

GENDER ELECTION MONITORING MISSION PAKISTAN

General National Assembly Election

11 May 2013



Final Report



Report and comments: Sabra Bano and Magda de Meyer

Content contributions: Katharina Stöckli and Melissa Vargas

Cover photo : Klaudyna Mikolajczyk: Polling station in Karachi, Pakistan

Report issued by: Gender Concerns International; Matt Luna, editor

GENDER ELECTION MONITORING MISSION PAKISTAN

*A country that listens
to the voice of its women,
listens to its future!*



Contents

Foreword	1
1. <u>Introduction</u>	2
1.1 Planning for the mission	2
1.2 The Gender Election Monitoring team	3
1.3 Deployment map	4
1.4 Political background	4
1.5 Political participation of women	6
1.6 Mission objectives	8
1.7 Political context	9
1.8 Aurat Foundation, partner organization	9
1.9 National and international legislative framework	9
1.10 Political system in Pakistan	10
1.11 Women's Parliamentary Caucus	10
1.12 Positive discriminatory measures	10
1.13 Political entities	12
1.14 The Election Commission of Pakistan	12
1.15 Gender imbalance within the ECP	13
1.16 Positive signs: promotion of women as candidates and voters by the ECP	13
1.17 Women as voters	14
1.18 Women as candidates	15
1.19 Political party nominations	15
1.20 Candidates validated by ECP	16
1.21 Voter education	17
2. <u>Observations</u>	18
2.1 Election Day	18
2.2 Security	19
2.3 Campaigning	20
2.4 Access to polling stations	20
2.5 Conditions at polling stations	22
2.6 Assistance and voter education	23
2.7 Polling staff	24
2.8 Presence of media / observers	25
2.9 Gender-disaggregated voter turnout.....	26
2.10 Share of power	27
2.11 Women member of the National Assembly	28
3. <u>Recommendations</u>	29
3.1 Political parties	29
3.2 The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP)	29
3.3 Voter education	30
3.4 Observers.....	30
3.5 Media	30
Annex 1: GEM Observers	31
Annex 2: Media coverage of the GEM mission	32
Annex 3: GEM Press Releases from Gender Concerns International	45

Foreword

Gender Concerns International is pleased to present the Gender Election Monitoring Mission Report: Pakistan 2013. The information, observations and recommendations in this document were made possible by the dedicated work of our team of international and domestic observers in partnership with Aurat Foundation of Pakistan. Our Gender Elections Monitoring (GEM) team observed 555 polling stations across Pakistan to document the inclusion of women as voters and candidates in Pakistan's National Assembly elections. We would like to congratulate the Election Commission of Pakistan on its achievements in smoothly facilitating election processes.

A knowledge base for mission implementation and training programmes has been built through the experience of previous GEM Missions in Libya (2012), Morocco (2011) and Tunisia (2011). The successful completion of this GEM Mission Pakistan 2013 had a special meaning to us because it was the first follow-up mission of the previous – and first ever – Pakistan GEM Mission in 2008. It is important to note that we also planned to include the province of Balochistan in our election monitoring this year, but that was not possible because of evolving security concerns.

Gender Concerns International's GEM Mission programme is a unique initiative because unlike other international election monitoring missions, our teams focus solely on women's actual democratic participation and their influences on decision-making processes. It is the only international mission that has trained local women across Pakistan in election monitoring from a distinctly gender perspective and integrated them into a unified team of observers. Our GEM missions work with established women's and civil society organisations to mobilise women, and then foster their participation before, during and after elections – as equal citizens of their own country.

I would like to extend my most sincere gratitude to all of the individuals and organisations who worked so hard to make the GEM Mission Pakistan 2013 not only possible, but also a success:

Anis Haroon, board of governors member at Aurat Foundation, endorsed the initial idea of GEM Pakistan 2013 and our partnership prospects with Aurat Foundation. Naeem Mira, Chief Operating Officer of Aurat Foundation, provided constant support and guidance that were key to this mission's success. Ms. Farkhanda Aurangzaib, Aurat Foundation's Chief Coordinator, displayed dedication in ensuring that the mission was effective in reaching throughout the country. And, the heads of five regional offices and their teams were catalysts for observing elections.

A very warm thanks also goes to all international and domestic observers, the communication department at Aurat Foundation, Gender Concerns International's teams in The Hague and Pakistan, as well as all of those who have inspired and supported this mission. Much appreciation is due to our deputy head of mission, Magda de Meyer, who helped connect all elements of success.

Women are powerful catalysts for positive change and democratic development. Working together with our partners on Gender Election Monitoring Missions helps women's voices to be heard, and builds opportunities for future initiatives to further support these voices. It is with pride in our accomplishments so far, and optimism for the future of women's rights around the world, that I share our findings in this report.

Sabra Bano, Head of Gender Election Monitoring Mission Pakistan 2013

1.0 Introductions

1.1 Planning for the mission

In the assessment mission of March 2013, Director Sabra Bano of Gender Concerns International concluded from a situation analysis that uncertainty surrounding the free and fair democratic participation of women raised the importance of observing the Pakistan elections of the National Assemblies from a gender perspective. The assessment mission also concluded that the role of women of Pakistan in the democratic process of their country could not be underestimated, and must be supported.



A deep and sustainable cooperation between Gender Concerns International (GCI) and its Pakistani partner organisation, Aurat Foundation, was established during the preparatory visit, resulting in the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between Ms. Bano and Mr. Naeem Mirza, the Chief Operating Officer of Aurat Foundation.

Aurat Foundation was involved in all stages of the GEM Mission from planning and implementation, to its successful conclusion. Working together with Aurat Foundation on the GEM Mission increased the sustainability of the mission and contributed to the development of the local capacities.

1.2 The Gender Election Monitoring team (GEM)

The all-woman GEM team comprised 110 national observers and 10 international observers. Aurat Foundation's regional offices in Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, Quetta and Islamabad assisted in the selection of national observers.

An intensive training course was held in Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad by international women's training experts for the Election Observers. The capacity enhancement training workshop for observers included:

- Introduction to principles of democratic, free and fair elections
- Electoral system of Pakistan
- Role of media
- Methodology for election observation.

The aim was to increase the ability of the domestic GEM observers to effectively monitor elections from a gender perspective, and build their knowledge of gender-inclusive democratic governance.



After the training session, a multi-stakeholder round-table meeting was organised to reach an understanding on the outcome of the GEM Mission and to seek the guidance of national experts. Representatives of the partner organisation, Khawar Mumtaz, the chairperson of the National Commission on the Status of Women in Pakistan, national human and women's rights activists, and other representatives of the international community were invited to attend the round-table. The discussion created an opportunity to share views and expertise regarding the current state of women in Pakistan in general and their participation during elections in particular. A press conference followed the round-table meeting.



In order to ensure that the mission was non-discriminatory and inclusive during the selection of national and international GEM observers, it was kept in mind that the participants for the capacity-enhancement training workshop should be from a more varied range in terms of women's experience, education and age – so that unique and varied perspectives could be gained through this process.

On May 11, 2013, Pakistan's Election Day, the GEM team was deployed to 555 polling stations across the country to monitor elections with a gender lens at various cities including Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar, Swabi, Kohat, Swat, Abbottabad, Mardan, Lower Dir, Hyderabad, Thatta, Sargodha, Bhakkar, Vehari and Gujranwala.

1.3 Deployment map



1.4 Political background

The preamble of Pakistan's constitution enshrines democratic principles and guarantees fundamental rights of all citizens. Under Pakistan's Ordinance, women were granted suffrage in 1947, and it was reaffirmed in national elections 1956 under the interim Constitution. Despite no legal restraints to women's political participation for more than 60 years, women in Pakistan still face social, economic and political obstacles, and discrimination that prevent them from exercising their political rights as voters, candidates, and election administrators.

Pakistan is going through serious unrest that is the result of a number of interrelated factors such as domestic terrorism, economic slowdown, and shortages of energy and water – combined with political instability in less-developed provinces and other areas of the country.

Pakistan's political history can be labelled anything but stable. Since its creation, the country has struggled to reach a consensus constitutional framework. The first constitution was not enacted

until about nine years after independence. Even then, the debate on the structure of the government and the system of governance remained a central topic.

The first constitution was promulgated in 1956, but the military takeover of 1958 heralded the end of the brief life of the 1956 constitution. Pakistan saw another constitution in 1962 prepared to suit the requirements of the military government. This too did not survive for long and another martial law was imposed in 1969, resulting in end of the 1962 Constitution. After the 1971 separation of East Pakistan, a new national consensus was reached in 1973.

At the heart of the political tension is the struggle between the civilian governments and the military establishment. Similarly, the constitutional struggle in Pakistan has been the division of power between the president and the prime minister, where the system has been oscillating between presidential and parliamentary systems of governance.

Since the adoption of the 18th and 20th Constitutional Amendments, the Election Commission Pakistan (ECP) has become autonomous with more constitutional authority as well as responsibility. There has been focus on the independent elections commission to hold free, fair and transparent elections for the National Assembly in 2013.

One of the major reasons for the high importance attached to the May 2013 Elections is that it was the first full-term transition of a democratic government in Pakistan's 65-year history. The newly constituted ECP with its enhanced role and independence, together with the vigilant judiciary, independent media, and new entrants in the political arena – made the elections different from any election in the past.

The need to have **gender disaggregated data** for all the stages of the electoral processes has also been a long-standing demand from the range of electoral and political stakeholders. Women constitute more than 48% of the population of Pakistan, but this percentage did not correspond to the number of registered women voters for a range of reasons, including not having a CNIC (identity card). In national and international electoral and political analysis, it is argued that women did not equally participate in electoral processes. However no empirical evidence existed to substantiate the argument, as the ECP did not collect any data of the casted votes to put forth a gender-disaggregated voter turnout.

The forms of the ECP were all gender-blind as they did not have the provision to record the distribution and collection of gender-disaggregated data – especially for votes cast per-polling station and constituencies that upon consolidation contributed to overall voter turnout.

One of the major achievements of the 2013 elections was the amendment of several forms for collection of gender-disaggregated voter turnout all the way down to the polling station level.

1.5 Political participation of women

A gender-sensitive approach to monitoring elections is important because it raises the awareness that even if political and legal mechanisms for equal rights of women are in place, there is no guarantee of women's equal access and full participation in democratic processes. Consequently, women's political participation remains lower than their male counterparts. Various issues and challenges restrict the advancement and empowerment of women in Pakistan:

1. Despite the Constitution of Pakistan guaranteeing dignity, freedom and equality to all citizens, women remain marginalised in political participation both in terms of holding public offices and voting due to predominant patriarchal patterns of society. They are disenfranchised at various levels especially through under-registration in electoral rolls, and encounter opposition while trying to vote, which shows disparity.
2. Women in remote and tribal areas are dependent on men for information and other basic civil rights such as the issuance of a National Identity Card. They are routinely prevented from exercising their right to vote by their families, tribes, clans, local and religious leaders. At times they are bound by engineered mutual agreements between rival candidates, political parties and tribal influential.
3. Physical threats on the premise that voting by women is contrary to their socio-cultural values contribute to a low turnout of female voters. Although there are penalties and legal redress for such acts, no action has been taken against the perpetrators despite the outcry from national and international agencies. Lack of political will and absence of effective affirmative action allow such disparities and injustices to flourish.
4. Inaccurate voters' list and poorly managed polling stations are main factors in disenfranchising women.
5. Wide-spread electoral fraud erodes democratic development, political stability and the rule of law. Pakistan is in urgent need of electoral reforms, with various aspects that require attention. It is crucial that stakeholders turn their attention to reforming a weak electoral system in order to support national stability.
6. Polling procedures and codes of conduct are often disregarded without consequences for the offenders. Women often face the brunt of this disregard more than men – e.g. disenfranchising women through mutual agreements between contesting candidates.
7. The Election Commission of Pakistan is responsible for overseeing credible elections. Orderly political transaction has at times been compromised as the ECP faces a lack of resources and challenges in management, affecting its capacity to research and analyse past elections to raise important electoral issues relating to women voters and participation.
8. There are separate women's polling stations and separate polling booths for women at combined polling stations, and varied systems of gender-disaggregated data collected by the ECP have resulted in a lack of a comprehensive analysis of women's voting trends.

The appointment of women to political positions cannot automatically be seen as an indicator of overall empowerment of women in the public and private sphere. Therefore, there is no cogent equation between the arrival of women into political office and an overall higher level of gender equality. But, it is beyond question that substantive women's political participation facilitates the advancement of women's interests, alliances, and women's ability to effectively influence policy and secure the implementation of gender-inclusive governance.

In Pakistan, lack of education, party patronage, weak political will to promote women politicians, cultural and/or religious constraints, family or community pressure, and inadequate financial means prevent women from emerging as prominent political decision-makers who are able to exercise power. Most of the women involved in higher politics either represent influential feudal land-owning families, or come from the political elite and thereby benefit from a strong family backing. This intermingling of family and community ties, party politics and economic factors makes it nearly impossible for women to gain political influence and stand for a general seat without powerful family backing and financing. The same conditions and limitations often also apply to male politicians in Pakistan, but the political system is still male-dominated and led. Male leaders mediate the access to privileges and influential political decision-making positions. The highly personalised leadership system based on family dynasties may contribute to fewer democratic principles in political parties of the country.



1.6 Mission objectives

Women are catalysts for change, and core women's organisations need respect, recognition and resources to bring about this change. Gender Election Monitoring missions support women's participation in democratic processes and promote the vision of a gender-balanced society, so that women are able to hold key decision-making positions and acquire leadership expertise.

