



A CALL TO ACTION: WOMEN RISE IN 2024

ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE REPORT





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In the lead-up to the consequential 2024 elections in Pakistan, a momentous shift is underway, signaling a call for active female participation in shaping the nation's destiny. The pivotal event, "Women Rise in 2024!" held in Islamabad on February 2, 2024, emerged as a thought-provoking roundtable discussion. It brought together distinguished figures from academia, media, and politics, fostering a collective call to action.

National Commission on the Status of Women, in collaboration with the Center of Pakistan and International Relations, arranged this conference focusing on advocating policy recommendations for the Election Commission, Government, and Media. Their demands included increased women's participation on general seats, foolproof security for women contestants, and securing the rights of women voters in the upcoming elections, thereby fostering gender equality in the electoral process.

Among the esteemed participants were representatives from the National Commission for Women (NCSW), the Center of Pakistan and International Relations (COPAIR), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Each contributor brought a unique perspective and unwavering dedication to women's empowerment, enriching the dialogue with valuable insights.

The core theme of the discussion centered on amplifying women's voices and ensuring their active involvement in the upcoming elections. The panelists painted a poignant picture of the current challenges, emphasizing societal biases, discriminatory practices, and limited access to resources hindering women's political engagement.

However, the roundtable was not merely a platform to recognize these obstacles; it served as a beacon of hope, outlining a roadmap for progress. Panelists, alongside an engaged audience, explored effective strategies, focusing on civic education, combatting gender stereotypes, promoting women's leadership, and leveraging technology to empower women and encourage their active participation.

The "Women Rise in 2024!" roundtable was more than a one-day event; it became a catalyst for change, sparking a national conversation urging women to rise above challenges and claim their rightful place in shaping the nation's future. The commitment and collaborative spirit displayed resonated, leaving a powerful message of hope and empowerment.

As Pakistan heads towards the 2024 elections, the echoes of this roundtable will continue to reverberate. The collective call to action issued by panelists and the audience serves as a potent reminder: Women's voices matter, and their active participation is not just a right but a necessity for building a more equitable and prosperous Pakistan. Despite the challenges ahead, the momentum gathered at this pivotal event stands as a testament to the unwavering spirit and collective will ensuring that in 2024 and beyond, Pakistani women rise, and their voices resound loud and clear.

Key Participants in this Conference Included:

- Nilofar Bakhtiar (Chairperson NCSW)
- Amna Munawwar Awan (President COPAIR)
- Nabila Malick (UN Women)
- Amna Sayid (UNDP)
- Azma Bokhari (PMLN)
- Sitara Aiyaz (Politician)
- Sammiya Raheel Qazi (JI)
- Asiyia Ishaq (MQM)
- Farzana Yaqoob (PPP)
- Shagufta Malick (ANP)
- Dr. Shuja (PIDE)
- Dr. Saad Ali (QAU)
- Barira (GUPC)
- Nayyer Ali (President WJC)
- Raja Faisal (PTV)
- Sumaira Khan (Samma TV)
- Tanzeela Mazhar (GTV)
- Dr. Zahid Center (SDG)
- Dr. Usman (COPAIR)
- Dr. Rakhshanda (Gender Specialist)

Charting the Course: Unraveling the Discussion Agenda Women Rise in 2024! Roundtable Agenda

Amplifying Women's Voices:

- **Identify existing challenges:** Discuss societal biases, limited resources, and discriminatory practices hindering women's political participation.
- **Promote civic education and voter awareness:** Develop strategies to educate women about their electoral rights and the political process.
- **Leverage technology and digital platforms:** Explore ways to utilize social media and online tools to mobilize women and amplify their voices.



Empowering Women for Leadership:

- **Challenge gender stereotypes:** Discuss strategies to dismantle deeply-rooted societal norms that discourage women's leadership roles.
- **Promote women's candidacy:** Explore initiatives to encourage women to stand for election and provide necessary support, training, and mentorship.
- **Create a support network:** Discuss fostering collaboration and collective action among women leaders and aspiring candidates.



Building an Inclusive Political Landscape:

- **Advocate for policy changes:** Discuss concrete policy reforms needed to create a more level playing field for women in politics.
- **Engage political parties:** Encourage parties to commit to increasing women's representation in their ranks and leadership structures.
- **Mobilize civil society:** Build partnerships with NGOs, advocacy groups, and community organizations to push for women's political empowerment.

Beyond the 2024 Elections:

- **Develop a long-term strategy:** Discuss initiatives to sustain momentum and ensure continued progress beyond the elections.
- **Monitor and evaluate progress:** Establish mechanisms to track the impact of interventions and measure progress towards gender equality in politics.
- **Share knowledge and best practices:** Foster collaboration and knowledge-sharing among stakeholders to accelerate progress across contexts.



Speakers at a seminar organized by the NCSW in collaboration by COPAIR on Friday, 2nd February' 2024

Formal Opening of the Round Table Conference

Gathering on the verge of significant change, the event "Women Rise in 2024!" unfolded as attendees prepared to weave the threads of collective action, seeking the blessings of wisdom and unity. Ms. Rabia Tahir, the esteemed guest from the NCSW, graced the occasion with verses from the Holy Quran, providing a spiritual invocation. Following this, the hearts of those present resonated with the shared melody of the national anthem.

