

Advancing Gender Equality in Politics: Reflection on Policies and Practices

National Discourse

July 19-20, 2010

Lahore, Pakistan

1. Background

Equal participation of women and men in decision-making is needed in order to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning. Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of their perspectives at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved. Women in politics and decision-making positions provide new perspectives to mainstream political issues by redefining political priorities, placing new items on the political agenda and addressing women's gender-specific concerns, values and contributions.

Efforts are being made by governments and NGOs in a number of countries in South Asia to increase the number of women in decision-making positions. Countries like Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh used their legislative reform processes to provide affirmative action in favor of women in the national constitutions. Various strategies have significantly contributed to increased representation and visibility of women in the public arena in those respective countries. But the effectiveness of this representation depended very much on the commitment of governments and political parties and on the vigilance of women politicians and activists to enforce them and guard against political manipulation.

2. Rationale

Inequality in politics starts with gender insensitive policies and discriminatory practices and attitudes. It cannot be addressed unless supportive policies and mechanisms are put in place and provided with an enabling environment to work effectively. So reviewing and reforming laws/policies, redefining political agendas and reflecting upon our thoughts and action can only bring about change in the scenario.

In line with this reality, a national policy discourse has been scheduled for July 19-20 in Lahore, Pakistan. The program aims towards promoting critical discourse on policies and practices of governance institution and political parties with regard to women's participation in politics. The in-depth discussion is expected to point out the recommendations for policy-makers to initiate comprehensive responses to promote women's participation in politics. The program will explore widely applicable and flexible recommendations in specific policy documents for overcoming the issue of marginalization of women in politics.

3. Objective

- To develop common understanding on the issues, concerns and initiatives of women's participation in politics.

- To generate discourse on existing policies and practices of democratic institutions and political parties from the gender perspective.

4. Expected Result

It is anticipated that the interaction among concerned stakeholders will be highly productive in drafting a National Charter by examining and analyzing legal and institutional gaps and flaws. The National Charter is expected to point out recommendations in specific national policy documents and mechanism with regard to women's participation in politics. The National Charter will later on be used to draft Regional Gender Sensitive Democratic Charter.

5. Expected Participants

- Women/Men Politicians
- Policy Makers (Parliamentarian)
- Lawyers
- Women/human right activists,

6. Methodology

- Interaction
- Experience Sharing
- Case Sharing
- Paper Presentation
- Group Discussion/Exercise

7. Deliverables

- National Charter
 - National Paper on Policy Analysis and Practice Monitoring
 - Event Proceeding Report
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