bannu	13	7
Total		846	594

² Questionnaire at Annex- II

The data has been gathered through the assistance of local CSOs, which then has been tabulated by using scientific software named Survey Gold. The rate of return of the questionnaire sent out has been approximately 70%. This data has been analyzed in a perspective to appreciate the LGO as an instrument of political facilitation for women, recognize the socio-political achievements of the elected women from LGS, identify gaps and highlight areas of improvisation in shape of policy recommendation.

In terms of **limitations**, following have been crucial:

- ✓ Inability of women councilors, at times even for a Intermediate degree holder could not fill the required form of yes & no in Urdu
- ✓ Irregular sessions of the District Councilors, which on an average met once in 2-3 months
- ✓ District councilors reside far from the district center, in different Tehsils and Unions, making it difficult to approach their homes
- ✓ Councilors not returning the questionnaire even when a person is deputed to assist & collect them from home
- ✓ Councilors not ready to fill form without Nazim's clearance especially belonging to Nazim's political party
- ✓ Councilors not interested to fill the forms taking it one of many stock taking exercise as they could not relate to any redressal to the issues raised by them

III. ISSUE DESCRIPTION

Pakistan

Pakistan “the land of pure” was carved on the map of the world on 14th August 1947 under the leadership of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah. At the time of existence the East Pakistan was one of its province, which in 1971 became an independent country by the name of Bangladesh. Pakistan is a federation with 4 provinces of Punjab, Sindh, North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Balochistan including Islamabad Capital, Federally Administered Northern Areas (FANA) and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). The population of the country has attained the figure of 150 million with 48% women³. Pakistan has a parliamentary system of government and its Constitution of 1973 provides a power-sharing formula. The federal legislature comprises the National Assembly and Senate, referred to as the Lower and Upper Houses of Parliament respectively.

Pakistani society is characterized by tremendous linguistic, ethnic and cultural diversity. There are considerable economic disparities between different sections of society, caste, tribe, clan and class. It is dominated by feudal and tribal value system, with strong patriarchal trends, which still permeate attitudes and behavior even where the actual social structure has changed. Nearly half the population does not have access to basic social services like primary health care and safe drinking water. Though this effects both men and women a like yet there is considerable disparity between the status of men and women in Pakistan. Women specific indicators have improved considerably since 1999, under the military government's initiative, yet several others are static and/or deteriorating. These disparities have crept in the governing system due to negative social biases, cultural practices, discriminatory legislation, inadequate policies, plans and programs including budgetary allocations and over all weaknesses in implementation. The lack of political will and the absence of affirmative actions let these disparities grow.

The overwhelming majority in Pakistan is Muslim. Pakistani society is so entrenched in culture, that customary/ traditional laws and practices usually override both statutory and Islamic laws. All these social, cultural and historical factors have directly and indirectly affected the status and rights of women at every level, all sectors, and ultimately have been the hurdle in their integration and mainstreaming in development and/or their real participation in the processes of decision-making.

Politics of Pakistan:

Both women and men have equality of political rights under the Constitution in terms of voting and contesting all elective offices. The Fundamental Rights in the Constitution guarantee equality of all citizens before the law and forbids discrimination on the basis of sex alone, but provides space for affirmative action by the State in the context of women. It further states that steps will be taken to ensure the full participation of women in all spheres of national life⁴. Pakistan has a parliamentary system the federal legislature comprises the National Assembly and Senate, referred to as the Lower and Upper Houses of Parliament. All citizens of Pakistan over the age of 18 years have the right to vote and

³ Annex I has the detail of Pakistan

⁴ Article no 34 of the 1973 Constitution

contest election of National and Provincial Assemblies provided they have a graduation degree (14 years of schooling) and 25 years of age, for Senate age requirement is 30 years.

The **National Assembly** has representation on population-basis with tenure of 5 years, unless dissolved earlier. The member enjoying majority's vote of confidence in National Assembly takes the chair of the Prime Minister. The **Senate** has representation on a basis of provincial parity. The Senate term is fixed for six years, elections being held every three years for about half the seats. Senate elections are indirect with Provincial Assemblies as its electoral college. There are 4 Provincial Assemblies and their elections are held in the same manner as those of the National Assembly.

As per 1973 Constitution the Passage of legislation at both the national and provincial level requires a simple majority of members present and voting, provided there is a quorum of one-fourth of the members of the respective body. The President & Governors also has the powers to promulgate Ordinances effective for a four & three month period, respectively, with the same force and effect as laws, if the National Assembly is not in session. Constitutional amendments can only be made by Parliament and require the approval of two-thirds majority of the total membership of each House.

No elected government to date has completed their designate tenure or transferred power democratically. Pakistan's political history is checkered with constitutional crises, political turmoil, economic instability, over 25 years of martial laws, regional wars and internal strife on issues of sectarian, ethnic, linguistic and provincial autonomy. The complexion of Pakistani politics underwent yet another 180 degree turn in October 1999 with General Pervez Musharraf, COAS, assuming power and yet not declaring a Martial law as fundamental rights were not suspended despite constitution being abrogated. He presented seven point reform agenda to "restore democracy" through introduction of Constitutional amendment package 2002, commonly known as Legal Framework Ordinance (LFO)⁵.

The reforms package focused first on electoral reforms by enhancing strength of both houses – NA, PA & Senate - and introduction of devolution/ decentralization of power plan. The general elections of 2002 were held according to these reforms. The major changes affecting national & provincial level politics were:

1. Elections on the basis of Joint electorate
2. Increase in number of seats:
 - a. Increase in number of seats in National from 217 to 342
 - b. Increase in number of seats in Senate from 80 to 100
 - c. Increase in number of seats in Provincial assemblies from 480 to 728
3. Introduction of education as eligibility criteria to be at least a graduate⁶ to contest election
4. 17% Reservation of seats for women under a system of proportional representation⁷: 60 at NA, 17 in Senate & 128 in 4 PAs

⁵ LFO is the controversial amendment in schedule 6 to the Constitution of 1973. It was an ordinance which has been made part of Constitution in 2004 by striking a deal between the ruling party Pakistan Muslim League (PML) & Muthadia Majlis-e-Ammal (MMA) an alliance of religious parties in opposition

⁶ Graduation is 14 years of schooling to earn a Bachelors degree

5. Reservation of seats for minorities 10 at National Assembly & 23 in Provincial Assemblies

Pakistan's Constitution of 1973 is most widely accepted, yet it had major controversial amendments by the military regimes with LFO as 17th amendment. General Musharraf validated his military takeover through a controversial national referendum in April 2002 and assumed the office of President. The LFO and election of President generated political debates and standstill, as the elected Government did nothing but desk thumping for 1 year and almost 5 months since October 2002. Even after the political deal Parliament is yet to start any legislative work since its inception.

Women & Politics in Pakistan

In a patriarchal socio cultural society, women's political participation has always been a low priority, except at the time of independence when they were involved on equal footing. Political parties and masses also perceive them as worth a guided vote at the time of election. Their role within the party was confined to women wings to fill election campaign rallies, motivating other women voters and/or forerunners in agitation rallies. Their presence at the decision making elected bodies and political party's level has been negligible.

The 1956, 1962 and 1973 Constitutions all were inclusive of reservation of seats for women at National & Provincial Assemblies. This reservation varied from 3% to 10%. The Constitution of 1956 had a 3% quota under Article 44(2), which translated, into 10 seats for women for 10 years. 1973 Constitution provided for 10 seats for 10 years or 3 elections whichever occurred later. These seats were increased to 20 in 1985. This reservation lapsed in 1988⁸ after three elections, which further reduced women's existence in Parliament to a negligible level i.e. 3.2% in National Assembly, 2.4% in Senate and 0.4% in all 4 Provincial Assemblies in 1997-1999. The democratically elected governments of both Nawaz Sharif & Benazir Bhutto neither revived nor increased this constitutional reservation. Women's participation in all aspects of the political process was at the lowest during their tenure despite twice having a female Prime Minister.

Over the year, increased association & participation of women in various political parties has also not led to their elevation in party hierarchy or political system. Women in politics are either from the elite classes or middle class both having different set of restrictions and advantages and comparatively later lacks decision-making at party and community level. For women in Pakistan choice of joining political arena some times is a prioritization between family life and politics and those having not so favorable enabling environment, especially a political family background, prefer family life⁹. Following table represent the women's political struggle & progress.