Gender Concerns International's GEM missions help women increase their capacities to participate in politics – as voters, potential candidates and administrators. Through this mission, women from Pakistan attained skills and experience in election monitoring, imparting them with greater knowledge of democratic and gender-responsive governance.

Relevant actions concerning women's human rights have been established with the overall aim of empowering women's active participation at all levels of governmental decision-making. Women's perspectives can therefore be taken into greater account – a benefit of these international norms that help allow lobbying and advocacy at international, national and local levels. A state's gender-biased political and social order produces and reproduces unequal power relations that perpetuate discrimination. Engendering of the state structures implies not only the formal recognition of international norms, but also the implementation of these political commitments into effective policies. Implementation, institutionalisation and internalisation of these norms into a local setting require a critical gender analysis during the state's transition to democracy. GEM missions strive to provide this critical gender analysis, by monitoring elections from a gender perspective and providing the newly-elected government with solid recommendations on how to ensure gender inclusive governance.

It is clear that the importance of the role of women in Pakistan in the democratic process cannot be underestimated, and must be supported. This is a key factor why monitoring elections from a gender perspective is vital in the country. A comprehensive approach to delivering this support aims to build the capacities of women in Pakistan as agents of political change, as women leaders in politics and civil society.

In short, the main objectives of the GEM mission are:

1. To increase women's political participation and highlight the importance for the new government to address women's interests and incorporate them into the new political agenda, policies and laws.
2. To promote a more sustainable and peaceful democracy by contributing to a transparent and fair electoral process that respects the rule of law and human rights for women.
3. To build the capacity of women's and civil society organisations and provide them with the tools to monitor elections, design campaigns for women's political participation and advocate for their rights on the new political agenda.
4. To provide a new audience with gender-neutral language and gender-sensitive information regarding the elections in the country.

1.7 Political context

The general elections of May 11, 2013 were unique in the sense that it was the first time in the nation's history that a civilian government had carried out its full term and peacefully handed over power to another civilian government.

The assassination of Benazir Bhutto in December 2007 shocked the people of Pakistan, and an ensuing sense of chaos was felt around the country. In the February 2008 elections, Ms. Bhutto's political party known as the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), emerged as the strongest political force and rebuilt the government. Despite the chaotic events prior to the elections, the 2008-2013 legislature period maintained civilian and democratic governance structure. Women held key parliamentary positions. Dr. Fehmida Mirza was elected as the first woman Speaker of the National Assembly. Women also gained high-level positions in the federal cabinet: Hina Rabbani Khar was appointed as the first woman foreign minister of Pakistan. Women in Parliament have been active as legislators in the General Assembly, and their accomplishments include enactment of a range of legislations. During the tenure of the previous government, there were a total of 93 Acts of the Parliament, out of which 6 were for women in particular. The women parliamentarians also worked on the introduction of bills against domestic violence, trafficking of women, and bills pertaining to women's reproductive rights.

1.8 Aurat Foundation, partner organisation

Aurat Publication and Information Service Foundation is a civil society organisation that was formed in 1986 in Pakistan. The organisation aims to create a socially just, democratic, and humane society in the country through women's empowerment and citizen participation in governance. In recent years, the organisation has been recognised as one of the leading institutions for enhancing the economic and political status of women in Pakistan. The Aurat Foundation is working to raise women's political participation through strengthening civil society at the grass-roots level to advocate affirmative Legislation and Policies for Women¹.

1.9 National and international legislative (general) framework

The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan guarantees fundamental rights, including political rights, for all citizens of Pakistan. And Article 25 of the constitution explicitly affirms the equality of all citizens as a guiding principle of the Republic:

Art. 25: "Equality of citizens. (1) All citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law.(2) There shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex 10. (3) Nothing in this Article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for the protection of women and children".²

¹ <http://www.af.org.pk/about.php>

² <http://www.pakistani.org/pakistan/constitution/part2.ch1.html>

Pakistan has committed to international legal obligations with the adoption of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948) and the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979) as well as the Convention on the Political Rights of Women (CPRW). The 2013 elections marked the country's first elections since Pakistan's ratification of the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) in 2010. ICCPR sets the international standard for elections and protects freedoms related to the elections, including the right "to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely choosing representatives" (Article 25) "...without discrimination on the basis of sex" (Article 2)³.

1.10 Political system

The Majlis-e-Shura is the federal and supreme legislative body of Pakistan's Parliament. It is bicameral and consists of the president, the National Assembly (the lower house) and the Senate (the upper house). The president is the head of the state, and the prime minister is the head of the government. On June 5, 2013, Nawaz Sharif of the National Muslim League was elected as prime minister for the third time.

1.11 Women's Parliamentary Caucus

The Women's Parliamentary Caucus was established after the elections of 2008 under the leadership of Dr. Fehmida Mirza, Speaker of the National Assembly. The Caucus is an important non-partisan platform for women parliamentarians to lobby and advocate for gender-inclusive governance as a tool to increase their influence, and to raise the awareness of women's policy concerns in the government.

In the previous legislature, women on reserved seats were active in challenging cultural and social norms through the introduction of legislation, such as bills against domestic violence, trafficking of women, and discriminatory practices⁴.

1.12 Positive discriminatory measures for the National Assembly

Affirmative action measures such as quotas, special trainings and recruitment helped in promoting and enhancing political participation and empowerment of women in high-level decision-making positions. Thereby reserved seats are considered to be an effective and sustainable mechanism to gain a more balanced representation of men and women in governmental bodies.

The National Assembly is the country's sovereign legislative body, and consists of 332 seats. Out of these 342 seats, 272 seats are allocated to directly elected members, and 60 are reserved for women and religious minorities. The electoral system for the National Assembly is based on single-member geographic constituencies in which members are elected by direct vote through a "first-past-the-post" system, also known as a simple majority.

³ <http://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%20999/volume-999-I-14668-English.pdf>

⁴ Aurat Foundation: Pakistan. NGO Alternative Report on CEDAW 2012. P. 49-59.

A gender quota of 17.5% of the seats in the National Assembly regulates the number of seats reserved for women⁵. Article 51, clause 47a, Representation of the Peoples Act from 1976, in Pakistan's Constitution, describes how the procedure for reserved seats for women is determined:

1. Political parties file their lists of candidates in order of priority for seats reserved for women within the period fixed by the Election Commission for submission of nomination papers with the Chief Election Commissioner or, as he may direct, with the Provincial Election Commissioner concerned⁶.
2. After the results for general seats are finalised, reserved women's seats are distributed to parties relative to the number of general seats secured in each of the provinces⁷.
3. For the reserved seats, both women and non-Muslims are picked from closed party lists.
4. "In" candidates can only run for general seats and not for any of the women's or non-Muslim seats.

According to Article 51, the seats of the National Assembly are distributed as follows:

Province	General seats	Women	Non-Muslim	Total
Balochistan	14	3	–	17
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province	35	8	–	43
Punjab	148	35	–	183
Sindh	61	14	–	75
Federally Administered Tribal Areas	12	–	–	12
The Federal Capital	2	–	–	2
Total	272	60	10	342

Quotas cannot guarantee a gender perspective in the political decision-making, but quotas can bring in a critical mass of women into governance structures. The presence of women in the government is essential to removing traditional gender stereotypes, as women actively participate in a male-dominated sphere. Although it can be understood as a commitment to ensure a more equal participation of women in political spheres – as expressed in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action – this affirmative first step has not been translated into further measures to overcome patriarchal male-dominated power structures. As long as these structures exist, equal access to and full participation at all levels of decision-making cannot be realised.

⁵ "Legal Framework Order 2002": At least 33% for female representatives was demanded, but in the LFO 17.5% has been set, which is three times higher than the previous reserved seats for women. <http://www.wpcp.org.pk/wpcp/SeventhPhases.aspx>

⁶ Representation of the Peoples Act 47A. <http://ecp.gov.pk/ElectionLaws/Volume-I.pdf>

⁷ <http://www.pakistani.org/pakistan/constitution/part3.ch2.html>

Highlights of the quota system:

Although the quota system with reserved seats ensures a minimum representation of women, it also contains negative components:

Political parties act as gatekeepers to women's political participation, and they control the promotion of women into decision-making roles within the parties and the government.

Reserved seat holders are not directly elected, and therefore not bound to a constituency. Without their own support through the political base, women remain dependent on political parties and are less able to interact at the grass-roots level. They therefore have fewer opportunities to practice and develop their political skills and capacities.

Since these women parliamentarians are not directly elected by the people, there is consequently a lack of democratic legitimacy. To ensure democracy and women's representation, women must be chosen by the people and for the people. PTI Chairman Imran Khan suggests holding a special election specifically for women's reserved seats, instead of women taking the reserved seats based on nomination lists⁸.

Women's political survival depends upon their loyalty to the party which selects them and they are often unwilling or unable to challenge the male party hierarchy, the party leaders and their policy.

The system of assigning reserved seats to political parties is also a way of boosting government majorities.

1.13 Political entities in Pakistan

Pakistan is a multi-party democracy. The Election Commission of Pakistan has validated a total of 105 political parties for the General Elections 2013. Most of the political parties have regional strongholds, and their candidates only contested in respective regions. More than three-fourths of the parties had no woman candidate contesting any NA seats.

The major parties in Pakistan are: Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz (PML – N), the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Pakistan Tehreek – e – Insaf (PTI), Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), Jamiat Ulema – e – Islam (JUI), Awami National Party (ANP) and the Jamaat – e – Islami (JI).

1.14 The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP)

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) is an independent and autonomous constitutional body, responsible for holding free and fair elections in Pakistan. Article 218 of the Constitution assigns the ECP the duty of organising and conducting elections⁹.

⁸<http://www.insaf.pk/News/tabid/60/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/14351/I-am-in-favour-of-reserved-seats-for-women-but-instead-of-nominations-on-lists-should-be-directly-elected-Imran-Khan.aspx>

⁹ Election Commission of Pakistan: Information Kit. 2003, p. 7; <http://ecp.gov.pk/sp/introduction.html>

1.15 Gender imbalance within the ECP

There is a distinct gender imbalance within the ECP. This has been acknowledged and addressed in their Five-Year Strategic Plan. In this plan, the ECP stresses the aim to increase the representation of eligible women within the ECP to at least 10%¹⁰. In the months leading up to May 2013 elections, the ECP recruited 31 new women employees at various levels, which brought the total number of female staff to 42. Despite this progress, women still account for only 1.8 percent of the ECP's 2,288 employees, and at lower or clerical positions. No women have been hired in senior management positions¹¹.

1.16 Positive signs: promotion of women as candidates and voters by the ECP

The ECP has included several notable provisions relating to women in the Code of Conduct for political parties and candidates. The code states:

Political parties contesting candidates and their supporters shall not propagate against the participation of any person in the elections on the basis of gender.

The political parties, contesting candidates and their supporters or other persons shall not encourage or enter into formal or informal agreement/arrangement/understanding barring women from becoming a candidate for an election or exercising their right of vote in an election. The Political Parties shall encourage the women to participate in election process.

(24) The Political Parties shall endeavour to provide equal opportunity to qualified members, both men and women, to participate in electoral process¹².

In September 2012, the ECP proposed a bill that suggested to declare elections null and void and made recommendations to "re-poll polling station(s) where less than 10% of the women votes were polled, so as to increase the number of women participating in the electoral process, and to prevent groups/parties from entering into an agreements that would restrain women from a particular area or a polling station from exercising their right to vote."¹³ The ECP sent the proposed bill to the Ministry of Law which forwarded it to Parliament for legislation. The bill was not approved. Nevertheless, the ECP holds the power to cancel elections in any constituency if the fundamental principle of free and fair voting is violated. The prevention of women from casting their vote would be a clear violation of this right, which is enshrined in the constitution.

¹⁰ Strategic Goal 7, objective: "The ECP has set the objective to increase representation of eligible women to its jobs to at least 10%." <http://ecp.gov.pk/sp/goals-objectives.html>

¹¹ IFES: The Election Commission of Pakistan. Fact Sheet.

¹² <http://ecp.gov.pk/ViewPressReleaseNotificDetail.aspx?ID=1841&TypeID=1>

¹³ <http://ecp.gov.pk/ViewPressReleaseNotificDetail.aspx?ID=1690&TypeID=0>

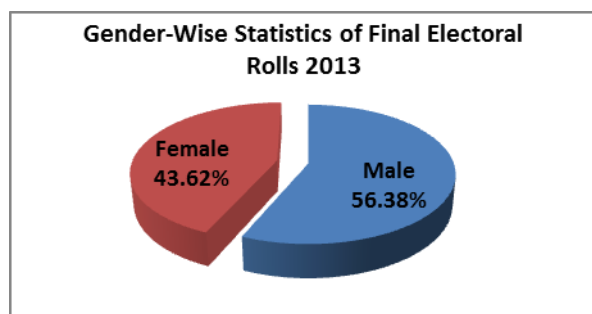
1.17 Women as voters

All citizens of Pakistan, regardless of gender, religion or ethnicity, are eligible to vote if they meet the following criteria:

1. A citizen of Pakistan
2. At least 18 years of age
3. Possess a National Identity Card issued by NADRA (National Database and Registration Authority)
4. Not declared to be of unsound mind by a competent court
5. A resident in the electoral area. A voter is considered a resident if he/she resides in or owns a house or any other real-estate property in that electoral area¹⁴.

An analysis of the 2008 General Election data indicated that there were 564 women's polling stations around the country in which no women voted. Cultural and traditional perceptions were identified as the main reasons for barring women from casting their votes. Journalists and active members of civil society groups revealed that agreements among political parties, candidates, and local leaders were made to block women from voting. In some cases, the ECP did not establish the women's polling stations because of local pressure.

