WOMEN DEVELOPMENT IN PAKISTAN

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Background Information

Woman is an integral and indispensable segment of human society. They make almost half of the globe. They have literally complemented the man in every civilization. One can hardly ignore the multi-dimensional role of women in every society. She commands respect and honor in all religions.

Islam is very particular about her significant status & role in the society. It is the ever first religion, which accorded not only respect to her but also her due share in inheritance. However the ground realities are quite opposite to the religious teachings in many countries including Pakistan.

The status of woman in Pakistan is a source of enormous domestic and international interest, as well as a Social & Political controversy. The fact that women’s status is low by all social, economic, and political indicators has made it a subject of a great concern.

In Pakistan’s policy-making on women, problem identification is clear and strong but policy formulation is negatively influenced by macro-level political pressures, limited resources, and limited conceptual understandings. Micro-level implementation and evaluation are extremely weak. Hence, the pattern of decision-making on women, which becomes identified as a policy when it unfolds, appears INCONSISTANT.

The same is explained through following data table.

**TABLE I**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Rate</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross Primary Enrolment</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined Enrolment Rate</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Maternal Mortality 340 per 100,000 live births

**TABLE II.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rate (1-4 years)</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>69.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor Force Participation</td>
<td>11.39%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earned Income Share</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE III.**

- Women in Parliament 3.4%
- Women in Top Administrative/Managerial Jobs 3%
- Literacy Rate 51%
- Gross Primary Enrolment 80%
- Labor Force Participation 69.1%
- Earned Income Share 80%

_In the early “90”s the women-in-development (WID) concept underwent an evolution and a new term, GAD (gender-in-development), was coined internationally to reflect this._
Both concepts originate as conceptual tools for development. WID is an approach, which looks at women’s access to productive and non-productive resources, their control over these resources, and their decision-making power. WID support through promotional efforts is intended to enhance this control, or create it where it does not exist. As an approach WID, was found to be limited in that it viewed women as a group in isolation, their contextual relationship with men in society and the economy was missing. WID initiatives ran the risk of being marginalized from mainstream development.

GAD as a concept became useful to donors because it exclaimed the roles of both men and women together. It allowed steps designed to change both roles as well as their relationship vis-a-vis each other.

Today both WID and GAD approaches are applicable concepts. In Pakistan gender sensitization and training is gaining momentum. Meanwhile some supporters of the WID approach suggest that it may be too soon to abandon a specific development focus on women, as planners still do not understand its importance. Despite numerous recommendations by experts, donors and activists, disaggregated data on women and men in all sectors, particularly the economic sector, is still lacking.

Another international development coincided well with findings on the ground in Pakistan. The larger donor countries began to realize that community participation and grass roots networking was the *sine qua non* for successful development programmers. In Pakistan, this conceptual shift, combined with a growing despair for ineffective government departments, helped to push donors towards re-designing their social sector approaches. In the area of women development, the result was increased support to projects run by non-government organizations rather than a major emphasis on strengthening the MOWD. Women NGOs benefited from this by receiving increased donor funding for research, advocacy, and community based projects.

**Chronology of Women and Policy Developments in Pakistan**

- **1973** New constitution provides for the reservation of ten National Assembly seats for women, and five percent of Provincial assembly seats for women for a period of two general elections. All government services were opened to women, barring the police force.

- **1975** First UN World Conference for women was held in Mexico. Pakistan strongly supports The Agenda.

  UN declares the Decade for the Development of women. In response the Pakistan government creates the first Pakistan Women’s Right Committee.

- **1976** First draft of Women’s Right Committee Report submitted to the party prime Minister. It recommends legal and structural reforms to improve women’s Status.

  Dowry and Bridal Gifts (Restriction) Act passed to limit marriage & Dowry expanses.

- **1979** Govt. establishes a Women’s Division within a Cabinet Secretariat. Women’s Developments Cells established within the Planning and Development Departments in the provinces in order to create a linkage with the women’s division. All funding comes from the federal Govt.
1983  Planning Commission includes a chapter on women’s development in the sixth Five-year Plan (1983-1988), for which an expert working group is constituted. Govt. establishes the Pakistan Commission on the status of Women to identify their needs in a wide range of sectors.

1984  Parliament doubles the number of reserved seats for the women from ten to twenty.

1988  Planning Commission includes another chapter on Women’s development for The Seventh Five-Year Plan (1988-1993) and has a working group submit Recommendations.

1989  The Prime Minister upgrades the Women’s Division to a full Fledged Ministry for Women’s Development.

The First Women Bank is created to provide improved credit facilities to women and increased employment opportunities for them in the banking sector.

Monitoring and Evaluation Cells are established at the Center and Provinces to replace the Women Development Cells within the Planning Commission and its Provincial Departments.

Minimum five percent Quote for employment of women in government services is established through Cabinet decision.


1994  National Inquiry Commission on the status of Women is established, headed by A Supreme Court judge and including political representatives and experts.

Women Police Stations set up on an experimental basis at nine locations nation-wide to facilitate women’s access to the Police without fear of violence at the hands of male officers.

Women appointed to the superior judiciary for the first time. There is an increase in the number of Women in senior official positions.

National Consultative Committee set up to recommend legal reform and measures to increase women’s political representation. It fails to complete its work.

Women’s Developments Cells in the provinces are disbanded and full-fledge Women’s Development Departments are established to facilitate de-centralized ownership.

1995  The sitting Government CEDAW in preparation for Pakistan’s participation in the UN World Conference for Women at Beijing later that year. Pakistan official and non-governmental participation is largest in its history of participating in UN Conferences for Women.

Punjab Government passes an Ordinance reserving one-third of all local council seats for Woman.
1996 A process of Beijing Follow-Up is launched by donors and government, which includes the formation of National and Provincial Core Groups to monitor the government’s implementation of the Platform for Action.

1997 Parliament passes a law making death penalty mandatory for the offence of Gang rape. This is in addition to the existing Hadood laws.

The National Inquiry Commission on the Status of Women submits its report. Its recommendations include repeal of discriminatory laws, drastic increase of women’s political participation through affirmative action and the establishment of a Permanent Commission on the Status of Women.

The Privatization Commission invites bids for the private purchase of the first Women Bank. WAF files a petition against the move and the Lahore High Court issues an order ensuring that the FWB mandate is upheld by any Buyer.

2000 Declaration of Devolution plan in Pakistan. Women were given 33% Participation share in the Local Government Elections.

The Asian Development Bank gave an aid of 130 million dollars in respect of implementation of Women quota in the Judiciary.

Future Initiatives

• Lobbying with Line Departments and NGOs for implementation of NPA.
• Focus on awareness raising, advocacy in districts as an on-going activity of NPA/CEDAW unit, Punjab till March 2001.
• Strengthening the capacity of PCG, DCG and Task Force in Punjab.
• Proposal for two centers for disabled women in Lahore and Rawalpindi forwarded to the Government.