⁷ Each province is considered as one unit, political parties submit a open party list of their women candidates which is allocated in proportion to the number of seats won by those parties in generally contested seats which are elected from single- member district by the first-past-the-post system

⁸ Global data base of Quotas for women: www.idea.int/quota/displycountry.cfm?countrycode=pk

⁹ Women in Parliament: peril & prospects by Aazar Ayaz 2002, Executive Director The Researchers

REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN PAKISTAN'S LEGISLATURE¹⁰

S. No	Legislature: 1947 to 2004	Total seats	Women elected on direct seats	Women elected on reserved seats	Seats held by women	
					Number	%
1	10.10.47 – 24.10.54	30	-	-	2	6.7%
2	02.05.55 – 07.10.58	80	-	-	0	0
3	08.06.62 – 12.06.65	156	6	-	6	3.8%
4	12.06.65 – 25.03.69	156	6	-	6	3.8%
5	14.04.72 – 10.01.77	144	6	-	6	4.2%
6	26.03.77 – 05.07.77	210	1	10	11	5.2%
7	20.03.85 – 29.05.88	217	1	21	22	10.1%
8	30.11.88 – 06.08.90	217	4	20	24	11.1%
9	03.11.90 – 17.07.93	217	2	-	2	0.9%
10	15.10.93 – 05.11.96	217	4	-	4	1.8%
11	15.02.97 – 12.10.99	217	6	-	6	2.8%
12	16.11.02 – to date	342	13	61*	74	21.64%

* one woman elected from seats reserved for minorities

In Pakistan's political history many events have led to change in its democratic discourses for better or worse; one of them was in October 1999 which was a blow to democratic journey of Pakistan yet it proved to be a blessing in disguise for women. Pakistan had ratified CEDAW and formally endorsed Platform of Actions, adopted at the 4th World Conference for Women in Beijing in 1995. GOP's national commitments are stated through its National Plan of Action (NPA) for women launched in 1999, which includes promoting women's political empowerment. Building on Pakistan's international commitment and decades long efforts of the civil society for empowerment of women, National Commission on Status of Women (NCSW) was established in 2000. It is in itself a paradigm that a "Military government" facilitated women's empowerment, which should have come from a democratically elected regime. Women were given adequate voice at national level politics by reserving 60 seats for them in National Assembly and 17 in Senate. This has brought the political empowerment for the women of Pakistan and has given them a berth in the line of first world countries.

Decentralization in Pakistan

Devolution/Decentralization is gaining ground globally to devolve power and improve service delivery. Decentralization aims to provide improved economic performance & resource mobilization and transparency of systems as per the satisfaction of local preferences. The concept gained popularity in the developing countries, including Pakistan, as it has the out reach capacity particularly beneficial for rural development and community empowerment.

Unfortunately in Pakistan, Military Governments have been the architects and executors of the Local Government Systems (LGS). In 1958 General Ayub Khan exposed Pakistan to a nominally empowered local bodies scheme. To legitimize his rule by giving it a democratic flavor he formally introduced it as "Basic democracies (BD)" which was

¹⁰ Women representation in Pakistan Parliament: background paper by Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development & Transparency (PILDAT), January 2004

evolved after careful study of the experience of the other countries keeping in view our prevailing conditions¹¹. Basic democrats were used as Electoral College that selected General Ayub as president in 1960, which was later validated through a referendum. He abrogated 1956 constitution and promulgated another one in 1962 under which this idea was extended in shape of a unitary, presidential government. This decentralization was an extended centralized control over federal units through a new grass root political base.

Pakistan had third military coup in July 1977 under General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq. Institution of local government was in limbo during civil rule of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, 1972-1977, despite promulgation of a Peoples Local Government Ordinance in 1975, under which no elections were held¹². General Zia also interpreted local government as a window of opportunity for a highly centralized and authoritarian system of government. In 1979 he revived them through provincial ordinances. Local Government was a provincial subject, thus, separate laws relating to local councils existed in the Provinces and it was to work under provincial control. It had three tiers Union Council (consisting of villages), Tehsil Committees (Sub Districts) and Zila (District) Council. Similar to BD scheme this system as well had no control on general administration, law & order or policing, which remained under civil bureaucracy. 1st local bodies elections were held in September 1979 and a significant success of Pakistan Peoples Party under cover name of “Awam Dost” led to postponement of general elections. The aim again was to legitimize and extend his military rule and use the newly created grass root political elites for political score settling which continued till 1988.

From 1988 to 1999 political throne was shared twice between Benazir Bhutto (1988 - 1990 & 1994-1996) and Nawaz Sharif (1990-1993 & 1997-1999). During Benazir Bhutto’s tenure no Local Government elections were held. Whereas they were held across country in the 1st tenure of Nawaz Sharif and in second only Punjab and Balochistan held these elections. The most interesting and recurring characteristics among all have been that (a) the systems never became fully functional, (b) each system was a new creation devoid of lessons from the past and (c) most importantly the system was enacted to carve a civil constituency for the military ruler to give it a cover of democratic legitimacy.

In 1999, the think tank of the General Pervez Musharaf, National Reconstruction Bureau (NRB) introduced a new system of local government. To institutionalize decentralization Local Government Ordinance (LGO) 2000 was promulgated, federally and then re-enacted provincially, in August 2001. The system has three tiers i.e. Union Council, Tehsil (sub district) Council and Zila (District) Council. Local Government Elections were held in 5 phases from August 2001 to 2002.

The present LGS is a by-product of the military government's reform agenda, therefore stands controversial. Musharaf government introduced the devolution plan without being pilot tested to complete the task before October 2002 deadline¹³. This hurried implementation was followed by the Presidential referendum in April 2002, to gain

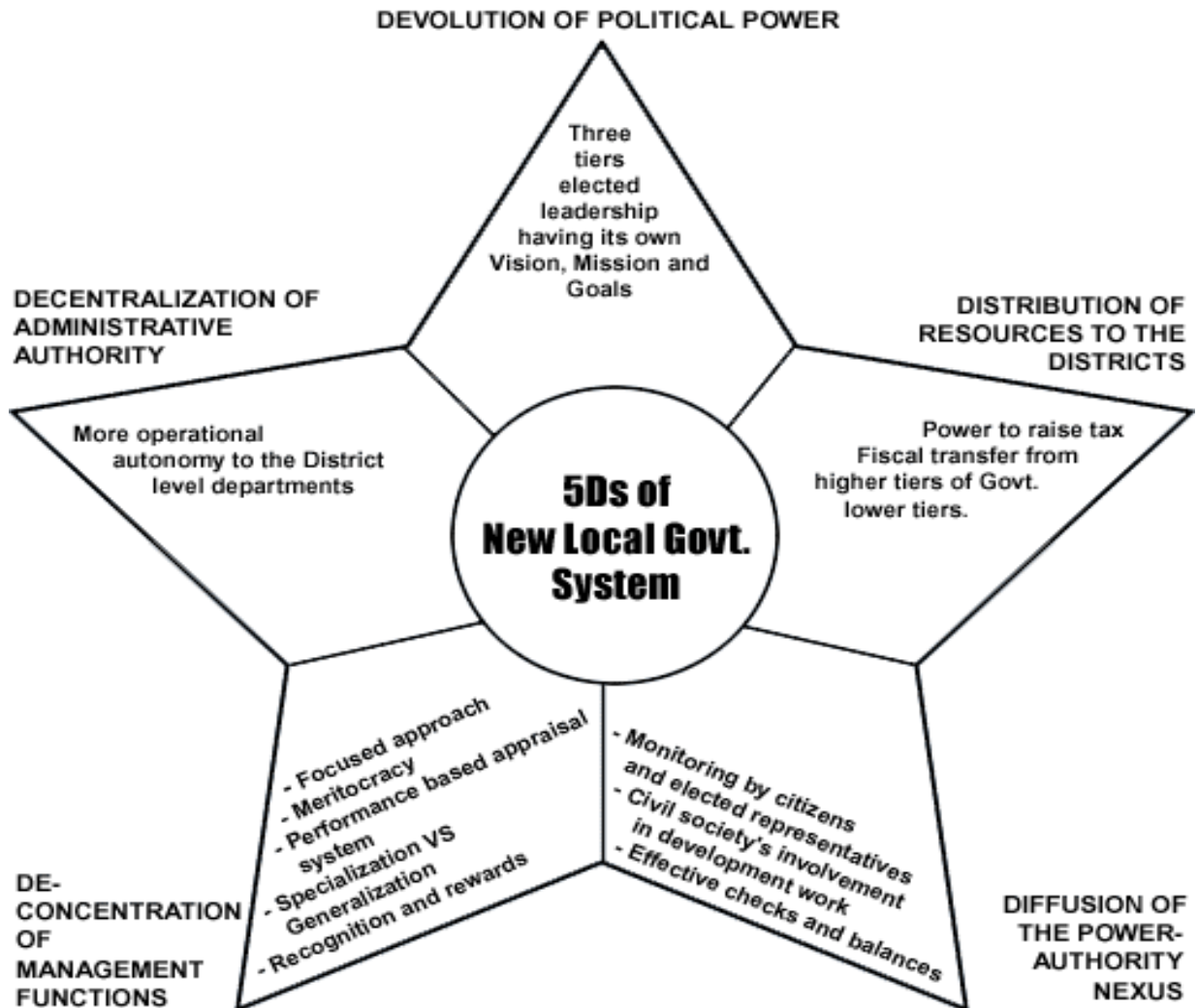
¹¹ Constitutional & political History of Pakistan by Hamid Khan, Karachi 2001 P.219