Most of these 2008 female polling stations with 0% female turnout (478, or 84.8%) were in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa (KP). Thirty-one were in Punjab (5.5%), 11 were in Sindh (2.0%) and one was in Islamabad (0.2%). Another 20 electoral areas with 0% female voting were in Balochistan (3.5%), and 23 were in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) (4.1%).

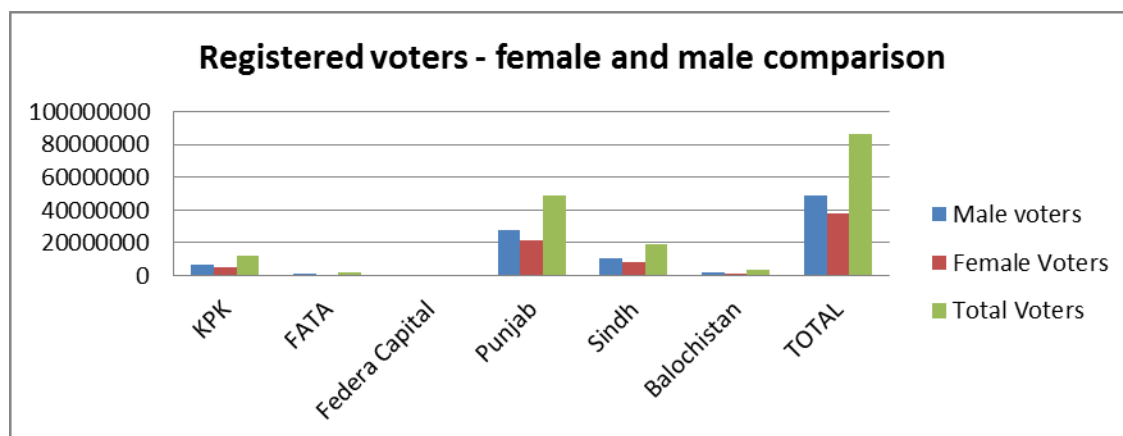


Women represented 43.6% of registered voters for the 2013 General Elections: 37.6 million women were registered to vote nationwide, compared to 48.6 million men.

The percentage of women voters was lowest in FATA, with 34.4% female registration (0.59 million women), compared to 1.1 million men. The highest was in Islamabad, with 46% female registration. The percentage of women registered as voters in each province was 42.6% in Balochistan, 42.9% in KP, 43.8% in Punjab and 44.7% in Sindh¹⁵.

¹⁴<http://www.ifes.org/~media/Files/Publications/White%20PaperReport/2013/IFES-PK%20Factsheet%20%20Women%20Minorities%20and%20Persons%20with%20Disabilities%20d15%202013-04-26%20en.pdf> <http://www.ecp.gov.pk/>

¹⁵ <http://www.ecp.gov.pk/>

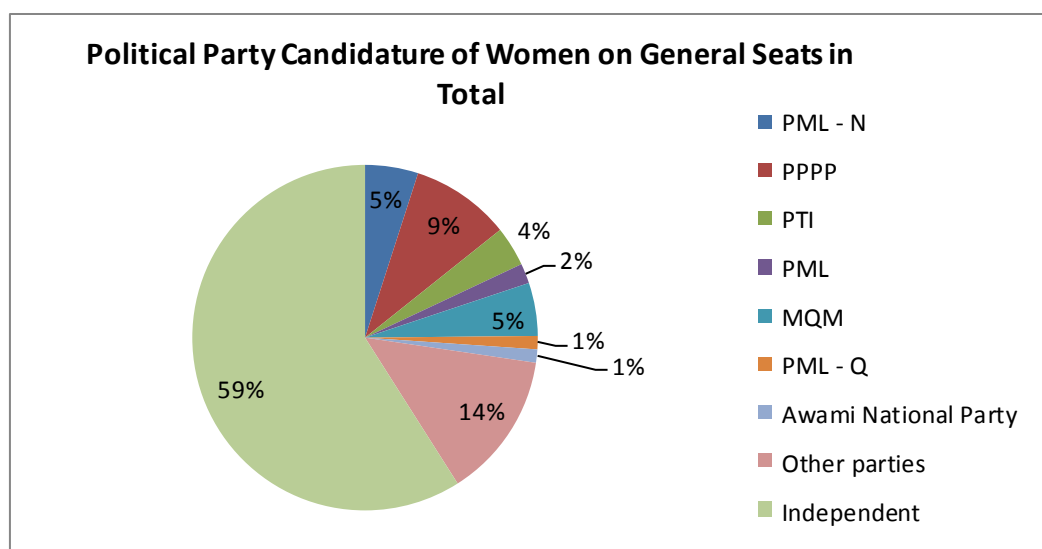


According to the ECP, 55% (compared to 44% in 2008) of the 86 million registered voters cast their votes in the General Elections of May 2013. Women's participation in the electoral process, both as candidates and voters, was reportedly higher than in the past¹⁶.

Women as candidates

1.18 Political party nominations

Female parliamentarians have been active in the 13th National Assembly by promoting discussions and introducing new bills. Yet despite their vivacious political engagement during the last five years, political parties issued very few party tickets to women candidates. Only 3.5% of the 6,819 candidates nominated by the parties were female, while 96.5% were male. The highest percentage of women nominations was seen in Punjab (4.6%) followed by Sindh (3.2%), Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) (2.7%) and KP (2.4%). In Balochistan and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA)/Frontier Regions (FRs), only 1.1% and 0.2% women candidates, respectively, were nominated¹⁷.



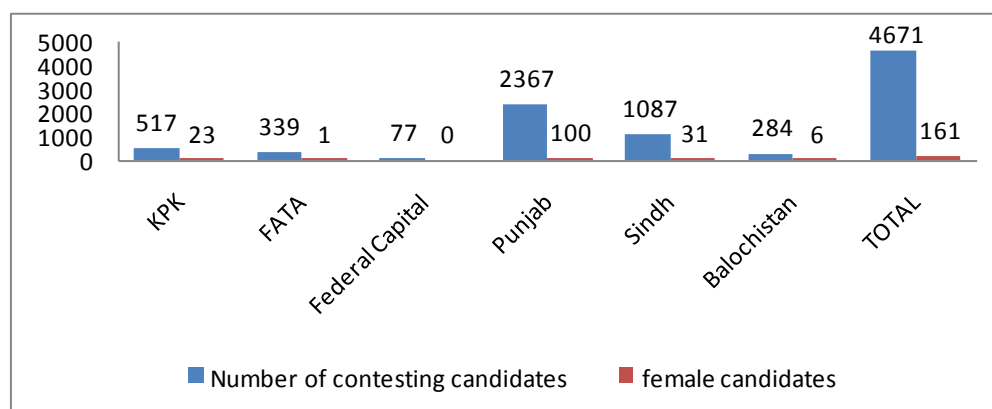
¹⁶ http://ecp.gov.pk/Misc/GE-2013-Graphs/02_na_turnout_comparison.png

¹⁷ FAFEN: Women and the 2013 General Elections

1.19 Candidates validated by the ECP

As of April 25, 2013, the ECP had published the final lists of validated candidates for the National Assembly (NA) in 258 out of 272 constituencies in all regions and provinces, with the exception of Balochistan. According to ECP summary data, a total of 4,671 candidates (161 female candidates = 3.4%) were contesting for NA seats, a 129.8% increase from 2008. But there was no significant increase – rather stagnation – in the number of women as candidates awarded with a party ticket¹⁸. The vast majority of female candidates were independent.

The provincial division was: 2,367 in Punjab (100 female candidates = 4.2%), 1,087 Sindh (31 women = 2.9%), 517 in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa (KP) (23 women = 4.4%), 339 in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) (1 female = 0.3%), 284 in Balochistan (6 women = 2.1%) and 77 in Islamabad (-)¹⁹.



¹⁸ <http://dawn.com/2013/04/21/number-of-women-candidates-not-rising/>

¹⁹ <http://ecp.gov.pk/Misc/ContestingCandidates/Contestingcandidates.pdf>

1.20 Voter education

Voter education is vital because of the basic information it provides: who is eligible to vote, where and how to register, how people can check voter lists to ensure that they are included, and what types of elections are being held. The public must also be informed of where, when and how to vote, who the candidates are and how to file complaints. In October 2012, the ECP announced that voter education was one of their top priorities for the 2013 elections, and that they had developed the first Voter Education Plan to be implemented in all districts.

The United Nations Department of Political Affairs (UNDP) played an important role in facilitating voter education. The main objective of the UNDP was to enable and support free and fair elections. As part of the Electoral Cycle Support for Elections Commission of Pakistan project, the UNDP prepared a voter education handbook, which was used by the ECP, civil society organisations, community mobilisers and advocates. The multiple initiatives conducted by civil society organisations were indispensable to voter outreach.

Some of the voter education programmes specifically targeted women, and various posters and leaflets were produced to encourage women's participation in the elections



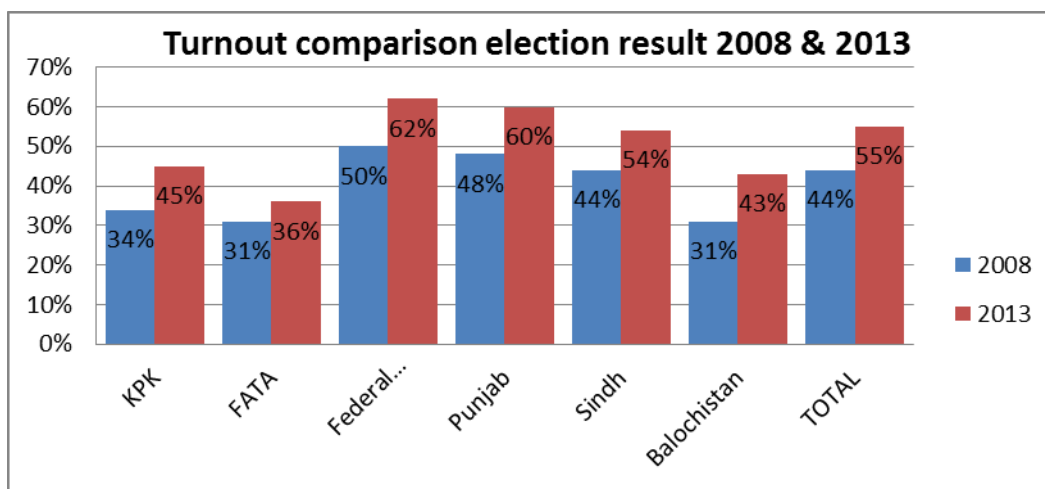
2.0 Observations

2.1 Election day

Despite violent pre-election threats and attacks, women of all ages ventured out to vote. The majority of women came accompanied by their families, neighbours or friends. Their enthusiastic determination to promote their political rights was overwhelming despite some common problems such as (but not limited to) long waiting times in which women stood in queues from the opening of the polling station until closing time, slow voting processes, polling station mismanagement and understaffing, missing or late-arrival of election staff and materials, small spaces and poor logistical facilities.

When the ECP extended voting time, women seized the opportunity to hurry to polling stations to cast their vote at the last moment. Some women voters also made great efforts to travel distances when they discovered they were not registered in a nearby polling station. In Sargodha, women voted for the first time in the history of union councils Lilliani and Moazamabad.

The elections also showed a clear demographic divide in the voting pattern, among semi-urban and urban areas, as most of the votes cast by women were in urban areas. Change has been slow to take root in the peri-urban and rural areas.



2.2 Security

Male security personnel were present at all the women's polling stations. Female security personnel were most prominently seen in Islamabad. Observers documented that women security personnel were present in less than 25% of the polling stations in Lahore and less than 10% in Karachi. Only one woman security officer was observed in Peshawar but none were seen in District Swat. The security personnel were not always aware of the exact procedures of polling and their duties. In some cases, problems arose when security personnel did not allow women with children to enter. And in some polling stations in Islamabad (for example, NA 48 Polling Station 72), observers were not allowed to enter the polling station.

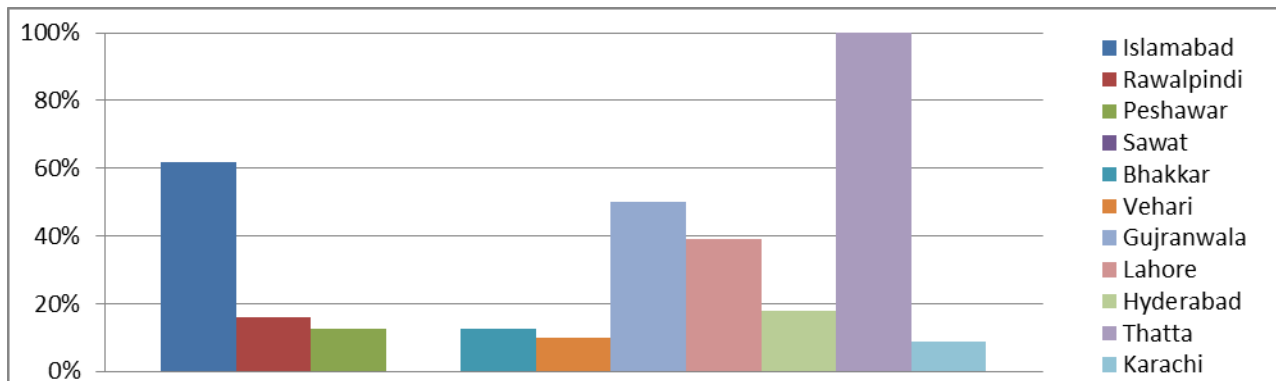


Figure: Percentage of polling stations observed with female security

Situations in some polling stations were chaotic and security personnel had difficulties restoring control: Lahore, Vehari, Gujranwala, Bhakkar, Swat, Hyderabad, Thatta and Karachi. It was witnessed in Swat that police restricted women from casting their vote. In Karachi, especially in NA 251, aerial gun firing, fighting and chaotic conditions deterred women from voting. Observers' reports revealed that in some polling stations army soldiers and rangers were deployed.



