



# PAKISTAN: GENDER RESPONSIVE LAWS, POLICIES AND ACTIVISM FOR WOMENS EMPOWERMENT

by

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# PAKISTAN: WOMENS EMPOWERMENT

- **Empowerment paradigm:** women exercise voice & agency to transform unequal power relations between men & women.
- **Concept:** Womens empowerment holistic
- **Scope:** Multifaceted social, economic and political dimensions are mutually re-enforcing



# Women & Girls the first to be harmed, last to be heard



## Pakistan Setting:

- Engulfed in a bitter war against terror
- 2<sup>nd</sup> last on WEF Global Gender Gap Index 2014

## Good News:



*Pakistani women & girls though victims are proven agents of change*



# 2002-2012 Legal Empowerment.....

## Break through years

**2002:** Constitutional amendment provides representation in all three tiers of democracy (17% to 33%)

**2006:** Legal tyranny of discriminatory laws first to go. Protection of Women Act amended two Hudood Ordinances.

*Unprecedented in Pakistan's legislative history, Seven positive and progressive laws for women enacted in seven years*



## 2013 +: Women friendly political governance sustained after 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment

**Example:** Fair Representation of Womens Act 2014 landmark law of Punjab Government, seeks to achieve substantive women's equality by breaking tokenism.

- 66 laws amended to provided atleast 33% women members of all Boards of statutory organizations, public sector organizations and committees.
- This Law is complimented with Empowerment Packages in Punjab Government, Policy, Development Plan and Annual Budget



# 2002-2012 Legal Empowerment.....

## Break through years                      Contd...

### **Crucial Factor behind legislative Activism:**

- Critical mass of women in parliament
- Strong inputs from women activist organizations

### **Take Home Message:**

Sustained linkages between political actors, women in government and NGO groups successfully establish an advocacy lobby/pressure group for women related legislation



# Making Political Empowerment Work in Democracy

## Interface of Laws-Policy-Institutional Measures. Some Empowering Initiatives:

- First Women Bank
- BISP (Benazir Income Support Programme)
- GRAP (Gender Reform Action Plan)
- Comprehensive Womens Development Policy
- Womens Police Stations
- Community Trained Midwives & LHWs
- Micro-Finance Policy
- NCSW
- WPC
- OWPP



# Reform Spaces Are Widened with Every Sacrifice



These women enable other, particularly women & girls to breath deeply in an environment that can suffocate the spirit





# Self Critique

## Needed Priorities: Domestic Violence, Education, Gender Based Budgeting

**Gender Based Budgeting:** Time to introduce GBB for mainstreaming gender and assess impact of fiscal measures on gender equality. GRAP has equipped federal & provincial governments to introduce GBB

**Violence Against Women:** Women/Girls must have social space free of violence & fear.

**Public Domain:** Protection Against Harassment of Women in the Workplace Act 2010: This enacted law is one of the few which is being implemented because implementation mechanisms are incorporated in the law.



# Self Critique

**Needed Priorities: Domestic Violence, Education Gender Based Budgeting Cond...**

*Domestic Domain:* The Domestic Violence Bill was passed by the National Assembly in 2011. It criminalized all forms of domestic violence. It felt through the cracks, never to become law due to religious extremism.

*We know domestic violence is the most pervasive form of violence in Pakistan. We know we must never give up!!*

## **Two important initiatives:**

1. Call for National Policy on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls
2. The support for national law on Domestic Violence because it addresses international commitments of Pakistan under CEDAW & UNHRD etc



# Self Critique

**Needed Priorities: Domestic Violence,  
Education Gender Based Budgeting Cond...**

## **Universal Education:**

- The Constitution pronounces education is a right
- Education Policies are sound
- Women & Girls are a priority with affirmative action

**Facts:** Education is in patters

- Though budgets have increased UNESCO Reports Pakistan has the second higher number of children out of school:

**Facts:** 4.5 m girls out of school; 33.8% girls primary completion rate; 49.5 million adults illiterate, 2/3<sup>rd</sup> women

**Diagnosis: CORRUPTION & MISMANAGEMENT**

**Accountability needed: Devolve education to  
district level local government institution**



# My Concerns:

We troopers are in a rough sea of archaic customs/sexist prejudices & misogynist norms

**Parliamentary space and economic betterment are not enough.....**

- We need to spread our wings by moving into the wider political arena of democracy and move beyond parliament
- Apply the new indicator of women's empowerment which is Gender Empowering Enabling Environment (GEEE)
- The justice system must work for women
- Strengthen inclusive democracy by focusing on participatory approaches through local government



# Womens empowerment a process, will be strengthened by co-ordinated & sustained institutional activism

**But** – The starting point is each one of us. Agency, the ability to make decisions about ones own life comes from within us



**Life is a state of mind:**

**A gift** --- accept it

**Sorrow** – overcome it

**Duty** – perform it;

**Song** – enjoy it; **Beauty** – praise it;



**LIFE IS IN OUR OWN HANDS AND WHAT WE MAKE OF IT**