¹² Devolution in Pakistan: reform or regression, a report by International Crisis Group (ICG), 22.03.2004, Islamabad

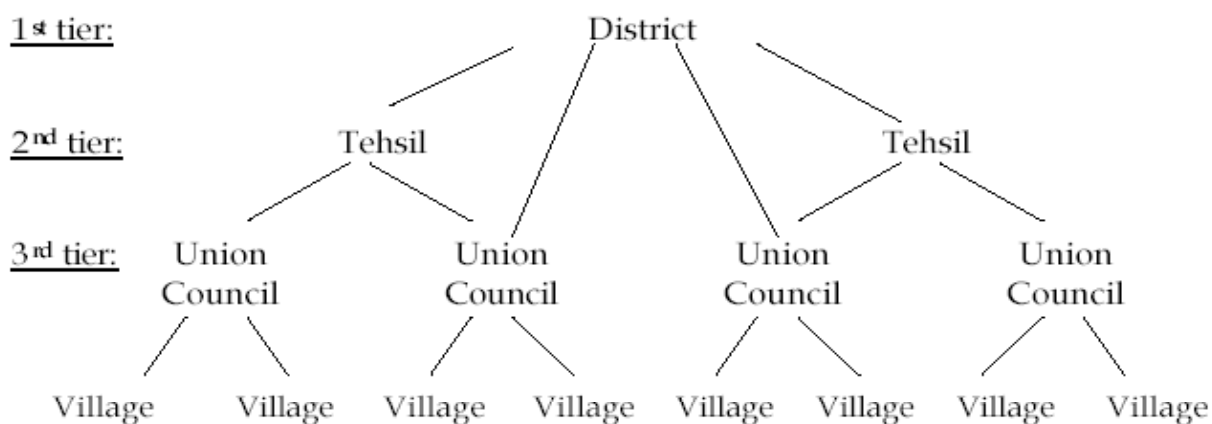
¹³ The Supreme Court of Pakistan in its judgment on the military take over of 1999 case, gave a deadline to the Musharaf government to hold general elections before 12 October 2002

political legitimacy, ensure hold in October 2002 general elections and to continue with their reform agenda under the slogan “ Pakistan first”.

The present system of decentralization is designed to ensure genuine people participation in bottom up developmental planning, improved service delivery mechanisms and promises checks and balances to safeguard against abuse of authority. This system has provision for a 33% reservation of seats for women and a 20% reservation for workers/peasants on all local councils. These reserved seats are directly elected at village level for union councils and indirectly elected at district and sub-district levels for District and Tehsil councils. Following describe the model & its tiers the best¹⁴:



¹⁴ The National Reconstruction Bureau (NRB) www.nrb.gov.pk



RESPONSIBILITIES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS¹⁵

Responsibility	District/Zila	Tehsil/Taluka	Union Council
Education	Primary & Secondary Education, Literacy	X	X
Health	Dispensaries & Local Hospitals	X	X
Roads	District Roads	Local Roads & streets	Local Streets
Water	X	Water Supply/system	Wells & Ponds
Sewers & Sanitation	X	YES	X
Fire Services	X	YES	X
Parks & Playgrounds	X	YES	YES
Animals	X	Slaughterhouses, Fairs	Cattle Ponds & Grazing Areas
Cultural & Sports Services	X	Fairs, Cultural Events	Libraries
Street Services	X	Street Lighting, Signals	Street Lighting

Women & Decentralization

The history of women representation at local government level has been equally bleak as it was for restoration and strengthening of their role in other legislative bodies, as explained earlier. Local government elections were held six times since 1958 and reservation of seats for women at local government level remained 2% till 1991-1993 when it increased to 10%. In the local government elections of 1998, about 12.7% seats

¹⁵ Decentralization in Pakistan: An approach to poverty reduction & protection of human rights by Aazar Ayaz, The Researchers, Islamabad, October 2003

were reserved for women in the Punjab local councils (excluding union councils for which elections had not been held), while Balochistan had reserved 25.8% seats for women. In the other two provinces, 2.9% seats had been reserved in NWFP and 23% in Sindh. In 1998 these elections were held in Punjab and Balochistan only where their representation rose to 12% - 25% respectively.

WOMEN & DECENTRALIZATION IN A GLANCE¹⁶

YEAR OF GOVERNMENT	REPRESENTATION
1958-1968: Ayub Khan	No special representation – Basic democracy
1971-1977: Zulfikar Ali Bhutto	No special representation
1977-1985: Zia ul Haq	2 seats at UC & 10% at other tiers except NWFP
1985-1988: Mohd. Khan Junejo	2 seats at UC & 10% at other tiers except NWFP
1988-1990: Benazir Bhutto	No LG elections held
1990-1993: Nawaz Sharif	10.4% national average
1994-1996: Benazir Bhutto	No LG elections held
1997-1999: Nawaz Sharif	12.7% Punjab, 25.8% Balochistan
1999-2002: Parvez Musharaf	33% reservation at all 3 levels
2002 – to date: Mir Zafarullah Jamali	Continuation of 33% reservation

Unfortunately for the democratic norms and value system but fortunately for the women of Pakistan, a military government yet again gave community an opportunity to be part of decision making, irrespective of intentions, which acknowledged the need for women being integral part of societal participatory decision making process.

Decentralization Plan 2000 has 33% reservation of seats for women at all three tiers. Local government elections were held to elect councilors at 6022 Union Councils, 305 Tehsil Councils, 30 town councils and 96 District councils. Elections at union council level are held on direct election basis and at the other levels through indirect elections. These elections were held in 5 phases, from December 2000 to August 2001. The 33% seats for women resulted in the election of approximately 40,000 women out of which approximately 36,000 women have been elected as local councilors at the lowest tier of the Union Council. This is for the first time that such a high number of directly elected women are participating in local government.

The seats distribution at the three levels is as follows¹⁷:

Union Council Level:

- 21 seats
- 8 General Muslim seats (for men & women)
- 4 women reserved Muslim seats
- 4 workers & peasant-reserved seats (for men & women)
- 2 workers & peasant-reserved for women seats
- 1 reserved seat for minorities
- 1 Nazim (Council Head) and 1 Naib Nazim (Deputy head)

¹⁶ Source: Women's participation in Local Government Elections in 2000 – 2001 by Naeem Mirza, Aurat Publication & Information Services Foundation, August 2002

¹⁷ www.nrb.gov.pk

Tehsil / Town Council: All Naib Nazim of Union Councils become members of Tehsil council
 1 Nazim and 1 Naib Nazim
 33% seats reserved for women
 5% seats reserved for peasants & workers
 5% seats reserves for minorities

District Council: All Nazims of Union Council become member of District Council
 1 Nazim and 1 Naib Nazim
 33% seats reserved for women
 5% seats reserved for peasants & workers
 5% seats reserves for minorities

On an over all basis the reserved seats for women comprises of 27.7%. The reason behind this decrease is that the value of 33% was calculated on the base number in each District / Tehsil & Town/ Union Council rather than its gross number of members. At Union Council level the two seats of Nazim, Naib Nazims & minority is also excluded while extracting 33% portion of women reserved seats.

WOMEN SEATS RESERVED AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL SEATS¹⁸

Level	No. of Councils	Total seats	Seats for women	Women seats % of total
Union Council	6022	126,462	36,066	28.5%
Tehsil Council	305	8,192	1,749	21.3%
Town Council	30	773	161	20.8%
District Council	96	8,806	1,988	22.6%
Total		144,233	39,964	27.6%

These women now have the opportunity to be the communal leaders and mainstream within the political system. Majority of women who contested elections at Union council level through direct elections have undergone the full-fledged mambo-jumbo of electoral processes. Tehsil & District level election for women was indirect therefore, it exposed them to a different angle of the electoral processes. So far negligible number of women can be seen in the leadership role in local government set up which is as follows:

Nazim District Council:	2
Naib Nazim Tehsil Council:	1
Nazim Union Council:	11
Naib Nazim Union Council	2
Women on minorities seat	126 (mostly Christian)

In terms of filling up candidature for seats in 72 Districts, out of 96 Districts, it had 80-99% of filled up seats. On an over all basis 45% women seats were contested, 38.7% got elected unopposed ad 15.5% are still vacant in 212 Union Councils. Local Government

¹⁸ Women's Participation in Local Government Elections in 2000 – 2001, page 22, by Naeem Mirza, Aurat Publication & Information Services Foundation, August 2002

elections in FATA & Islamabad are yet to be held. By-elections on vacant seats have also been held now on 28.3.2004 to almost 4000 vacant women seats.