2.3 Campaigning

Campaigning actions and materials were seen in some polling stations across all observed areas, with posted party signs, campaign T-shirts, stickers and posters inside and outside the polling stations. And according to the ECP, transport to polling stations by parties was not allowed, but this was violated in a number of instances.

Observers witnessed that party members tried to influence women outside polling stations to cast their vote for their respective party. Party members attempted to restrict women casting their vote for the opposing candidate in Rawalpindi, Lahore, Peshawar, Swat, Hyderabad and Karachi. Tensions and fighting between party members were common, and unauthorised party members were seen inside the polling stations. And in some polling stations, political agents interfered in voting procedures and took over the organisation. In Kacha Killa polling station in Hyderabad, for example, it was reported that no other agents of political parties were present except MQM. At this station, the ballot boxes were open and four polling officers were absent. MQM agents had taken over the polling station.

Conditions were bad and out of control at NA 54 Polling Station 403 in Rawalpindi. After the late start of the polling, supporters of the PPP tried to block women from entering the polling station. The polling staff worked inefficiently and the impression was that they favoured PPP. Another example was NA 120 in Lahore. In this constituency of Nawaz Sharif, PMLN was campaigning, and observers also noticed that security personnel favoured PMLN supporters.

2.4 Access to polling stations

Observers of the Gender Election Monitoring mission documented that women were also barred from voting due to political party agreements or by threatening circumstances. The mutual agreements barring women from voting, denying women from exercising their fundamental human right is one of the rare cases where the different political parties reached a consensus. This attitude towards women's equal rights raises legitimate concerns about the government's understanding of inclusive and democratic governance.

In Upper Dir, only one woman was able to cast her vote in UC Darora. In Lower Dir, women were stopped from voting in seven constituencies, and in Buner district women were not allowed to vote in 17 UCs. Women were also barred from voting in several constituencies in Mardan, D.I. Khan, Nowshera, Batagram and Malakand.

Constituencies where women were stopped from voting are shown in the table:

S.No	District	NA	PA	UC/Polling station	Status
1	Upper Dir	33	91-93	All UCs	Women were barred in all UCs. Only one woman cast her vote in UC Darora
2	Lower Dir	34	91	Nafasa	Women were not allowed to cast their vote
				Kamangarah	
				Bajwaro	
				Pato	
				Bankot	
				Sari	
				Ouch	Nuzhat Begum (a candidate) cast her vote
3	Buner	28	77-79	17UCs	Among 27 UCs women didn't cast their vote in 17 UCS
4	Mardan	10	28	Kotki	Women were not allowed to cast their vote
		10	28	Katlung	
5	D.I. Khan	25	67	Garah Essa Khail	Women were not allowed to cast their vote
6	Nowshera	5	12	Choki mumraiz	Women were not allowed to cast their vote
7	Batagaram	22	59	Ajmera	Women were not allowed to cast their vote
8	Malakand	35	98	Govt Degree College, Govt High School Dargai	Women were not allowed to cast their vote
		35	98	Heroshah, Haryan Kot	
		35	98	Primary school Nary Obo	

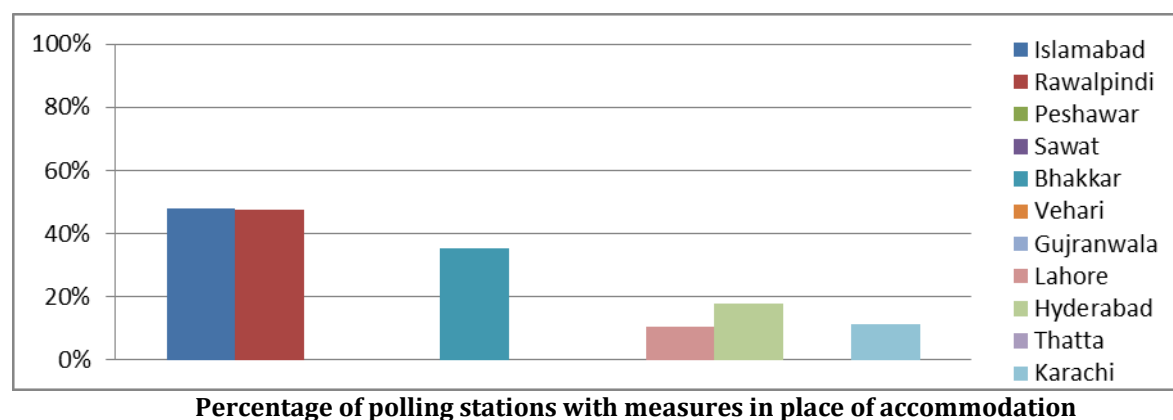
The ECP ordered re-polling at two polling stations after receiving complaints that women were prevented from casting votes. However, not a single woman voted during re-polling at these two stations. This reveals that while re-polling is a measure intended to enable women's participation in the political process, it may not be effective in increasing women's political participation.

2.5 Conditions at the polling stations

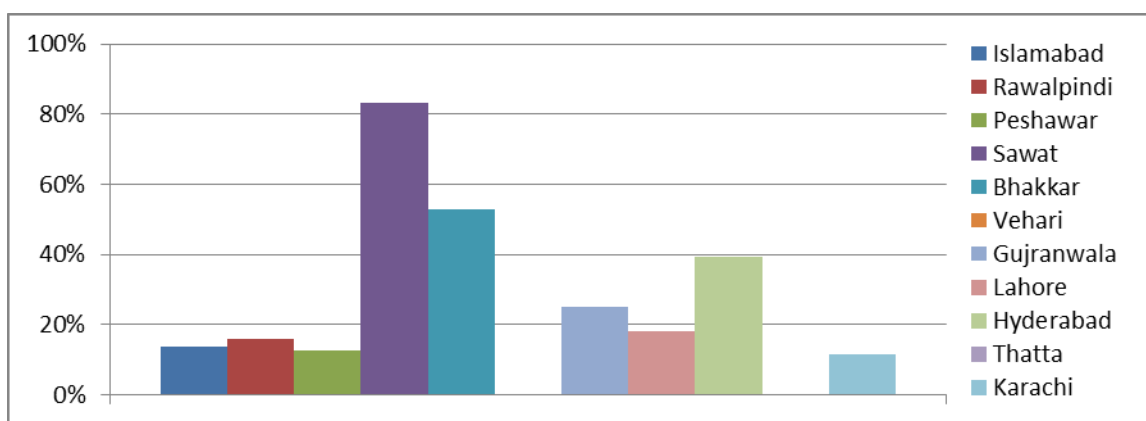
In all the areas, observers noted mismanaged, unorganised and chaotic polling stations. Many polling stations were too small, and lacked adequate seating for observers, staff and party agents. Moreover, voter secrecy was not always ensured, mainly because polling booths were sometimes positioned incorrectly. For example, booths were placed in front of windows or open to public view. Some polling stations were overcrowded, and several mixed stations were operated in one room, leading to chaotic conditions and culturally inappropriate situations for women.



Poor general facilities were found in most of the observed polling stations. There were no washrooms/toilets and drinking water facilities in place. Due to lack of space and/or lack of information, special facilities to accommodate the elderly, invalids, pregnant women, and women with children were insufficient or were not known to the users in most of the observed polling stations. For example, no sitting areas were provided for people with disabilities. Stations did not provide the appropriate physical assistance to those in need. In one instance, a disabled woman came to a polling station at Lahore around 9:00 a.m., but was unable to climb the stairs to the first floor to vote. She was asked to come back at noon, and she was again unable to vote. She then returned at 6:30 p.m. when staff finally brought the ballot box downstairs for her to cast her vote.



The reports clearly indicated that in most of the polling stations observed in Swat, women left prior to voting. Also in Hyderabad, a significant number of polling stations observers reported that women did not cast their vote. On the other hand in Verhari and Thatta, no such case was noted.



Percentage of polling stations observed in which women left prior to casting their vote

The primary reason why women left the polling station before casting their vote was long waiting times. Factors contributing to long waiting periods included slow voting procedures and late opening of polling stations – mainly in Karachi – where women had to wait long times under hot conditions. In some polling stations in Hyderabad, Karachi, Swat and Lahore, observers witnessed that voting materials were provided very late and were lacking at some locations: seals for the boxes, ink, envelopes, and extra white boxes. Normally, the materials were expected to have been delivered the day before. In Hyderabad and Karachi, polling staff came in late or did not show up at all.

Other reasons for leaving prior to casting votes were that women could not find their name on the registration lists, they were frightened by chaotic situations, they were prevented from voting or they did not understand the procedure.

2.6 Assistance and voter education

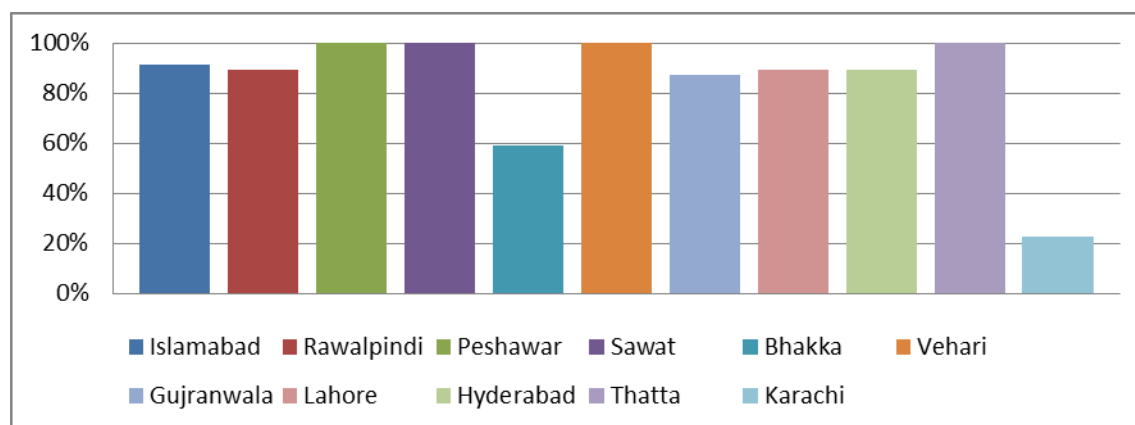
In many rural stations, large numbers of women required assistance on how to vote. In urban centres, knowledge of the voting procedure was satisfactory. Polling staff were observed helping all age groups. The reports revealed that party agents took advantage of some of these types of situations and influenced or instructed women on whom they should vote for. In some cases, assistance was also provided to women behind the screen.

In some areas, many women left polling stations without voting due to the fact that they were unable to understand the voting procedure, which was a clear indicator of poor voter education: Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Bhakkar, Gujranwala Swat, Hyderabad and Karachi. Especially in Swat, the overall assessment of voter education was poor. The quality of voter education varied in other observed areas across the different polling stations. It was also observed that the voter education material sent by an organisation to the districts for dissemination was still in the district offices and had not been distributed in the absence of directions for its distribution.



2.7 Polling staff

In 84.4% of the women's polling stations observed, the polling station presiding officers were women, and in 88.7% of the centres women were observed as managers. The adherence to the established procedures for opening and polling were mainly satisfactory. In some cases, husbands or fathers were "assisting" women presiding officers. There were men presiding officers at several combined polling stations and at several women's polling stations in Karachi, where the percentage of presiding women was the lowest at 22.7%. In Peshawar, Swat, Vehari and Thatta, the observers witnessed only women presiding officers. And in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Hyderabad and Lahore, the percentage was near or over 90%.



Percentage of polling stations observed under female direction

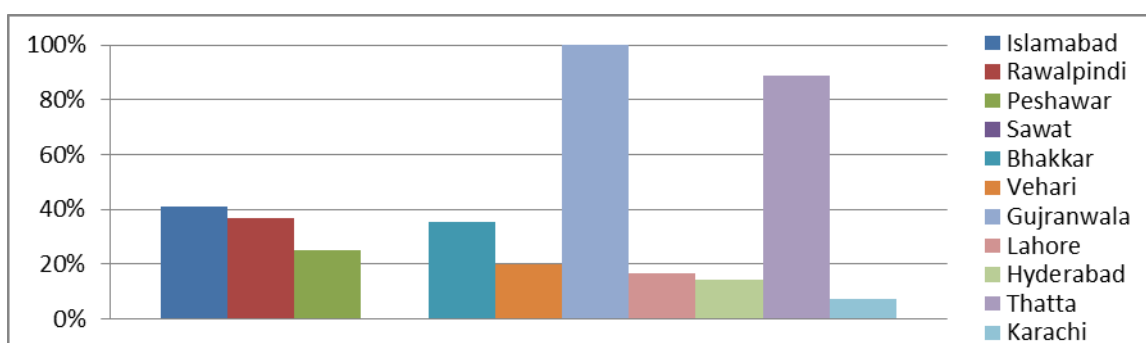
It was observed that nearly all staff were not properly trained, although training was supposed to have been given to all staff on board. Mismanagement and confusion were observed due to lack of training. In several places, flaws in the procedures were noticed: ballot papers not stamped, polling booths not placed to guarantee secrecy, allowing entry of unauthorised persons, help by unauthorised persons etc. The shortage of staff slowed the process of voting, and voters had to wait for hours to cast their vote.