STATUS OF WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEM

Level	No. of Councils	Total Seats	Seats for Women	Women Elected	Seats Vacant
Union Councils	6022	126,462	36,066	32,222	3,844
Tehsil Councils	305	8,192	1,749	1,675	74
Town Council	30	773	161	161	0
Districts Council	96	8,806	1,988	1,905	83
Total		144,233	39,964	35,963	4,001
Women elected on reserved seats for Minorities				126	
Women elected as Nazim / Naib Nazim				16	
TOTAL NO OF WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT				36,105 (90% coverage)	

IV. FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS:

Nature of opportunities & obstacles vary with the political situation in each country. It ranges from inequality within political parties to access to the mass media or access to resources for conducting an election campaign to having legal and social conducive enabling environment for their political participation. Regardless of the political situation, a conducive and women inclusive electoral system is a must to facilitate women's right to be elected. Excluding women from positions of power and from elected bodies impoverishes the development of democratic principles in public life and inhibits the socio-economic development of a society.

Most of the elected bodies are dominated by men who further their own interests. It's presumed and have been researched as well that the male-dominated political institutions/ government do not promote women or women's issues. Thus women themselves must organize and mobilize their networks, learn to communicate their interests and push for mechanisms to enhance their own representation.

(A) Issue Identification

The policy study has been undertaken within the following parameters to be holistic and to identify critical issues within this framework:

1. Legal perspective of the policy
2. Administrative perspective of the policy and its implementation status
3. Role and support mechanism of political party, if any
4. Ideological & psychological context
5. Post policy level of social empowerment
6. Post policy level of economic empowerment
7. Post policy level of political empowerment
8. Post policy level of women's involvement & influence in council work, development work & policy decision making
9. Post policy need, effectiveness & requirements of training

(B) Identification of Obstacles/Gaps: survey findings¹⁹

Fortunately in Pakistan a legislative order felicitated the women's struggle to be politically empowered under a military regime. Gaps in line with identified issues has been brought forward through (a) careful policy study and analysis, (b) interviews with leaders of political parties, (c) Interviews with Nazims, (d) Focus Group Discussions with the elected female district councilors (e) review of donors & civil society projects and (e) findings of the questionnaire. Therefore they have been divided into following categories, which are:

1. Legal & Administrative/ implementation Gaps
2. Ideological & Psychological obstacles
3. Socio-Economic obstacles
4. Political obstacles

¹⁹ Findings of the Questionnaire at Annex-III

Legal & Administrative/ implementation Gaps

Civil society activism for promotion, mainstreaming & protection of women's political right is spread over two decades, which got recognition in devolution plan 2000.

Detail study of the Local Government Ordinance (LGO) identifies following gaps:

- Non coverage of legislation to FATA
- Rights & responsibilities of women councilors have not been mentioned
- Indirect mode of election at Tehsil & District council weakens the community link
- Its not mandatory to have women in the committees under LGO
- The quorum is not linked with presence of women in house especially budget session
- Law does not specify mandatory notice of council & committee meeting which marginalize women
- Musalihati Committee (Arbitration Council) non functional which operates at Union Council level where women have more direct access to justice
- Honorarium is mentioned but its award is left to discretion of district council
- Distribution of fund on an equal or percentage basis between men & women councilors not mentioned
- No provision for reservation of women in the Local Government Commission
- No deterrence provision in law against those who deprive women from political participation

The implementation process highlights following gaps:

- Village & neighborhood councils not formed which are more beneficial to women
- Women being marginalized, in house, on the pretext of reserved seat holder and having no specific constituency whereas they share the same electoral college and mode which elects the district Nazim
- Access to development funds complicated due to lack of clarity & understanding
- Women councilors role being stereo typed and limited to health, population, education and social welfare rather than mainstreamed
- Women do not have access to copies of LGO especially in Urdu language
- Women do not have any facility of waiting room and/or toilet at most of the district council
- Women are not encouraged to speak and upon doing so they are pushed to focus on women issues alone by their colleagues
- Women are neither encouraged nor asked to prepare any development scheme
- District level bureaucracy offers resistance as they are not sensitized enough to accept women in the role of political authority

Ideological & Psychological gaps

It's a general perception with and for women that choice of being in politics for them would be a choice between home and public life. From a Pakistani and eastern cultural perspective it's a difficult choice to make as they will have to carry the dual burden of

domestic and professional work. To make things more difficult both immediate family and society expects them to excel in both. Ideological and psychological hindrances for women entering in politics especially at grass root level in Pakistan are and can include following:

- Traditional perception of roles: Gender perception, cultural pattern as well as predetermined roles assigned to men and women
- Women's lack of confidence to enter politics & run for elections
- Society's, in general, and women's, in particular, perception of politics as a "dirty" game
- Sensationalization & portrayal of women in the mass media

Traditional perception of roles has played and is playing a very important role for the women in politics and those who want to join politics. Stereotyping of roles where men are for public life and women for private life becomes more predominant when the subject is of politics. In the rural setups women are excluded from decision-making process and its level/ intensity ranges from the level of exposure or development of adjacent urban city center. For any politician Union Council level is the closest interface point in local government system especially in rural areas. When politician is a woman the cultural barriers, norms, traditions and customs raise to maximum height. The most persistent problem that woman face at this level is that community (a) wants to personalize their relationship with their political leader which is required to be asexual, (b) wants approachability at all times, (c) wants them to have the ability to be authoritative in speech and body language and (d) is used to criticizing and maligning politicians in public meetings. In our traditions women are synonymous with "honor" which is a very sensitive subject and age-old family feuds start and are settled by their involvement. Therefore, it becomes a major societal hindrance for the women and family to join politics and be in a public role.

Lack of confidence in women themselves is an important cause of their negligible representation in political arena. By virtue of the local government legislation women have been given an entry point and a medium to voice but the legislation cannot give them voice and confidence to speak. This has been a handicap for most of the elected women as they remained cornered in official conduct due to the fear of being taunted by male colleagues for whatever they say and in their shaky confidence in their ability to raise question, argue and object.

In Pakistan it's a general perception that politics as a "dirty" game. The characteristics that are must under this perception for a politician are filthy rich, loud mouthed, ruthless nepotistic and corrupt. Out of these being corrupt tops the chart, which has many forms from bribery to creation of favorable legislation to exploit market condition for oneself or family. Democracy demands transparency and grass root politics demands and warrants further accountability. It's a common saying that joining politics is the formula for being quick rich and having over 144,000 councilors is perceived as an addition to the Corps of corruption. Women are perceived to be less corrupt and a conduit to reduce corruption, therefore it adds to burden of being extra conscious in whatever the say and do even to the extent of consulting someone. They and their families have come under a special scrutiny by their respective community to the extent that what she wears and how she talks and where she goes? This has limited their privacy in certain respects and has

increased level of expectation to be at the zenith of transparency and be the leading force to fight corruption.

Media by all means can make or break any one through their reporting and projection mechanism. In general terms media tends to under project the women rights issues but tends to sensationalize trivial issues related to them, which provoke social sensitivities. News reporting in Pakistan where women are involved gets more of a glamorous or scandalous touch than a factual projection. It fails to point out that how women are the most affected due to socio-economic and political changes being vulnerable and largely alienated from political decision making. During the election campaigning period and afterward as well media is more interested to either hunt for the cup board skeletons or tantalizing statement from women. The news of women having argument is portrayed as family tiffs. Their pictures get captioning as “councilor attending a function” rather than emphasizing her point of view. In this case as well their press releases on council issues is down played for want of a scandal which acts like the last straw on a women’s back along with other social reservations and stigmas she has to watch and guard for.

Socio-Economic Obstacles

Socio-economic status of a woman in a society has a direct influence on their participation in political institutions and elected bodies. The socio-economic obstacles impacting women’s effective participation in local government system can be categorized as:

- Illiteracy and limited access to education
- Lack of information and exposure
- Social & cultural barriers: push & pull factor
- Dual burden of family & professional obligations
- Economic dependency
- Mobility constraints

The literacy level in Pakistan remains stagnating despite certain statistics projecting that the literacy rate has reached 40%. There is glaring disparity between the literacy rate for male & female as well. The governmental education facilities are insufficient and in most of rural areas its non existent which compounds in case of girls. These schools are at much distance from the villages, which further restricts the probability for girl child to attend. Private school facilities are available in urban centers but are expensive enough to be out of reach of the middle class families. Despite this major handicap, which translates into all their endeavors, they have been courageous to join the political ranks but this limits their efficiency and effectiveness to understand and system’s optimum utilization.

The educational handicap transcend into the professional life of these women as they lack information and exposure. Present LGS is even difficult for the practiced experts and politicians to understand unless its explained in depth. The ordinance for a long period of time was available in English only, which is not comprehensible in certain parts of the country. It was after a year or so when Urdu translation of the same became available and even that is not available to all councilors especially women. When these results are compared against the level of illiteracy it demands extensive training.