The announcement of extension of voting time by the ECP at the end of Election Day was not received in time by several presiding officers. This caused frustration and tension: women presenting themselves at 5:30 p.m. found the polling stations already closed and ballot boxes sealed. This resulted in difficult situations.

2.8 Presence of media/observers

Media played a crucial role in giving women an opportunity to be heard and to speak about inequalities, marginalisation and barriers. The media also made a significant contribution to voter education.

The presence of the media was especially strong in Gujranwala, Thatta, Islamabad and Rawalpindi – but relatively low in Lahore and Karachi. In Swat, no media attendance could be recorded at the observed polling stations. In those polling stations where media was observed, both men and women were interviewed by journalists, and no significant gender-related treatment or preference from the media was noticed.



Percentage of polling stations observed with media present

Women political party agents were present in nearly all visited polling stations. The political parties differed according to region – for example MQM in Karachi. Most frequently present were the three dominant parties: PMLN, PPP and PTI. In some polling stations, the political agents exceeded their authority and directly interfered in the procedure.

Domestic observers were not present in all 100% of the polling stations that the Gender Concerns International team of observers visited. Bhakkar had the highest presence of observers. Islamabad, Vehari and Gujranwala had observers at half of the polling stations. In Peshawar, Karachi and Hyderabad, our observers reported only a few observers, and none in Swat. In Rawalpindi and Thatta, domestic observers visited one third of the polling stations during the presence of the GCI observers.



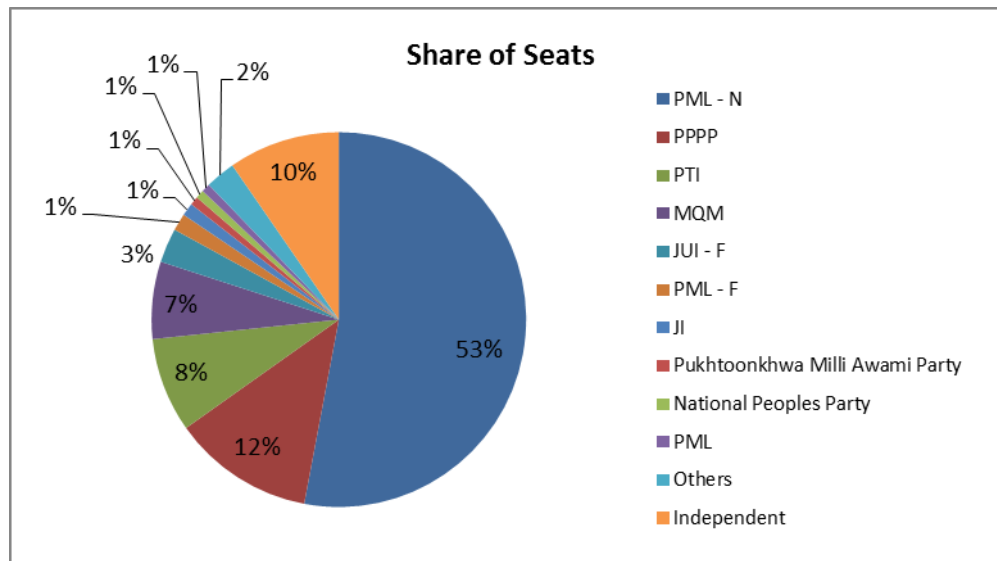
2.9 Gender-disaggregated voter turnout

The General Elections of 2013 was the first occasion when the number of women voters was to be recorded in Pakistan. The ECP wanted to count the number of ballots cast separately in women's and men's polling booths in order to record gender-disaggregated voter turnout in women's, men's and combined polling stations. This information should be recorded on the Statement of the Count (**Form XIV**). The ECP introduced specific amendments to Form XIV-Statement of the Count to measure the gender-disaggregated voter turnout. This data gathering is to enable the ECP to report male and female voter turnout nationally and in each district and province. It was the responsibility of the ECP to ensure that all presiding officers followed this new procedure carefully, and that the resulting gender-disaggregated voter turnout data was made publicly available soon after elections. According to the new rule, the women's boxes should have been opened and counted before the men's ballot boxes. The ballots should have then been mixed together to count the votes. The indications of the ballots were not intended to be gender-disaggregated.

However, it was observed that the presiding officers did not always fill out required forms correctly and the data was not recorded. Therefore the ECP may not be able to provide accurate data about male and female voter turnout. A crucial step towards more transparency was made by the ECP after heavy criticism from the European Union Election Observation Mission to Pakistan about their information policy. In a press release from June 11, 2013, the ECP directed all the returning officers for providing certified copies of information relating to the General Elections 2013 to any individual, NGO, media and general public including the Form XIV.

2.10 Share of Power

The results of these historic 2013 elections in Pakistan gave Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) more than 50% of the seats in the National Assembly, because independent candidates joined PMLN. The electorate at the ballot box punished the former ruling Pakistan People's Party (PPP), but despite PPP's substantial losses, the party is still the second strongest force in Pakistan. Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) emerged for the first time as a new popular political party. The rest of the seats were divided between different smaller parties.



On June 5, 2013, Nawaz Sharif took the oath of Prime Minister for the third time. In his address to the National Assembly, he said that the priorities of his government would be to build up a solid infrastructure, bring economic reforms and tackle corruption.

The PML - N has defined its vision of a progressive and prosperous Pakistan in the National Agenda for Real Change Manifesto 2013. Regarding their role in ensuring rights of women, the Manifesto is limited to the status of women in Islam only. And PML-N acknowledges to "Promote participation of women in national development and their social, political and economic empowerment by recognising their role as agents of change." Furthermore the PML-N is committed to enforcing laws on violence against women and eradicating discrimination against women²⁰.

So far the Federal Cabinet, which assists the Prime Minister and consists of Federal Ministers and State Ministers, includes two women. Anusha Rahman Ahmed Khan and Saira Afzal Tarar were appointed as state ministers²¹.

²⁰ <http://www.pmln.org/pmln-manifesto-english/>²¹ <http://www.pmln.org/pmln-manifesto-english/>

²¹ <http://www.pakistan.gov.pk/gop/index.php?q=aHR0cDovL3d3dy5uYS5nb3YucGsvZW4vc21pbmNfbGlzdC5waHA%3D>

2.11 Women members of the National Assembly

The increase in women's political participation did not affect the total number of government seats allocated to women. Although the increased political participation of women as voters is a step in the right direction, this increase has yet to be translated into a more gender-inclusive and gender-balanced government. Women were mobilised as voters through campaigns and voter education by the ECP and by political parties. The political parties encouraged women for the purpose of strengthening their own position, but at the same time, they were not willing to share the political power within the party with women. This is evident because political parties issued few party tickets to women candidates and also have given them difficult constituencies to win. Therefore their investment in women to participate in the political process can be interpreted as a way to gain votes rather than a truthful commitment to gender inclusion, women's political empowerment and equality.

In these elections, only six women were elected on general seats in the National Assembly – in comparison to 16 women in the 2008 elections, and 13 in 2002. All of the six women were incumbents who were re-elected. Two of three PPP winners were sisters of President Asif Ali Zardari. The constituencies of the three PPP women parliamentarians were in Sindh. The other three winners were from PML-N party with constituencies located in Punjab. Although the majority of women candidates ran as independent, none of the independent women candidates were elected. This demonstrates that women depend heavily on the support of their party.

The distribution of reserved seats for women for the upcoming legislature is as followed: PML-Nawaz: 34 seats, PPP: 8 seats, PTI: 6 seats and MQM: 4 seats. Jamiat Ulema-I-Islam-Fazl secured 3 seats for women. One seat is for JI, PML-F, NPP and PMAP²².

A significant portion of reserved seats for women in the National Assembly was awarded to friends and family members of top political leaders. Some of them even lost on May 11th, but have joined the National Assembly as parliamentarian via a reserved seat²³. After the elections 2013, the percentage of women parliamentarians was at 19.29%. It is significant to mention that without the affirmative measure of reserved seats, the amount would have been only 1.75%.

²² http://www.na.gov.pk/en/mna_list_w.php?list=women

²³ <http://tribune.com.pk/story/556356/womens-reserved-seats-top-politicians-spouses-kin-strike-it-lucky/>

3. Recommendations

3.1 Recommendations for political parties

1. Conduct gender-sensitisation trainings and other related instructions for political parties on the importance of the inclusion of women in elected office and the selection of women candidates prior to the elections.
2. Follow the rule of 33% allocation of office-holding and/or decision-making positions to women at all levels and in all committees. Encourage increase in the number of allocated seats, and maintain contact with international standards on actual implementation of allocated positions.
3. Hold elections within parties to ensure democratic values, mechanisms and processes within their own domains.
4. Take decisive legal action against party personnel who engage in preventing women from voting – also against candidates who benefit by gaining office from such actions.
5. Allocate special funds for women candidates to contest elections from existing party budgets.
6. Special budgets must be allocated to women candidates for their women constituencies for empowerment-related programmes and initiatives.
7. An effective campaign by civil society organisations should be launched to demand legislative measures from the present parliamentarians on the ECP's suggestion of declaring elections null and void in the areas where women are barred to vote.
8. Hold awareness-raising campaigns to highlight the importance of integrating women as candidates and voters, and promoting the election of women on general seats for the National Assembly.

3.2 Recommendations for the Election Commission of Pakistan

1. Ensure a balance of women and men at all levels of decision-making in ECP.
2. Build the capacity of women in the ECP and appoint a gender officer within the ECP to address and improve women's participation.
3. Deploy capable and adequate polling station staffing. Increase the number of polling staff. Provide sensitisation training to all the polling staff and conduct a series of workshops on gender and the importance of women in the electoral process.
4. Declare elections null and void in constituencies where women are barred from voting. Conduct automatic re-polling in polling stations where the women's voter turnout is less than 10%.

5. Evaluate and improve present verification procedures of voter identification documents to guard against fraud at polling stations. Update and/or implement photo ID requirement for all voters.
6. Ensure effective methods of collecting gender-disaggregated electoral data, and publish transparent and gender-disaggregated results to the public from each polling station, including Form XIV.
7. Guard against discriminatory attitudes in media, polling station officials and parties.
8. Ensure the provision of well-equipped polling stations with competent staff, adequate facilities and all basic needs for women prior to voting day. Required materials should be delivered to polling stations prior to election day.
9. Provide for separate female and male polling stations in needed areas.

3.3 Recommendations for voter education

1. Survey the percentage of registered women voters in all areas of the country prior to elections and take steps to promote registration and participation of those who are not registered.
2. Ensure that voter education reaches rural areas across Pakistan and involves women of all ages, using local languages and indigenous resources.
3. Ensure that tools used for voter education are understandable for illiterate women and men in different regions of the country.

3.4 Recommendations for observers

1. Recruit and train more women election observers to document all aspects of equal gender participation.
2. Ensure systems to facilitate free and secure access of observers at polling stations in all areas of the country.

3.5 Recommendations for media

1. Provide training to media personnel on gender and democracy prior to the elections.
2. Ensure that both women and men candidates have proportionally equal shares of media coverage prior to elections, and that gender-inclusive electoral issues are included in media reports.
3. Use the media as a valuable tool for voter education with a specific focus on gender inclusion and women's participation in elections as voters.

GEM Mission Pakistan 2013 International Observers



Sabra Bano (Netherlands/Pakistan)
Head of GEM Mission



Magda De Meyer (Belgium)
Deputy Head of GEM Mission



Lucyna de Graaf (Poland/the Netherlands)



Klaudyna Mikolajczyk (Poland)



Katharina Stöckli (Switzerland)



Shukria Hassani (Afghanistan)



Simran Sohi (Netherlands)



Melissa Vargas (United States)

Media coverage of the GEM mission

The Express Tribune: Disenfranchised women: NGOs to monitor female voters on polling day

By Sumera Khan; May 11, 2013

Gender Concerns International (GCI), in partnership with Aurat Foundation, has launched its Gender Election Monitoring (GEM) mission in Pakistan. GEM is the only observation mission organised by an international NGO that has been accredited by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

The GEM mission will monitor the polls with reference to women's participation. Both organisations have already signed a memorandum of understanding on March 1. Under the agreement, 10 foreign GCI observers and 50 local observers provided by the Aurat Foundation will be deployed to their respective observation stations.

The main objectives of the mission will be the training of the regional staff, collecting lists of women candidates on general and reserved seats, monitoring the Returning Officers' behavior towards female candidates during the nomination and scrutiny process, collecting information on how political parties are mobilising female voters, coordinating with radio stations to educate voters, monitoring newspapers and the social media and holding mock polling sessions with rural women voters.

Aurat Foundation president Naeem Mirza said that the demand for electoral reforms to address women's problems was not new. Female disenfranchisement, he added, has been a blatant violation of rights in Pakistan, he added.

"It is common practice in Pakistan to exclude women from voting, usually through compromises and accords between political parties' representatives in the region as well as family members," he observed.

An ECP official said that the commission recommended that it be empowered to overtly deal with the issue of restricting women from voting. He added that results from polling stations where women are prohibited from voting or where less than 10% of the registered women vote will be declared null and void.

The GEM Mission will issue a preliminary report on May 13 and a final report will be issued within the next two months.

tribune.com.pk/story/547328/disenfranchised-women-ngos-to-monitor-female-voters-on-polling-day/

Pakistan Today: GEM promotes gender inclusive elections in Pakistan

Islamabad, May 6, 2013 - The Gender Concerns International's Gender Election Monitoring (GEM) Mission has deployed 15 international and 50 national observers to ascertain women's participation in the upcoming elections.