Social & cultural barriers are the strongest push & pull factor for women entering politics at any level in Pakistan. Local government is the most accessable tier of government for

community, which for women means more recognition in the local public eye. A large %age of women at councilor level is self-motivated for want of social empowerment, which means to be heard and known – “I am a living reality & can speak”. This desire got culminated for those who were strongly supported by husband/men of family and a significant number coming from political family background. In certain areas of Pakistan social norms and traditions are so strong that deadly feuds start on a suspicion that the other male has looked and/ or talked about a family’s women and/or a male electoral staff held her thumb to put indelible ink. In certain areas of NWFP and Balochistan women were not allowed to register as voter, contest and cast vote. In those areas, predominantly Dir, Kohistan, Dera Bugti, etc., the local political elite had written understanding signed by all to abide by this and anyone violating it would be socially ostracized. For women it was pronounced that those violating it would face an automatic annulment of their Nikah (marriage contract), would not remain respectful enough to hold a funeral prayer if she dies and thus will be outcaste. In these areas there are no women elected to any tier of local government. In certain areas men of the family attend the session on women’s behest.

Dual burden of family & professional obligations leads to neglected household & family and at times inability to deliver. Women are major contributor to national economy through paid and largely unpaid domestic labor. In Pakistan social traditions and customs lead to disproportionate work burden on women. She is to keep house and family affairs at her best as well as professionally compete with male colleagues, who have less socio-domestic responsibilities and more professional exposure, and excel. The cadre of elected councilor has an average family of 6-10 in a joint family system. Her new role affects her children and husband as well as she is publicly talked about which can be positive or negative. Her achievements can also lead or distract good marriage proposals for her children, which are socially very important to her. In present set up so far their new role has positive effect. They are enjoying the attention and respect package of this initiative.

Women’s decision of being in politics needed “yes” from all family members – immediate & extended. She carries an extra and to some extent unnecessary burden of all of their expectations. This tax them at both ends to take care of the family needs, do time management to squeeze out the meeting time and above all know about council work. Most of the District councils in this context are not playing a facilitative role by not even provided by a common room for women to sit while waiting for the start of the meeting.

Economic dependency has always been the most crucial factor in women’s furtherance in any profession or cause. Although their social and biological role is very clear but their input as significant female electorate remain absurd. Being member of the council itself is a third type of job/role for women beside housewife & workingwomen. Women in Pakistan, like other developing countries, have very little control or possession of economic assets. In some parts women themselves are treated like an asset. Women’s participation into political life has taxed their family life and household budget as it has led to increased expenditure.

Majority of the councilors belong to middle class with monthly income averaging at PKR 10,000 (\$ 180) . The election campaign was funded and run mostly be male members of the family averaging PKR. 15,000 – 20,000 which is an understatement due to Election Commission’s restriction on election expenditure.

Women were informed about the honorarium as it was widely advertised and is part of the LGO as well. The honorarium is set at Rs. 5000 (\$ 83) per month. So far a very small number of women (% of the 33 district) have been able to receive it for the rest it has not been granted and women are fighting to get their share. Now having a monetary compensation is the first step for them to feel economically independent. If they cannot have their due share how can they fight for other's cause. Secondly their access to development schemes and funds is also restricted. Thirdly they are not being given any TA/DA rather in some provinces the District Nazim takes all members out on a picnic out of TA/DA head. Most of the women are also ignorant about their right to TA/DA as well.

Mobility constraints grow problematic as the council meeting place is far from most of their houses - approximately 25 KM. The transportation expenditure averages to Rs. 300 (\$3.5). These mobility expenses are not only for councilor alone but mostly some family member goes to pick and drop and it means another travel cost plus the opportunity cost of the person for most of them travelling is an added dent on house hold budget. So far they are ready to bear it out of their saving and to pursue their promised land. Moreover public transport system in rural areas is next to non-existent and at both urban & rural areas its not women friendly. Generalized law & order situation is also, such which is not much conducive for a female to travel alone for longer distances. In certain places the Tehsils are an hour or mores drive away from District center, which constraints their participation being dependent on some local transport having its own timing and not being able to stay out late for the fear of missing the ride.

This issue is the major constraint for women as voter and candidates as men do not want to be tied with them to and from polling station. At elected level since it has social status attached with it therefore so far its being accepted.

Political & Professional Obstacles

Women around the world face socio-political constraints being kept away from decision-making level. Women face plethora of constraints most of which integrates into political constraints. Men generally dominate political arena. In Pakistan feudalistic and tribal mindset coupled with strong hold of traditions contributes to such a situation where women reject, disassociate and/or are reluctant to become a ball then a player of male styled politics.

Frustration under this category increase due to:

- Lack of political awareness
- “Masculine model” of political life and of elected governmental bodies
- Nature of electoral system & institutions
- Lack of party support system
- The lack of contact and cooperation with other public organizations such as trade (labor) unions and women's groups
- Non-cooperation of bureaucracy
- Attitude of male councilors & council session
- Lack of political education & training mechanism for leadership

Lack of political awareness is the most common problem among the women councilors. Within Pakistan there are certain cultural similarities, i.e., the same level of social and economic development among parts of provinces but at the same time this generalization is inapplicable because of the lack of a political culture and the lack of confidence many women face. Since politics is taken as “men’s game” women do not have much knowledge about electoral procedures, rights, responsibilities and obligations as candidates, voters, supporters & elected member. Most claim to know or have read LGO but can neither relate to it nor interpret it. Most cannot differentiate between political right and duty and would answer it as the same. A voter's political literacy – capacity to make coherent choices and decisions when voting – and political freedom – the independent decision to vote or not - is clearly not dependent only upon the level of formal education, yet plays a significant role, as does the political will to improve the situation. The Civil Society Organization are trying to reach out but their efforts lack out reach which needs to be supported by government.

“Masculine model” of political life and of elected governmental bodies²⁰. Political life is organized according to male norms and values and even by male lifestyles. Politics in Pakistan as well is a “winners and losers” competition and confrontation, rather than a process or choice based on mutual respect, collaboration and consensus building. This environment is mostly alien to women except for those who have political family background. Differences between men and women also appear with respect to agenda setting and priorities of decision-making, which are determined by the interests, backgrounds and working patterns of both sexes. Women are considered to give priority to societal concerns whereas it comes out of this research that alongside social concerns in which education tops the list, the infrastructural concerns such as roads, electricity, etc are top of their development priorities with gender specific issues at 4th or 5th position.

Nature of electoral system in Pakistan is such that excludes women from electoral process. The biggest difficulty starts with registration in electoral rolls. In order to be registered they need National Identity Card (NIC), which in itself is cumbersome process because government has issued new NIC, which has not been fully replaced, and in rural areas this difficulty is compounded as is equally faced in urban centers. The other related issue is that it is a must to have a photograph on NIC, which in tribal and conservative clans are not ready to accept, therefore, a large no of villages are without them. Electoral rolls need women to be registered with their own first name and not as daughter of some one or wife of some one and the same socio-cultural card is played which excludes them.

Location & access to polling booths also adds to mobility and transport problems as on an average they are at least one hour away. In rural areas one need to wait for hours for transport and it’s difficult to take women’s responsibility to and from polling station and later to council meetings. During elections private transport are also taken over by more financially strong contestants who deploy it for their exclusive voters, which further marginalized women because there are no timings for them, and no guarantee of a ride back. Location of polling booth warrants women to invest at least 5-6 hours to cast vote, which is unfeasible for them. Men do not permit their women to cast vote at a pooling booth with a male staff. In some areas a women casting vote in a male run polling booth

²⁰ Handbook: *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, Stockholm, International IDEA, 1998.

can lead to communal violence and murders as women are object of “honor” and no one is allowed to see or touch (polling staff has to hold thumb of the voter to mark) her.

Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) as an institution is far behind to cater to such problems and address the related and electoral complaints. This cast heavy shadows on its much hyped neutrality & independence. ECP policies and conduct rules & procedures are also gender blind though they did mobilize a media campaign but advertisement in newspaper do not go a long way due to illiteracy.

Lack of party support system: The present LG system is a “non-party” based system. Elections were held accordingly but the elected representatives have clear party affiliations, which are visible at the level of each tiers Nazim and Naib Nazim. Women have been key campaigner and mobilizer to access the "other half" but their role in party structure in terms of political decision making is non existent. There are only 2-3 political parties in Pakistan who has women in their executive council and those too not more than 2 members. The women wing of the political parties is, still, practically a detachable arm of a political party worth window dressing in political rallies and protests. A detail round of interviews with 1st tier leadership²¹ of the major political parties in Pakistan shows that almost all the political parties support the reservation of quota for women in local government. They consider it as a window of opportunity for women to formally voice themselves from a platform. They considerably recognize the training and exposure gap but has done nothing to attract women to join their rank. Political parties realize the importance of LG system and therefore want to change the system to party based mechanism.