Director Gender Concerns International Sabra Bano who has previously headed similar projects in Libya (2012), Morocco (2011), Tunisia (2011) and Pakistan (2008) is in charge. She said that she prided herself on participating in Pakistan's historic moment by being part of the only international gender perspective election observation mission. "Pakistan's government's recognition of the importance of women's political participation foreshadows a promising future for Pakistan," she added.

The mission's representative on Monday said that expert trainers will hold workshops for the domestic observers. She told that GEM is collaborating with the Aurat Foundation to follow a comprehensive observation methodology developed through Gender Concerns International's experiences in election observation in the Middle East, North Africa and parts of Asia. "International observers will be deployed at different observation stations on 10th May", she stated. The representative said that the mission will issue a preliminary report on May 13, followed by a final report with recommendations for promoting gender inclusive elections.

The Gender Concerns International's Gender Election Monitoring (GEM) Mission has deployed 15 international and 50 national observers to ascertain women's participation in the upcoming elections. Director Gender Concerns International Sabra Bano who has previously headed similar projects in Libya (2012), Morocco (2011), Tunisia (2011) and Pakistan (2008) is in charge. She said that she prided herself on participating in Pakistan's historic moment by being part of the only international gender perspective election observation mission. "Pakistan's government's recognition of the importance of women's political participation foreshadows a promising future for Pakistan," she added.

The mission's representative on Monday said that expert trainers will hold workshops for the domestic observers. She told that GEM is collaborating with the Aurat Foundation to follow a comprehensive observation methodology developed through Gender Concerns International's experiences in election observation in the Middle East, North Africa and parts of Asia. "International observers will be deployed at different observation stations on 10th May", she stated.

The representative said that the mission will issue a preliminary report on May 13, followed by a final report with recommendations for promoting gender inclusive elections

www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2013/05/06/city/islamabad/gem-promotes-gender-inclusive-elections-in-pakistan/

The International News: GCI launches Gender Election Monitoring Mission in Pakistan

Islamabad, May 12, 2013 - Gender Concerns International (GCI) in partnership with Aurat Foundation has launched its Gender Election Monitoring (GEM) Mission in Pakistan.

GEM Mission is the only Observation mission organised by an international NGO that has been accredited by Election Commission of Pakistan. Talking to APP here on Friday, a representative of the mission said 'The GEM Mission' will monitor the General Election 2013 with reference to women's participation in the election. Both the organizations have already signed a MoU on March 1, under which 10 international and 50 national observers will monitor the coming elections from gender angle, she added.

The representative said a team of women gender expert international observers (IOs) will be deployed to their respective observation stations to observe the electoral process from a gender perspective on May 11. "The IOs will be joined by fifty female observers from Pakistan, who have been recruited and appointed by the Aurat Foundation", she said.

thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-6-176854-GCI-launches-Gender-Election-Monitoring-Mission-in-Pakistan

Balochistan News Network: Fragile security situation: Poll mission not to visit FATA, Balochistan

By Sehrish Wasif;

ISLAMABAD, May 10, 2013: Due to security reasons, the Gender Election Monitoring (GEM) Mission has hinted not to go to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata) and most likely to Balochistan to monitor polls on election day. The GEM Mission has deployed 15 international and 50 national observers to ascertain women's participation in the upcoming elections. "I do like and want to observe general elections in Balochistan but our domestic observers have advised us against it because of security concerns," said Sabra Bano, head of the Mission and director of the Gender Concerns International (GCI) while talking to *The Express Tribune*.

Bano said that in Balochistan women face multiple forms of discrimination in terms of politics or as voters and this region should not be ignored. "The GEM Mission has worked in conflict zones across the globe and monitoring polls in Balochistan should not be a problem for it," she said.

"For us all women in Pakistan are equal and we want to empower them by highlighting their issues they face either while contesting elections or casting votes. If the region was ignored just because of the security fear it would be injustice with the women there," she said.

"As compare to 80s and 90s there has been an improvement in women's participation in elections, which is a good sign," she said Bano believes that upcoming elections were a ray of hope for every Pakistani despite fragile law and order situation in the country.

International Trainer, GEM Mission, Caecilia J van Peski said that it was for the first time that she had come to Pakistan to train local female observers to monitor elections from the gender perspective. "Despite security and other issues, all these females are passionate about visiting polling stations in their respective areas which reflect that Pakistani women are strong and brave enough to face all sort of challenges," she said.

balochistannewsnetwork.blogspot.com/2013/05/fragile-security-situation-poll-mission.html

Dawn.com: Security still a concern for observers

ISLAMABAD, May 9, 2013: Representatives of Gender Concerns International (GCI), who have come to Pakistan to monitor general elections 2013, were dissatisfied with the government's security measures.

"No authority has given us any assurances about security. Law enforcement agencies have not contacted us to discuss security measures for our volunteers. We have already decided not to cover Balochistan. However, I have been considering traveling to Quetta alone, but final decision will be made on May 11," Director GCI and head of Gender Election Monitoring Mission (GEM) Sabra Bano said, while talking to mediapersons in a local hotel on Thursday.

Ms Bano who has been living in Holland for the last 30 years said that although local collaborators had suggested that even local volunteers of GCI should not be sent to sensitive polling stations all over the country, particularly, in Balochistan. "I might go to Balochistan to monitor a few polling stations. We are hoping that extremists might not target us because we are just monitoring for fairness and have nothing to do with the results," she said.

Accompanied by experts of GCI, Lucyna de Graaf, Magda de Meyer who have monitored previous elections in Libya (2012), Morocco (2011), Tunisia (2011) and Pakistan (2008), Ms. Bano said that they appreciate that the democratic process is underway in Pakistan, a step in the right direction. "If the general election process is not inclusive of women, it will not bring democracy", she added.

GCI is the only international non-governmental organisation that has been accredited by Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), in partnership with Aurat Foundation, to monitor female participation in the election.

Ten foreign female experts have arrived in the country to monitor the election, in the collaboration with 50 local female observers in three provinces and the federal capital. Chief Coordinator GEM Farkhanda Aurangzaib noted that foreign experts would stay in the hotel, while 50 trained domestic observers, from Sindh, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad would give them feedback.

The local observers will work in their native areas so cultural sensitivities are observed. The trainers also elaborated an observation methodology developed by Gender Concerns International's for election observation and promoting gender inclusive governance throughout the Middle East, North Africa Region and parts of Asia. On Monday, May 13, GEM will issue a preliminary report regarding the electoral process. The final report of the GEM will be issued within the next two months.

In Attock, a two member delegation of European Union (EU)'s observer mission visited the district Police headquarters to discuss provision of security for the EU's observers during their visits to the district to monitor the election process on May 11.

Police sources informed that the two-member EU Election Observation mission at Pakistan led by Alin Dreagen and Brellta Oleksy met with the district Police officer (DPO) Abdul Kadir Qamar. The delegation was briefed by the officials about the administrative and security measures that have been taken by the district police and civil administration ahead of the polling day. Particularly, the delegation has been briefed on sensitive polling stations, strength of contesting candidates, voters and polling stations in the district.

dawn.com/news/1010652/security-still-a-concern-for-observers

Oman Tribune: Taliban threaten day of carnage

ISLAMABAD/PESHAWAR/LAHORE/MIRANSHAH The Pakistani Taliban on Friday warned the country's 86 million electorate not to vote in Saturday's landmark elections, telling them to keep away to "save their lives". "Democracy is against Islam and is a system for infidels. Being a Muslim, it's our responsibility to reject this thinking and ideology and be a part of the struggle to enforce Islamic sharia," said spokesman Ehsanullah Ehsan.

"To revolt against this system, the TTP (Tehreek Taliban) have planned several actions on May 11, so we appeal to the people to stay away from polling stations to save their lives," Ehsan added on the eve of the vote. Country's bloodiest election campaign spanning over three tumultuous weeks came to an end on midnight of Thursday and Friday. Following the end of a five-year democratic term, the upcoming polls are seen as another step that will carry forward the democratic process in the country. Attacks on politicians and political parties have killed more than 120 people since mid-April, according to an AFP tally, and the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan said the elections were the most violent in the country's history.

The TTP have branded democracy unIslamic and have singled out the main outgoing parties for particular threat, drastically curtailing public campaigning for the Pakistan Peoples Party and its main allies. "Elections on May 11 are being conducted under a secular system. The secular system is completely against the Islamic system," Ehsan said, speaking by telephone from an undisclosed location.

Around 70,000 presiding officers will assume control of polling stations on Friday. The officers will be stationed at the polling office on the night of May 10 and will be handed over polling material, including ballot papers and voters' lists. The ballot papers and other material will be opened in the presence of polling agents on May 11. For the first time in the country's history presiding officers are being given powers of magistrate first class for three days starting from Friday to punish on the spot anyone found interfering with electoral process. They will be empowered to jail anyone for three months for disrupting polling process after a summary trial.

Representatives of Gender Concerns International (GCI), who have come to the country to monitor general elections, were dissatisfied with the government's security measures. "No authority has given us any assurances about security. Law enforcement agencies have not contacted us to discuss security measures for our volunteers. We have already decided not to cover Balochistan." "However, I have been considering travelling to Quetta alone, but final decision will be made on May 11," said director GCI and head of Gender Election Monitoring Mission (GEM) Sabra Bano, while talking to mediapersons in a local hotel on Thursday.

Bano, who has been living in Holland for the last 30 years, said that although local collaborators had suggested that even local volunteers of GCI should not be sent to sensitive polling stations all over the country, particularly in Balochistan. "I might go to Balochistan to monitor a few polling stations. We are hoping that extremists might not target us because we are just monitoring for fairness and have nothing to do with the results," she said.

Accompanied by experts of GCI, Lucyna de Graaf, Magda de Meyer, who have monitored previous elections in Libya (2012), Morocco (2011), Tunisia (2011) and Pakistan (2008), Bano said they appreciate that the democratic process is underway in Pakistan, a step in the right direction.

GCI is the only international non-governmental organisation that has been accredited by ECP, in partnership with Aurat Foundation, to monitor female participation in the election. Ten foreign female experts have arrived in the country to monitor the election, in the collaboration with 50 local female observers in three provinces and the federal capital.

omantribune.com/index.php?page=news&table=&id=143880&heading=Pakistan

Daily Times: GEM mission starts work to monitor elections

ISLAMABAD, May 7, 2013: The Gender Election Monitoring (GEM) mission has started its working to observe participation of women in the upcoming elections.

The monitoring is being done by Gender Concerns International's Gender Election Monitoring Mission under which 15 international and 50 national observers will monitor the coming elections from a gender perspective.

The mission is headed by Sabra Bano, Director of Gender Concerns International who has been the head of previous GEM Missions including Libya (2012), Morocco (2011), Tunisia (2011) and Pakistan (2008). "It is with great pride that I get to take part in this historical moment for Pakistan by heading the only international election observation mission to monitor the elections from a gender perspective," said Sabra Bano.

A representative of the mission said experts held training workshops for 50 GEM domestic observers. The official said the GEM Mission Pakistan 2013 is being conducted in partnership with the Aurat Foundation. She apprised that the GEM Mission observers will follow a comprehensive observation methodology developed through Gender Concerns International's experience in election observation and promoting gender inclusive governance throughout the Middle East and North Africa Region and parts of Asia. She informed that the organisation would depute a team of female gender expert international observers (IOs) to different parts of the country.

Two days following the elections, the official said, the GEM Mission will issue a preliminary report, which will be followed by a final report to include recommendations for promoting gender inclusive elections.

dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2013%5C05%5C07%5Cstory_7-5-2013_pg11_7

Pakistan Observer: Gender election monitoring mission

Islamabad, May 11, 2013 —Gender Concerns International (GCI) in partnership with Aurat Foundation has launched its Gender Election Monitoring (GEM) Mission. GEM Mission is the only Observation mission organized by an international NGO that has been accredited by Election Commission of Pakistan.

Talking to APP here on Friday, a representative of the mission said 'The GEM Mission' will monitor the General Election 2013 with reference to women's participation in the election. Both the organizations have already signed a MoU on March 1, 2013, under which 10 international and 50 national observers will monitor the coming elections from gender angle, she added.

The representative said a team of women gender expert international observers (IOs) will be deployed to their respective observation stations to observe the electoral process from a gender perspective on May 11. "The IOs will be joined by fifty female observers from Pakistan, who have been recruited and appointed by the Aurat Foundation", she said.

The Gender Election Monitoring Mission's international observer team included Sabra Bano, Head of the Mission, Magda De Meyer, the Deputy Head of the Mission who have monitored previous elections in Libya (2012), Morocco (2011), Tunisia (2011), and Pakistan (2008). Sharing further said that if the general election process is not inclusive of women, it won't bring true democracy.

pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=206421

Daily Times: Gender Election Monitoring Mission launched for election

By Ijaz Kakakhel

ISLAMABAD, May 10, 2013: To monitor arrangements for women voters in general election, the Gender Concerns International (GCI) in partnership with local gender based organisation has launched its Gender Election Monitoring Mission in Pakistan.

Aurat Foundation will assist the GCI in monitoring arrangements in specific areas of the country. The GEM Mission is the only observation mission organised by an international NGO that has been accredited by Election Commission of Pakistan. Prior to the press conference a 'Multi-stakeholders Round Table on Inclusive Democracy & Gender Concerns Election 2013 Pakistan' was organised here at a local hotel. The GEM Mission will monitor the elections with a focus on women's participation. Both the organisations have already signed a MoU under which 10 international and 50 national observers will monitor the elections from a gender perspective.