Besides this what obviously lack is internalization of the reality within a party structure to integrate such large number of women politicians. No political party has any support plan to assist them through training for the job, to provide financial support to women candidates or to plan a mechanism for them to access the male political workers networks for canvassing. This shows prevalence of double standards within political parties as on one hand they support the quotas for women and on the other no one during their time i.e. especially PPP & PML-N, worked to have such a reservation for them. Community in general and women in particular are confused when it comes to the question that do you have a party affiliation because they do not have this understanding that to be affiliated means to be a registered member of the party. 60% of research sample has reluctant to join political party. Here party affiliation is where your family has voted. Definition of a political activist is also at loss because a voter of the party considers itself to be party activist and because of this interpretation has expectation which when are unmet cause disillusionment. No party has ever considered bridging or clarifying this information gap.

The contact and cooperation with other public organizations such as trade (labor) unions and professional groups facilitate the political orientation and easier integration in political system. This lacks on the women's end, as their number in workforce is low. In order to empower and enable women to participate in politics, it is necessary to extend the scope of women's involvement at the grass-roots level. For men this comes naturally since most of them are in the employment circuit, sit at public informal meetings & discussions and are therefore, exposed to routine & constraints. It has been more than a decade when NGO's especially women groups launches a systematic movement within

²¹ Interviews with PML-Q, PPP, National Alliance, MQM, MMA

political parties and communities for women to be accepted and be part of political decision making arena and their efforts have resulted in necessary electoral changes.

NGOs in Pakistan have a historic contribution to achieve gender balance in political life by getting it translated in legislation and national policies. Through donor assistance they were the most organized group to mobilize women as voters and candidates in the LG elections.²² They have and are helping women to think carefully about their own goals, strategies and tactics. It is important to assist women in the councils to be able to deliver and to equip them with the necessary skills and strategies to ensure that women's issues are taken into account in the debate and discourse that takes place. This becomes more important as a step towards confidence building and facilitates the sharing of experiences. Though for women social empowerment was THE motivating factor to join politics but accessing the NGO support mechanism is still slow. NGOs are taking their out reach campaign more close to women's home therefore, this bond is expected to grow stronger with time.

Bureaucracy in a colonial influenced system is also “men’s domain”. Not only is the bureaucracy gender insensitive but number of women in bureaucracy is also very low. This men’s domain at grass root level is administratively first step of integration. Earlier a woman in a government office will get a preferential treatment out of respect. But now since bureaucracy has been arm twisted to accept elected leader as their bosses, which includes women as well, they find themselves disoriented and are not very facilitative to this new set off rules. This becomes more obvious for women when they are asked to show their “members ID” which has not been issued in most of the cases; their recommendation is not given priority. If they walk into an office they are asked to understand the system first and are pushed from pillar to post. District Management Group, the administrative cadre/group, at the district level were masters and rulers in attitude whereas LGO has changed their role to subjugation and facilitation to the elected bodies & members which is alien to them. Men can get their issue resolved as they know how the system's machinery is lubricated but for women it needs sensitization both for women and bureaucracy to be mutually facilitative.

Attitude of male colleague and conduct of council: On an overall basis council is not playing the role of facilitator to integrate women rather the attitude of male colleagues and Nazim is sarcastic and at times derogatory or marginalized. Women face communal criticism when they cannot solve the issues. Being denied to speak in house adds into their social and professional irritation and frustration. At times despite their repeated requests they are not given the opportunity to raise their issue by the speaker. When women raise the issue of allocation of funds & need for development funds/activity, they get to hear the sarcastic comments that “there are funds for your cosmetics” or “you are a women reserved seat”, “why funds for you?” and/or “ “what do you know about funds and work you are here to sit so sit”. At places where they have been given development funds (a) it not at parity with men, (b) they have been pressurized from Nazim to utilize its as per their choice and/ or (c) their funds been self utilized by Nazim under his discretion and they have just been informed. They have no say in agenda setting of the council nor quorum is linked to their presence. The LGO monitoring committee has

²² Citizen Campaign for Women Empowerment in Local Government Election 2000 – 2001: A project lead by Aurat Foundation and funded by NORAD worth \$ 1 million

women members but neither they get adequate notice nor have much say in its working. Their nomination is also limited to few committees of population, education and health.

Women lack political education & training mechanism for participation and leadership.

The absence of well-developed education and training systems for women's leadership in general, and for orienting young women toward political life in particular is also a professional set back. This becomes an added set back in wake of low women literacy rate. The need is to expand the pool of women who are qualified to join political ranks. To start with it should be part of educational curriculum and women should have access to employment opportunities. Common understanding of the concerns of women, gendered political awareness-raising, lobbying skills and networking are important for the process of training women for political careers.

Women have been getting training from different sources. With the help of Norwegian (NORAD) financial assistance a project was undertaken to train all elected (37,000) women councilors²³. It benefited mostly to those who had some education because the curriculum and material developed for training is mostly in written form and does not reach out to illiterate in rural areas. It has also been termed as “touch and go” due to its short duration and not being in local language. For most of the target groups it was the only opportunity to “know about LGO” but not reading or understanding it fully. On an average such initiatives have been appreciated by them but still needs more customized approach & strategies, which are inclusive of issues with stronger sustainability. Women elected on workers, labor and peasants seats are more at loss in their proper functioning than others being ignorant of their roles & responsibilities.

Canadian government (thru CIDA) has also financed women district resource centers in 60 districts, which are on going in collaboration with a national level NGO – Aurat Foundation. Beside this many provincial NGOs have prepared resource kits, including pictorial and written, to help women councilors in discharge of their duties. Devolution Trust for Community Empowerment (DTCE) a GONGO will also be working to strengthen the local government system, which has gender as cross cutting theme.

(C) Achievements

On empowerment front socially these women have started with achieving (a) their family support, irrespective of push and pull factor, to contest elections, which means acceptance of their right to be in political arena (b) having been accepted to take on the role of political decision making on behalf of their community; (c) equal political decision making right being an elected representative. Social recognition, sense of authority, respect & improved social standing within and outside family being in a decision-making role are “THE” gains felt by these elected women. But these achievements is rapidly being followed by an answer “nothing” in response of gains of being in the system due to their increased frustration and obstacles within and outside the system.

Economically, the designated honorarium approximately PKR 5000 (\$86) is women's access to economic assets and was to be an added incentive, though in most of the case

²³ Women's Political Participation Project (W3P) implemented by UNDP in 2002-2003 worth \$ 3 million

this is not being disbursed so far. Opportunity to avail development funds also ideally contributes to strengthen her role of a public representative.

Politically they have established their right of political equity. Their political journey was not an easy one as women encountered non-conducive enabling environment despite a softened social stance. Despite handicaps they went through the process from their mobilization as candidates, canvassing electoral process, getting trained for effective participation and ultimately to safeguard their interest in the house. Opportunity to join a political party is attractive for them as the next step but no political party is painting a rosy and attractive picture for them.

(D) Evaluation of gaps & achievements

During LG elections, in some parts of Pakistan acceptance of women's right of political decision making was cordial and in some it has been a sensitive issue to the extent that any deviance was subject to social ostracization. The same pattern followed in by-elections held in March 2004.

A large number, of 37,0000 (approximately), of women have managed to be at the grass roots political center. Among the target group, majority of women councilors, almost 90% are married between the ages of 30-40 years having 6 family members on an average and belonging to middle class families. Most are fresh entrants to the political system. Literacy level is lowest among the women at the Union Council level but it improves at Tehsil & District level and political affiliations are more visible. There are various committees in each house and they have women as its members. Number of women chairing these committees is negligible. Their presence is a prospect to have equal access to development funds and contribute to women facilitative policy formulation though a similar opportunity is yet to be attained by even male colleagues in most of the areas. Women have landed on the political planet and it would be upon their own ability to prove their right of being a must and productive habitant. Not only would they have to learn to live in the tough environment but to cultivate the same as well to make it conducive for themselves.

End of first tenure for women in LG highlights that:

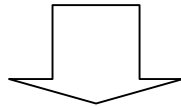
- Sizeable elected women do not know much about LGO
- LGO in itself is vague when it comes to being integrative and holistic from a gender perspective
- "Respect & recognition" followed by "nothing" are political achievements to them
- Reserved seat is being equated as a political stigma or alms
- Non availability of "economic gains" and stress between family and professional commitment is self agitating for them
- "Equality with men in treatment & access to funds" is priority policy change objective as against presumed women focused sewing machine supplies only
- Policy formulation has been on the back burner in the new born system
- Development works mechanism of Citizen Community Boards (CCB) is unclear and is yet to be understood and activated
- "Helping people" are termed as Political rights & duties by women

- “Infrastructural communal development” is priority of women to spend development funds followed by education
- Sizeable majority have received “training” but term it insufficient due to its touch n go approach
- Upward Political mobility and mainstreaming has not taken place due to education as eligibility criteria
- Non party based system has left the party role & out reach limited

Access, Participation and Transformation model by Thenjiwe Mtintso, Deputy Secretary General ANC South Africa, has been adopted here to gauge to understand women’s position, stakeholders’ responsibility, constraints to fully activate the system and establish deadlines to monitor progress. The model at this stage is:

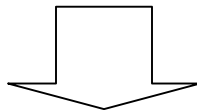
ACCESS

The factors that bars the women from entry into institutions
(In our case we have passed this stage of identification but continued efforts are required to strengthen the affirmative intervention and overall strengthening of the system)



PARTICIPATION

The structural barriers to the effective participation by and advancement of women within institutions
(Government has pitched in their share of removing barrier. It’s now up to the political parties to democratically mainstream & internalize this change pattern. A concerted effort from all stakeholders is required for the capacity building of women)



TRANSFORMATION

Internal: The administrative policies that are required to ensure equal representation of women at all level as well as gender sensitive work environments

External: The operational procedures necessary to ensure that gender equality is advanced through service delivery

(LGO itself needs to have women inclusive amendments to provide adequate space and acknowledge women as equal players. Government’s system and bureaucracy is far from being gender sensitive as client and as server, their SOP are also gender resistant; same is the case for political parties)

V. CONCLUSIONS

Synthesis of major findings

On one hand devolution has given landmark political recognition to women in Pakistan but on the other has burdened them with procedural technicalities of management and financial systems, political intricacies of the new system, support mechanism for gender mainstreaming and balancing it all with family's responsibilities. From the analytical point of view the study of policy, secondary data and survey findings have brought forward following paradigms which needs to be explored to establish a track of sustained development.

- Exploring the Gendered face of politics
- Egalitarian Vs Authoritarian political attitudes
- Political mobility Vs severance of social links
- Qualitative Vs Quantitative Approach
- Socio-cultural behavioural barrier breaking Vs manoeuvring/ imposition
- Confidence Building Vs Capacity Building
- Decentralization & Gender sensitization of bureaucracy
- Integration Vs detachability within a political party

The most important point that comes forward is to carve, realize and accept that there is a Gendered face of politics, which is of a “female”. Politics by being defined as masculine is the first step to marginalizing women because it sets into social and communal attitude formation, which does not perceive women in a public-cum-political leadership role. We need to explore that does political role or leadership has a “Gender” or its a state of mind. In Pakistan being in a political role is not that simple as it gets translated into one's social life style, priorities and attitudes. When this masculine perception is coupled with socio-cultural norms it brings together concepts of frailty of a women, on one hand and abusive dirty nature of politics, on the other, which is not meant for women. Being in politics is also propagated as “all time access” which is not socially perceivable for a woman.

No effort has been undertaken by the political stakeholders to depersonify the male face of politics rather it has been blown out of proportion. Therefore, it requires extra effort from all stakeholders to engender politics for communal recognition and internalization. We also need to lower down our level of expectation from the point that now women are there so they will be best deliverer and will not adopt to similar practices of deviation and evasive as linked with their male colleagues. We should take them as mortals as men in the system.

Politics in itself has to strike a balance between being egalitarian in nature or authoritative. The politics at grass root level requires egalitarian approach but the sense of power in itself heightens in a class-ridden society like Pakistan where social stratification is pronounced. Each province has its own norms and ethos that further adds into this paradigm and question of empowerment and its relative perspective becomes diverse and complex. The tribal belt is egalitarian in nature whereas feudal strong holds are authoritative.

Women in either setup do not get facilitated however, once in the arena it demands them to behave accordingly which necessarily does not match with their nature, as it does not

allow them to cross the identified social boundaries. Social stratification is also personified which does not allow women from lower income group families, as is the case in local government, to be accepted or socially elevated especially in rural areas where a “Mazara” (male tenant) is not allowed to sit in front of the landlord and acknowledging women of these families to be sitting and deliberating next to them in political decision-making. This attitudinal phenomena needs to be addressed for women’s effective mainstreaming and professional acceptance in council work.

This translates into political attitude formation for women as well. Currently the political system has predominant feudal norms, which focuses on climbing up the socio-political ladder and increase social distances. When women step into power corridors of politics they adopt the same social set of values to progress, which wants them to be more authoritative than egalitarian, which leads to detachment from community and not being easily accessible. LG Politics is synonymous with accessibility but when authoritarianism strikes at its basic spirits. Our development interventions in support to strengthening role of LGS and women needs to focus to keep them linked to cultural grass root and upward political mobility should be professional and social elevation and must not result in cutting off downward communal linkages.

This definitely leads us to an important question that is a customized quota reservation intervention enough to make “the change” happen? or is it quality and qualitative strength of the new entrants one should focus on? For societies like Pakistan where cultural norms and traditions over ride other statutory and legal provisions, reservation of quota is definitely the needed affirmative action; but for long term sustainability and holistic integration it has to be substituted, in phased manner, with more direct elections and not reservation alone. This will lead to quality representation against a mere numeric representation. This of course is dependent on a given set of enabling environment, contributed by all stakeholders, which are dependent upon social and behavioral change which in turn needs sustained catalyst interventions.

Phased planning for sustenance and integration requires attitude improvisation within the given provincial cultural setup. This space creation has to be indigenously grown rather being taken as an imposition or an attempt to break away from cultural roots. Reservation in LGS has broken a social barrier and now requires a prudent manoeuvring tactics for smooth sailing. It needs an advocacy plans within the framework of respective provincial cultural norms and not to appear as cultural invasion. The rural community still perceives women in politics an urbanite and elitist agenda, which is not meant for generalization and adherence to it, can lead to airing religious and cultural ideological clashes. LG in its essence of being indigenous and reflective of community aspirations needs to adopt its own customized advocacy approaches from a communal perspective where these ideological paradigms are resolved through local opinion makers especially religious leaders.

On the beneficiary front, that is women, the need is to shift focus to their confidence building rather than capacity building alone to let them be at ease with their role in political decision-making. They need to be eased into their new role than being perceived as a customized liability. By no means it should less prioritize capacity building initiative but should reduce their over looking their shoulders before speaking. They need to get over this fear of being wrong, ridiculed or teased and need to be encouraged to take that cold plunge to learn and experience for themselves. Once women are confident to take

political decision making in their natural stride and are equipped with basic know how, would be the day when all barriers will by themselves become invisible.

Our governmental bureaucratic set ups also have colonial legacies and the LGS has hit their power base real hard. One can see its effect as relatively less cooperation is being extended to elected representatives and more of complications of procedural practices. This becomes more visible when this representative is a woman because the system lacks gender sensitivity and they further capitalize their weaknesses. Bureaucracy needs to be focused in improving client-server relationship and accepting women as political decision maker.

On the political party's front major reforms are needed in internal democratization and restructuring of the system and ideological paradigms of a political party to integrate women in their cadre rather than using them as an external detachable accessory. Unless the political parties are put on the path of reformation it can never translate into real time change because it has to shift and accept women in their ranks through a diagnostic model of improvisation rather than prognostic one.

Set of policy recommendations

The policy under study is one of the major reform initiatives of the government. It takes into account the positive and negative lessons learnt from the previous similar experiences. The policy is the first legislative affirmative action on the part of the government to recognize the role of the missing half in the political decision-making. This is in line with ratification of international conventions as well which has secured a front row seat for Pakistan in the league of countries recognizing women's role in the political set up.

The essence of research was to study the socio-economic & political impact of the policy on women, assess its impact on their political mainstreaming within political parties & system and their influence on decision making during the first tenure of the local government. It is too early to assess the deep socio-economic & political impact of this intervention at this point of time as its in an inception stage but it does brings out the administrative and implementation gaps both at governmental and stakeholders end. However, after having attained the level of a collective voice it misses the point at many occasions where it should have and could have let its existence known better and those are the points which need strengthening the most among others.

In light of the policy study following is the recommendations matrix:

S. No	Issue	Recommendations	Responsibility
1.	Legal Gaps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Law should be extended to Tribal Areas as well 2. Elections should not be held in phases but in one go to avoid negative influences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRB / Federal Govt. • NRB / Federal Govt. & Provincial Govts.