A team of women gender experts and international observers (IOs) will be deployed to their respective observation stations to observe the electoral process on May 11. The IOs will be joined by fifty female observers from Pakistan, who have been recruited and appointed by the Aurat Foundation. The GEM Mission's international observer team includes Sabra Bano, Head of the Mission, Magda De Meyer, the Deputy Head of the Mission who have monitored previous elections in Libya (2012), Morocco (2011), Tunisia (2011), and Pakistan (2008).

Farkhanda Aurangzaib, Chief Coordinator, GEM Domestic Observers, Aurat Foundation, is coordinating the 50 domestic observers, from Sindh, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad Capital Territory. "If the general election process is not inclusive of women, it won't bring true democracy", said Sabra Bano while sharing the objectives of the GEM Mission.

Earlier in the day, expert international trainers held training workshops for GEM domestic observers on 'how to observe the general elections with gender lenses.' The trainers also laid down and discussed a comprehensive observation methodology developed through Gender Concerns International's experience in election observation and promoting gender inclusive governance throughout the Middle East and North Africa Region and parts of Asia.

Sabra Bano said the mission wants to visit Balochistan for monitoring purposes but the local organisation and security experts stopped them for going there. She stressed that they had worked in conflict areas in different countries like Libya and Afghanistan.

dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2013%5C05%5C10%5Cstory_10-5-2013_pg11_1

The Express Tribune: Gender monitors arrive today

Islamabad, May 5, 2013 - Members of the Gender Elections Monitoring mission are due in Islamabad on Sunday to observe the upcoming general elections. Sabra Bano, Director of Gender Concerns International, will be heading the team of observers. Bano headed the last GEM mission to Pakistan in 2008 and has headed a mission to Libya (2012), and missions to Morocco and Tunisia in 2011. "Ours is the only international election mission to monitor elections from a gender perspective," Bano said.

The GEM team will be accompanied by a team of gender expert observers including the deputy head of the mission, Magda de Meyer, who was previously the deputy head of GEM missions in Pakistan, Tunisia and Libya, and Ann Wilkins, a political analyst and former Swedish Ambassador to Pakistan. The GEM mission will be conducted in partnership with the Aurat Foundation.

af.org.pk/Election%20Monitor/ISB%203%20May%2013/Gender%20monitors%20arrive%20today.pdf

Associated Press of Pakistan: Women voter actively participated in 2013 elections

ISLAMABAD, May 13, 2013: Gender Election Monitoring Mission issues preliminary report here on Monday reported huge women voter turnout in General Election 2013 who remained standing in queues since morning till the closing time. “Despite pre-election times threats and attacks, female voters turned out in big numbers often present from the beginning, very enthusiastic, including old age, middle age, youth, mothers with babies and children, disabled women, women carers coming along with their families, neighbours, relatives or friends” said Sabra Bano, Head of the Mission.

Addressing a press conference she said given the circumstances, the tenacity of women was amazing. In Sragodha, women voted for the first time in history in union councils Lilliani and Moazamabad, she further said.

She informed that GEM observation mission from Gender Concerns International in partnership with the Aurat Foundation, sent out 110 observers, to monitor election activities from gender perspective throughout the day at 555 women polling stations all over Pakistan.

The experience of international and domestic observers was mixed together in order to obtain a maximum result. Election monitoring was undertaken in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar, Swabi, Kohat, Swat, Abbottabad, Mardan, Lower Dir, Hyderabad, Thatta, Sargodha, Bhakkar, Vehari and Gujranwala. The GEM Mission’s international observer team included Sabra Bano, Head of the Mission, Magda De Meyer, the Deputy Head of the Mission who have monitored previous elections in Libya (2012), Morocco (2011), Tunisia (2011), and Pakistan (2008).

While in some polling stations, Sabro Bano said, political agents seemed to have taken over the task of the administrative staff and have been found to ‘guide’ the female voters, in others campaigning was going on inside polling stations.

In Upper Dir it was the case in the entire district and only one woman was able to cast her vote in Union Council (UC) Darora. In Lower Dir, women were stopped from voting in seven constituencies and in Buner district women were not allowed to vote in 17 UCs. Women were also barred to vote in several constituencies in Mardan, D.I.Khan, Nowshera, Batagram and Malakand.

“Although we regret that ECP is an ‘all men’s club’, we do recognize that ECP did an enormous effort to reach out to female voters and to set up as many polling stations so that women did not have to cover great distances (the 2km rule)”, she observed.

The introduction of Short Messaging Service facility to find out where to vote and under which number, was very successful with literate and young women, the GEM head said. Although there were more Polling Stations (PSs) closer to the women’s homes, the facility itself often was not up to mark too small PSs, burning hot inside, no privacy for the voters.

Police and security often male was found in female polling stations, not always aware of exact procedures, she said adding, for instance the fact that the observers could enter before opening, that they could assist counting. Women voters’ knowledge about vote-casting procedure was of average nature in urban centres, however, in rural areas and in rural suburbs of cities women generally lacked information about voting, she said.

The media played a great role in giving women their rightful place, Sabro Bano said adding, they were a great help in voters’ education and gave a forum to women candidates.

“They highlighted difficulties and injustices regarding women and gave a voice to those who are often voiceless”, she commented.

app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=235006&Itemid=1

Pakistan Observer: Women voters actively participated in elections

Islamabad, May 14, 2013 — Gender Election Monitoring Mission issues preliminary report here on Monday reported huge women voter turnout in General Election 2013 who remained standing in queues since morning till the closing time. “Despite pre-election times threats and attacks, female voters turned out in big numbers often present from the beginning, very enthusiastic, including old age, middle age, youth, mothers with babies and children, disabled women, women carers coming along with their families, neighbours, relatives or friends” said Sabra Bano, Head of the Mission.

Addressing a press conference she said given the circumstances, the tenacity of women was amazing. In Sragodha, women voted for the first time in history in union councils Lilliani and Moazamabad, she further said. She informed that GEM observation mission from Gender Concerns International in partnership with the Aurat Foundation, sent out 110 observers, to monitor election activities from gender perspective throughout the day at 555 women polling stations all over Pakistan.

The experience of international and domestic observers was mixed together in order to obtain a maximum result. Election monitoring was undertaken in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar, Swabi, Kohat, Swat, Abbottabad, Mardan, Lower Dir, Hyderabad, Thatta, Sargodha, Bhakkar, Vehari and Gujranwala. The GEM Mission’s international observer team included Sabra Bano, Head of the Mission, Magda De Meyer, the Deputy Head of the Mission who have monitored previous elections in Libya (2012), Morocco (2011), Tunisia (2011), and Pakistan (2008).

While in some polling stations, Sabro Bano said, political agents seemed to have taken over the task of the administrative staff and have been found to ‘guide’ the female voters, in others campaigning was going on inside polling stations. In Upper Dir it was the case in the entire district and only one woman was able to cast her vote in Union Council (UC) Darora. In Lower Dir, women were stopped from voting in seven constituencies and in Buner district women were not allowed to vote in 17 UCs. Women were also barred to vote in several constituencies in Mardan, D.I.Khan, Nowshera, Batagram and Malakand.

“Although we regret that ECP is an ‘all men’s club’, we do recognize that ECP did an enormous effort to reach out to female voters and to set up as many polling stations so that women did not have to cover great distances (the 2km rule)”, she observed. The introduction of Short Messaging Service facility to find out where to vote and under which number, was very successful with literate and young women, the GEM head said.

Although there were more Polling Stations (PSs) closer to the women’s homes, the facility itself often was not up to mark too small PSs, burning hot inside, no privacy for the voters. Police and security often male was found in female polling stations, not always aware of exact procedures, she said adding, for instance the fact that the observers could enter before opening, that they could assist counting.—APP

pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=206692

The Daily Mail: 'Women voter actively participated in polls'

ISLAMABAD – Gender Election Monitoring Mission issues preliminary report here on Monday reported huge women voter turnout in General Election 2013 who remained standing in queues since morning till the closing time.

"Despite pre-election times threats and attacks, female voters turned out in big numbers often present from the beginning, very enthusiastic, including old age, middle age, youth, mothers with babies and children, disabled women, women carers coming along with their families, neighbours, relatives or friends" said Sabra Bano, Head of the Mission.

Addressing a press conference she said given the circumstances, the tenacity of women was amazing. In Sragodha, women voted for the first time in history in union councils Lilliani and Moazamabad, she further said. She informed that GEM observation mission from Gender Concerns International in partnership with the Aurat Foundation, sent out 110 observers, to monitor election activities from gender perspective throughout the day at 555 women polling stations all over Pakistan.

The experience of international and domestic observers was mixed together in order to obtain a maximum result. Election monitoring was undertaken in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar, Swabi, Kohat, Swat, Abbottabad, Mardan, Lower Dir, Hyderabad, Thatta, Sargodha, Bhakkar, Vehari and Gujranwala. The GEM Mission's international observer team included Sabra Bano, Head of the Mission, Magda De Meyer, the Deputy Head of the Mission who have monitored previous elections in Libya (2012), Morocco (2011), Tunisia (2011), and Pakistan (2008).

While in some polling stations, Sabro Bano said, political agents seemed to have taken over the task of the administrative staff and have been found to 'guide' the female voters, in others campaigning was going on inside polling stations. In Upper Dir it was the case in the entire district and only one woman was able to cast her vote in Union Council (UC) Darora. In Lower Dir, women were stopped from voting in seven constituencies and in Buner district women were not allowed to vote in 17 UCs. Women were also barred to vote in several constituencies in Mardan, D.I.Khan, Nowshera, Batagram and Malakand.

"Although we regret that ECP is an 'all men's club', we do recognize that ECP did an enormous effort to reach out to female voters and to set up as many polling stations so that women did not have to cover great distances (the 2km rule)", she observed.

The introduction of Short Messaging Service facility to find out where to vote and under which number, was very successful with literate and young women, the GEM head said. Although there were more Polling Stations (PSs) closer to the women's homes, the facility itself often was not up to mark too small PSs, burning hot inside, no privacy for the voters.

Police and security often male was found in female polling stations, not always aware of exact procedures, she said adding, for instance the fact that the observers could enter before opening, that they could assist counting. Women voters' knowledge about vote-casting procedure was of average nature in urban centres, however, in rural areas and in rural suburbs of cities women generally lacked information about voting, she said.

The media played a great role in giving women their rightful place, Sabro Bano said adding, they were a great help in voters' education and gave a forum to women candidates. "They highlighted difficulties and injustices regarding women and gave a voice to those who are often voiceless", she commented.

dailymailnews.com/0513/14/Islamabad/index.php?id=3

Pakistan Today: GEM report indicates high women voter turnout

Islamabad, May 13, 2013 - The Gender Election Monitoring (GEM) mission on Monday issued its preliminary report on female electoral participation, finding that a large proportion of Pakistan's women came out to vote on May 11.

"Despite pre-election threats and attacks, a large number of female voters from all age groups showed up enthusiastically to cast their votes, said GEM Mission Head Sabra Bano, Addressing a press conference she informed that women voted for the first time in the history of Sargodha, Lilliani and Moazzamabad. She said that the Gender Concerns International's GEM mission in partnered with the Aurat Foundation to depute 110 observers, both international and local, to monitor the elections from a gender perspective at 555 female polling stations all over Pakistan.

GEM's Election observations were conducted in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar, Swabi, Kohat, Swat, Abbottabad, Mardan, Lower Dir, Hyderabad, Thatta, Sargodha, Bhakkar, Vehari and Gujranwala. The team included Sabra Bano and Deputy Mission Head Magda De Meyer, who have also monitored elections in Libya (2012), Morocco (2011), Tunisia (2011) and Pakistan (2008).

According to Bano, political agents seemed to have hijacked the administrative Staff's tasks in some polling stations, and they "guided" female voters in the polling process. Campaigning was also being done inside the polling stations.

In Upper Dir only one woman was able to vote while in Lower Dir, women were stopped from voting in seven constituencies. In Buner, women were disallowed to vote in 17 Union Councils (UCs). The same situation arose in several constituencies in Mardan, Dera Ismail Khan, Nowshera, Batgram and Malakand. Bano acknowledged the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP)'s efforts to reach out to female voters by setting up as many polling stations as possible so that fewer women would experience transportation difficulties.

The 8300 Short Messaging Service (SMS) facility to locate one's polling station and constituency also proved helpful to young and literate women voters. However, she pointed out that some of the polling stations lacked basic utilities, such as lack of cooling and privacy for voters. Male security personnel were found in some female polling Stations, inadequately informed of correct procedure. The women's knowledge about the vote-casting method was average in urban centres. However, in the rural areas women generally lacked this information entirely, she said.

Sabra Bano lauded the media's role in encouraging women to vote, adding that it had been extremely helpful in disseminating voters' education and in providing a forum to women candidates.

pakistantoday.com.pk/2013/05/13/city/islamabad/gem-report-indicates-high-women-voter-turnout/

The Nation: GEM Mission urges ECP to declare polls null, void

By Asma Ghan

ISLAMABAD, May 14, 2013 - Although overall female voters turned out in big number and it was heartwarming that women in Pakistan refused to bow down, yet in areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa women were barred from casting their votes. Due to this flagrant violation of election rules and code of conduct, the Gender Election Monitoring (GEM) Mission calls upon the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to declare elections null and void in those constituencies where women were barred from voting.

The Gender Election Monitoring (GEM) Mission- a joint mission of Aurat Foundation and Gender Concern International, the Netherlands-based organisation - made this demand in its preliminary report that was shared at a press conference on Monday.