S. No.	Issue	Recommendations	Responsibility
		<p>3. Next Election should be held on Party basis</p> <p>4. Next elections should have direct election for all tiers of LG</p> <p>5. LG Commission should have women as members</p> <p>6. LGO should define equal weightage, roles & responsibilities of reserved seats</p> <p>7. LGO should fix percentage reservation for membership of women on all monitoring committees especially for Arbitration Committees, Justice Committee, Conciliatory Committee & Public Safety Commission, etc</p> <p>8. LGO should have at least 5% of chairpersonship of monitoring committees for women</p> <p>9. LGO should fix a minimum number of women members to be present in the council session as part of quorum</p> <p>10. LGO should fix a mandatory percentage of women's presence for the budget session and passing of the budget</p> <p>11. LGO should specify access & allocation mechanism of development funds for women</p> <p>12. Nazim should be directly elected</p> <p>13. ECP should have stricter code of conduct for LGE to curb forceful banning of women</p> <p>ECP should have swifter complaint resolution mechanism to take action</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRB • NRB • Provincial Govts. • NRB • NRB • NRB • NRB • NRB • NRB • NRB • NRB, ECP • ECP

S. No.	Issue	Recommendations	Responsibility
2.	Administrative/ implementation Gaps	<p>against election day & post election issues</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provision of copies of LGO in Urdu 2. Conceptual clarity of house about reserved seats v.v. the same electoral college for Nazim & women members 3. District's rules of business/ SOP should be inclusive of women issues as cross cutting theme 4. Members should be given adequate notice time about schedule of council session and committee meetings 5. Council sessions & committee meetings should not be scheduled/ held after sunset. Venue of such meetings should be a public place if District council's own building is not available 6. Women should be provided with a common room with attached toilet at District office 7. Women should be provided with secretariat support from district bureaucracy 8. In each financial year at least 10% development schemes forwarded by women be mandatory to be adopted 9. Gender sensitization training for district bureaucracy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Govt. • District Nazim • District Govt. & • District Govt. & District Nazim, Committees' chairperson • District Govt., District Nazim & Committees' chairperson • District Govt. & District Nazim • District Govt. & District Nazim • District Govt., District Nazim & council • NRB, Provincial Govt., District Govt.

S. No.	Issue	Recommendations	Responsibility
3.	Socio-Economic Obstacles	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Elected women councilors be educated in non formal functional literacy 2. Women resource centers at district level to give them institutional update and support 3. Advocacy for positive and productive side of the women in politics by involving communal opinion makers, religious leaders. 4. Training of school teachers especially of primary level for students awareness and attitudinal change 5. Honorarium, TA/DA amount should be fixed and process streamlined 6. Media should be involved in gender sensitization and responsible, productive reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRB, MOE, NGOs, Donors • District Govts. MOWD, Provincial WWD, Donors • Elected councilors, CSOs • MOE, MOWD, CSO, Donors • District/ Provincial Govts. • District/ Provincial Govts., NGO, Donors
4.	Political & Professional gaps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Colleges and universities should have short courses for elected and aspirant women councilors to orient them with their assignment 2. SOP should be amended to be gender sensitive to accept women as elected representatives both for bureaucracy & government departments 3. ECP should issue electoral card to all voters as an alternate to NIC with a 5 year validity which will keep electoral rolls updated and enhance voter turn out 4. Women should be given an alternate options to obtain NIC without photograph for electoral purpose only 5. ECP should field female enumerators for culturally conservative areas to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRB, MOWD, Provincial Govts., MOE • NRB, District/ Provincial Govts • ECP • ECP, NADRA • ECP

S. No.	Issue	Recommendations	Responsibility
		<p>facilitate women's registration</p> <p>6. Appreciating the issues of mobility of, location of women polling booth be not more than 25 KM radius</p> <p>7. No. of female specific polling booths be raised</p> <p>8. Stricter code of conduct for LGE for media to stop sensationalization</p> <p>9. Political parties Act needs to be amended for internal democratization of party</p> <p>10. Political parties needs to organize down to grass root level to extend their out reach and strengthen LG system</p> <p>11. Political parties must reform and integrate women wing of their parties in mainstream party decision making</p> <p>12. Political parties should have at least 33% women in their Executive Council</p> <p>13. Political parties should adopt mechanism to facilitate their female activists in electioneering through in house networking & organization</p> <p>14. Professional bodies should be encouraged to increase female membership i.e. in CBO, CCB, Trade union, etc</p> <p>15. Bureaucracy be professionally sensitized to adjust to their new roles & responsibilities under LGS</p> <p>16. Advocacy within house to integrate & professionally support their women colleagues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECP • ECP • ECP • ECP • NRB • Political parties • Political parties • Political parties • Political Parties • CSO, corporate social interventions • NRB, Federal & Provincial govt. through their training institute • District Nazim

S. No.	Issue	Recommendations	Responsibility
		<p>17. Capacity building of women in a continuous manner during their tenure of LG system. This should be close to their homes, at flexible time and in local dialect by involving local CBOs & colleges</p> <p>18. Training & awareness raising of women councilors to utilize the council session as an opportunity of having market access for promoting cottage industry for opening new economic gains.</p> <p>19. Capacity building of councilors to raise and pursue policy decision on issues of violence against women, HR violation and child labor</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dist. Govt., NRB, in collaboration with Donors, MOWD, MOE ● SMEDA, Dist. Govt., Donors, NGOs ● Donors, NGOs

Epilogue

Using the word "Democracy" or "democratic processes" does not automatically translate into the "user friendly governance mechanism" rather it needs to be designed, tested, applied and continuously improvised as per ground realities. It takes an impact assessment and vigilant monitoring for it to qualify to be stable and delivering.

Under military government initiated agenda of good governance, Devolution plan was the first step to this direction. The present system deserves appreciation for promoting the concepts of participatory development, monitoring, supervision, transparency and accountability and above all recognizing women's political equity. The LG system is showing the signs of being accepted at the grass roots level. It has so far withered many a storm and survived. It is gaining momentum and recognition for which its next election and LG performance will be crucial to its strength.

On the other hand, first tenure highlights shortcomings of a policy prepared and implemented in haste without being a pilot testing which led frictional implementation. It has introduced a new paradigm of social development with an old mindset of all stakeholders. The system is "non party based" yet the district governments leadership- Nazims - are clearly party aligned which affects women the most who are novice in the political arena with pressure of changing or adopting new political loyalties. Nazim's indirect election adds to this fire as s/he has an independent axis than the one, which orbits the council, as s/he is not member of the house. Despite being a "non party based" system local governments are being projected as the "cue master" for political parties for provincial and national election which cast shadow on its transparency concepts.

The system is having acceptance problem from politicians and bureaucracy. The unsettled issue of provincial autonomy, fiscal decentralization and National Finance Commission²⁴ (NFC) leaves much to be desired and delivered especially for women who automatically have been pushed low in priority except being show cased.

The LGO lacks the systematic linkages, synchronization and co-ordination among different tiers of LG, provincial government and the relationship with Members of Provincial Assembly (MPA), and federal government and their relationship with Members of National Assembly (MNA). This has created a tug of war of jurisdictions, roles & responsibilities among them. This obstructs the upward socio-political mobility for women, the most and subsequently co-ordination for development. The essence of LG has been undermined by allocation of special development funds to each MPA & MNA i.e. PKR 5 million and 10 million, respectively, which they want to use for sewage and roads – a job of LG – rather than focusing on legislative work. The system failed to link up to Provincial and National level legislature in terms of a feeder for legislation.

The non-functioning of LG committees also remained a bottleneck as women members could have gained exposure & experience of council working. The gendered culture of politics coupled with monopolistic feudal attitude still dominates the system making it a tough battleground for women despite having legislative affirmative support with them.

²⁴ NFC is the highest government body to decide the sharing of revenues between federal and provincial governments. The similar set up is at the provincial level called PFC

Social respect and recognition has elevated women councilors yet their families have been subjected to social and political pressures of varying degrees in pre and post election time frame from their clan, local political elite and religious factions ranging from being singled out to by signing pacts to ban women's political participation.

Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) could not come up to its expectation of neutrality and independence as it failed in 2000-2001 and during by-election in 2004 to stop such illegal accords despite being reported through CSO & media. ECP has a tainted complaint resolution mechanism and there are no powers with their District level representative to take action on the spot.

NRB needs a well designed, customized and continued advocacy plans for coalition building among stakeholders to bring policy change and effect socio cultural behavioral changes processes which is must for success of any system promoting equality, equity and representation. The government through NRB and otherwise must resort to the option of research based policymaking and review. The contribution of the civil society in policy advocacy needs to be integrated into a public – private partnership, which is crucial for the success of local government system.

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

COAS	Chief of Armed Services
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DG	District Government
DP 2000	Devolution Plan 2000
ECP	Election Commission Of Pakistan
LFO	Legal Framework Ordinance
LG	Local Government
LGE	Local Government Election
LGO	Local Government Ordinance
LGS	Local Government System
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOWD	Ministry of women Development, Social Welfare & Special Education
NA	National Assembly
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
PA	Provincial Assembly
PG	Provincial Government
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
SMEDA	Small & Medium Entrepreneur Development Agency
TC	Tehsil Council
UC	Union Council