The GEM observation mission had sent out 110 observers in Pakistan to monitor election activities from gender perspective throughout the day at 555 women polling stations in major cities of Pakistan. The mission observed elections in Karachi, Peshawar, Lahore, Islamabad, Rawalpindi and some other areas in Pakistan. The Head of the GEM Mission in Pakistan Sabra Bano along with the Deputy Head of Mission Magda De Meyer and Coordinator of Domestic GEM Mission Farkhanda Aurangzaib held the press conference and delivered the preliminary findings of the mission.

Sabra Bano informed that in Upper Dir and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa women were barred from voting through political party agreements or under threatening circumstances. "In Upper Dir it was the case in the entire district and only one woman was able to cast her vote in UC Darora. In Lower Dir women were stopped from voting in seven constituencies, and in Buner district women were not allowed to vote in 17 UCs. Women were also barred from voting in several constituencies in Mardan, DI Khan, Nowshera, Batagram and Malakand."

Though according to ECP, no transport was allowed by parties yet this was violated all over the country. Voters reported that they were being offered money to vote for a certain party, she said. In some polling stations political agents took over the organisation and tried to 'guide' the female voters.

In other areas campaigning was going on inside polling stations, showing clearly party signs, wearing T-shirts, serving tea and even a sticker was noticed of a political party on a polling booth.

Although there were more polling stations closer to the women's homes, the facility itself often was not up to mark. 'We noticed many stations that really were too small, where there was no place for observers and party agents to sit and where it was burning hot inside. Moreover, this prevented privacy for the voters. In another place several mixed polling stations were all in one room, which led to complete chaos.

The complaints of inadequate physical space within the polling booths were received from most of the polling stations. There were no washrooms for polling staff as well as women voters at most of the stations'. She also highlighted that in some stations furniture was not sufficient and comfortable enough to sit on all the day. In some other polling stations, for instance in Karachi, material was supplied very late and also lacking at some places e.g. seals for the boxes, ink, envelopes, extra white boxes. Normally material should be delivered a day before but in some cases it was reached the polling booth at 11:00pm.

Police and security staff often found male in female polling stations and women police personnel were seen only at a few places. In Sargodha, women voted for the first time in the history in union councils Lilliani and Moazamabad. The mission in its report regretted that although the ECP is an 'all men's club', yet it also recognised that it did an enormous effort to reach out to female voters and to set up as many polling stations so that women did not have to cover great distances (the 2km rule).

The introduction of SMS facility to find out where to vote and under which number, was very successful with literate and young women. However, illiterate women and women from more rural areas remained dependant on political party camps to get to know their polling station location, block code and serial numbers.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/islamabad/14-May-2013/gem-mission-urges-ecp-to-declare-polls-null-void>

Pakistan News Today: Nowshera, Lakki Marwat: Re-polling in stations with women vote bar

PESHAWAR, August 27, 2013: The Peshawar High Court on Monday ordered the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to hold re-elections on polling stations of NA-5 Nowshera and NA-27 Lakki Marwat, where women were barred from voting on August 22 by-elections.

The court has also ordered the ECP to withhold the notification of results from these constituencies till re-polling is completed.

The court has further asked the government to table a bill in parliament to prevent similar incidents in the future and make necessary amendments to the People's Representation Act 1976 to ensure maximum participation of women in elections.

A two-member special bench, comprising Peshawar High Court Chief Justice Dost Muhammad Khan and Justice Malik Manzoor Hussain in its verdict ordered the ECP to conduct an inquiry and also run an awareness campaign before re-elections so that women can fully participate in the polls.

The chief justice in his verdict also stated that according to results of some polling stations, minimum female participation was 1.42% while maximum was 3%, which was unacceptable.

"The government shall table a bill in the parliament and debate upon the issue. In future, not a single female should be prevented from using her constitutional right in the general elections," the judgment said. The chief justice remarked that barring women from voting was a disgrace for a country which has had a female prime minister for two terms, and a speaker of the National Assembly in the last government.

"When there is a local government election in the country, politicians provide transportation and bring women from their houses, but when it comes to general election, women are prevented from their basic rights," the PHC chief justice said in his remarks. He added that when men do not object over the inclusion of women in list of Zakat and Usher recipients and the Benazir Income Support Programme, why did they have reservations over the inclusion of women in the voters list.

While presenting statistical data, Provincial Election Commissioner Sono Khan Baloch, said that there were 236 polling stations in NA-5 Nowshera, of which 70 were exclusively for women, 160 both for men and women, while six were exclusively for men. He said that of the 140,469 registered voters, 29,961 were female, adding that 14% turnout was recorded on the day, as 20,091 voters cast their ballots, of which male voter turnout was 33%.

According to Baloch, there were 331,104 registered voters in NA-27 Lakki Marwat, of which 187,311 were male and 145,793 female. He said, 124,679 votes were polled, of which 88,537 were male, 36,142 were female, adding that male turnout was 47.22% while female turnout was 25.13%. He further stated that there were 20 polling stations where women did not vote, with 22.1% less than male. Returning Officer Nowshera Yasmeen Nusrat informed the bench that 13 female polling stations and 21 combined polling stations had no results.

Baloch, while talking to the media outside the courtroom, said they would conduct their own inquiry in these constituencies.

pakistannewstoday.4com.co/tag/repolling/

Annex 3

Press Release: Aurat Foundation and Gender Concerns International to Monitor the 2013 Elections in Pakistan from Gender Perspective

ISLAMABAD, 28 February 2013: The Aurat Foundation and Gender Concerns International announced their partnership in working towards and promoting a gender inclusive governance prior to, during and after the 2013 elections in Pakistan. The organisations wish to monitor the elections with a gender perspective by establishing a Gender Election Monitoring (GEM) Mission.

The GEM Mission's prime objective is to support women's participation in democratic processes and to promote the vision of a gender-balanced society, so that women are seen as catalysts for change and can hold key decision-making positions and acquire leadership skills. The GEM Mission aims to ensure that women's political participation continues post-election and that the newly elected government addresses a gender agenda.

The two organisations, Gender Concerns International and the Aurat Foundation will implement the advancement of the political participation of women in Pakistan through capacity-building, the facilitation of training sessions, and lobbying/advocacy work.

Building the capacities of women's organisations, women in civil society organisations, female Parliamentarians, female leaders and 50 or more domestic observers to monitor the 2013 elections in Pakistan from a gender perspective will strengthen local women's capacities and build their relationship with female Parliamentarians.

Gender Concerns International is an international gender and development organisation with its headquarters in The Hague and offices in several countries including Tripoli, Tunis, Brussels, and Islamabad. It has conducted a series of unique GEM Missions successfully monitoring elections exclusively from a gender perspective in Pakistan (2008), Tunisia (2011), Morocco (2011) and Libya (2012).

Since the establishment of the Aurat Foundation, the organisation has been involved in empowering women to participate in political process of Pakistan. The organisation has developed various initiatives to support and motivate women's political participation. Through its regional offices in Quetta, Peshawar, Karachi, Lahore, Gilgit Baltistan and the Head Office in Islamabad, the organisation has extensive outreach capabilities at a grassroots level.

The Aurat Foundation and Gender Concerns International look forward to cooperating to promote female leadership and gender equality in Pakistan.

Press Release: Gender Concerns International Appreciates the Government of Pakistan's Announcement Welcoming Foreign Election Observers

March 20, 2013: Gender Concerns International greatly appreciates the Government of Pakistan and the Election Commission of Pakistan's announcement welcoming international observers to monitor Pakistan's upcoming elections. Gender Concerns International finds it very encouraging that the government of Pakistan has agreed to take all steps within its means to facilitate foreign election observers during the upcoming elections.

Last February, Gender Concerns International announced its partnership with Aurat Foundation to monitor the elections from a gender perspective by launching a Gender Election Monitoring (GEM) Mission. Through this GEM Mission, the two organisations will observe the democratic inclusion of women as voters, candidates, and administrators in Pakistan's upcoming 2013 elections.

Gender Concerns International fully shares the Pakistani Government's vision of foreign observers' non-interference in Pakistan's electoral process and will comply with Pakistan's National laws and international norms and regulations. The organisation's core goal is to monitor the elections from a gender perspective.

Gender Concerns International is an international gender and development organization with its headquarters in The Hague and offices in several countries including Tripoli, Tunis, Kabul, and Islamabad. It has conducted a series of unique GEM Missions successfully monitoring elections exclusively from a gender perspective in Pakistan (2008), Tunisia (2011), Morocco (2011) and Libya (2012).

Press Release: Preliminary Statement, GEM Mission Election 2013 Pakistan

On the 11th of May 2013 the GEM observation mission from Gender Concerns International in partnership with the Aurat Foundation, sent out 110 observers in Pakistan, to monitor election activities from gender perspective throughout the day at 555 women's polling stations all over Pakistan. The experience of international and domestic observers was mixed together in to obtain a maximum result. Election monitoring was undertaken in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar, Swabi, Kohat, Swat, Abbottabad, Mardan, Lower Dir, Hyderabad, Thatta, Sargodha, Bhakkar, Vehari and Gujranwala. Due to the presence of a wide network of the Aurat Foundation on grass-roots level, the mission succeeded in reaching out far into the country.

The GEM Mission's international observer team includes Ms. Sabra Bano, Head of the Mission, Ms. Magda De Meyer, the Deputy Head of the Mission who have monitored previous elections in Libya (2012), Morocco (2011), Tunisia (2011), and Pakistan (2008). Ms. Farkhanda Aurangzaib, Chief Coordinator, GEM Domestic Observers, Aurat Foundation, is coordinating the domestic observers. The press conference was chaired by Ms Sabra Bano assisted by Ms. Farkhanda Aurangzaib and Ms. Magda De Meyer.

1. Determination and joy

Despite pre-election threats and attacks, female voters turned out in big numbers often present from the beginning, very enthusiastic, including old age, middle age, youths, mothers with babies and children, disabled women , coming along with their families, neighbours, relatives or friends. Standing in cues from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., at closing time manyh women were still in line. Given the circumstances, the tenacity of women was amazing. In Sragodha, women voted for the first time in history in union councils Lilliani and Moazamabad.

2. But also obstruction and violation of electoral code

While in some polling stations political agents seemed to have taken over the task of the administrative staff and have been found to 'guide' the female voters, in others campaigning was going on inside polling stations. In Upper Dir it was the case in the entire district and only one woman was able to cast her vote in UC Darora. In Lower Dir women were stopped from voting in seven constituencies, and in Buner district women were not allowed to vote in 17 UCs. Women were also barred to vote in several constituencies in Mardan, D.I.Khan, Nowshera, Batagram and Malakand.

3. A great job done by ECP

Although we regret that ECP is primarily a 'men's club' , we do recognize that ECP did an enormous effort to reach out to female voters and to set up as many polling stations so that women did not have to cover great distances (the 2km rule). The introduction of SMS facility to find out where to vote and under which number, was very successful with literate and young women.

4. In and outside the polling stations

Although there were more polling stations closer to the women's homes, the facility itself often was completely inadequate: too small PSs, hot inside, no privacy for the voters. In another place several mixed polling stations were all in one room which led to chaos. No wash rooms were available for female polling staff as well as women voters at most of the stations. Water was not provided. In some polling stations material was very late and also lacking.

No sitting areas were foreseen for older, disabled or pregnant women. As queuing often took many hours in the sun, this led to fainting and sickness.

5. Polling staff

In female PS, we mostly found female staff, although in some cases, husbands or fathers were 'assisting' the female presiding officer. The extension of the voting time by EPC at the end of the day was not received in time by several presiding officers what caused frustration and chaos: women presenting themselves at 5.30pm found the polling station already closed and ballot boxes sealed which had to be sorted out with difficulty.

6. Security

Police and security often male was found in female polling stations, not always aware of exact procedures: for instance, the fact that the observers could enter before opening, that they could assist counting. In some cases security did not allow women with kids to enter which caused a lot of trouble.

7. Voter education

Women voters' knowledge about vote-casting procedure was of average level in urban centres, however, in rural areas and in rural suburbs of cities women generally lacked information about voting. Often many political party agents have been found taking advantage of this.

8. Media

The media played a great role in giving women their rightful attention. They were a great help in voters' education and gave a forum to women candidates. They highlighted difficulties and injustices regarding women and gave a voice to those who are often voiceless.

CONCLUSION:

All over it was heart warming that women in Pakistan refused to bow down and time and time again said they would not give up until they were able to vote.

Out of respect for all these courageous women who stand up for free and fair elections , even in the most barren circumstances, our main conviction remains that we call upon the ECP to declare elections null and void where women are not allowed to vote. A country that neglects its women, neglects its future!

Gender Concerns International is an international development organisation based in The Netherlands. It was formed in 2004 by a group of experts with extensive professional experience in the field of gender and development.

In order to accomplish a gender-balanced society, Gender Concerns International works to increase the political participation and empowerment of women, to promote security and development, and to influence policy.

Within this framework, Gender Concerns International primarily focuses on the status and rights of women, by operating via a network of public authorities, organizations and individuals on regional, national and international levels.

Established in 1986, Aurat Publication and Information Service Foundation is a civil society organisation committed to working for women's empowerment and citizens' participation in governance for creating a socially just, democratic and humane society in Pakistan.

Over the last 26 years, Aurat Foundation has come to be recognised nationally and internationally as one of the leading institutions for enhancing women's economic and political status in the country.

Gender Concerns International
Raamweg 21-22, 2596 HL
The Hague, The Netherlands
Phone: +31 (0)70 444 5082
Fax: +31 (0)70 444 5083
Email: info@genderconcerns.org
Website : www.genderconcerns.org