The event then progressed with introductions of distinguished participants, representing diverse fields yet united in their pursuit of women's empowerment. This paved the way for insightful dialogue and collaborative action, shaping a future where Pakistani women rise, their voices echoing loud and clear.

Welcoming Remarks by Amna Munawar Awan, President COPAIR:

Addressing the assembled participants with warm greetings, the President of COPAIR, deeply committed to fostering women's political participation, emphasized the upcoming election as a pivotal moment to bridge the gender gap in the political landscape. The focus of the dialogue was set on exploring how political parties could champion women-led initiatives through their manifestos, urging women to confidently contest on general seats. This, he highlighted, would shatter glass ceilings and contribute to a more inclusive and equal democracy. The call to harness the collective power of the roundtable aimed to ignite a wave of change, ensuring that women's voices resonated loudly and clearly in the upcoming 2024 elections.



Standing at a crossroads, the President emphasized the unique opportunity to bridge the chasm of gender disparity in the political arena. Rather than merely talking, the goal was to ignite a conversation that delved into how political parties could champion women-led initiatives by incorporating them into their manifestos. The sentiment echoed the idea that the ballot box is a powerful tool, but real change thrives on voices rising in unison. The focus was on raising voices for women – their representation, aspirations, and their rightful place at the decision-making table.

Highlighting that elections shouldn't just fill seats but amplify diverse perspectives, the President urged for the inclusion of women's priorities, concerns, and solutions in the very fabric of political manifestos. Envisioning a Pakistan where women confidently shattered glass ceilings without the need for quotas, the emphasis was on supporting their candidacies on general seats to unlock the true potential of democracy.

Positioning the roundtable as more than a discussion, the President characterized it as a catalyst for action, encouraging participants to leave with concrete strategies. The aim was to inspire each other to break down barriers and pave the way for a more inclusive future. The collective power of women's voices, when unlocked, was seen as the force that could elevate the nation. The President concluded with a call to make women's voices the loudest symphony of change in the upcoming 2024 elections.

Key Note Address by the Chief Guest Nilofar Bakhtiar, Chairperson NCSW:

In the keynote address by Chief Guest Nilofar Bakhtiar, who serves as the Chairperson of NCSW, the narrative centered on Pakistan standing at a pivotal moment with the imminent 2024 elections offering an opportunity to reshape the nation's trajectory. Emphasizing the need for a collective effort, Bakhtiar envisioned a symphony of voices and a tapestry woven from diverse perspectives, highlighting the importance of vibrant and robust threads of women's voices within this rich fabric.



Bakhtiar painted a vision of a Pakistan where women transcended the role of mere voters to become architects of the nation's future. As Chairperson of the National Commission for Women, she positioned the roundtable as a crucial cornerstone in building the bridge to this envisioned future.

Acknowledging the necessity for collaborative efforts, Bakhtiar stressed the importance of engaging in hand-in-hand collaboration with political parties. The goal was to encourage them to recognize the immense potential within women-led initiatives, advocating for their incorporation into party manifestos as guiding principles for a more inclusive and equitable Pakistan.

Addressing the women present, she saw the fire in their eyes and the determination in their hearts. The call was to harness that passion, urging them to contest general seats with unwavering confidence. Every stakeholder in the room was portrayed as standing in solidarity, ready to offer support and fuel their journey.

The keynote emphasized that that was not the time for hesitant steps or whispered ambitions; it was the year to rewrite the narrative. Participants were urged not to be mere participants but leaders shaping the destiny of Pakistan with wisdom, courage, and an unwavering belief in a brighter tomorrow.

The roundtable was positioned as the spark igniting a nationwide movement, not just leaving with words but with concrete strategies and an unwavering commitment to action. Bakhtiar

declared that when women's voices rose, nations rose. In 2024, the aim was for these voices to be the loudest symphony of change, echoing through the halls of power and resonating across the entire nation. The collective call was to build a Pakistan where women were not just heard but empowered, leading the nation towards a future filled with hope, equality, and shared prosperity.

Nabila Malick, Communication Expert, UN Women:

In an event featuring Nabila Malick, a Communication Expert from UN Women, a compelling call for collective brilliance and women's empowerment unfolded. Acknowledging the unwavering support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Pakistan's journey towards inclusive democracy, there is a profound recognition of the crucial role women play in shaping a more equitable and prosperous society. The roundtable itself serves as a tangible expression of the commitment to this vision.



Malick emphasized that supporting women-led initiatives and encouraging their active participation in the upcoming general elections goes beyond mere numerical representation. It's about unlocking a vast potential for positive change and moving beyond symbolic gestures to strive for genuine empowerment. The need was stressed to cultivate an environment where women's voices are not only heard but actively translated into meaningful policies impacting the lives of millions.

Painting a vision of Pakistan where women's voices seamlessly interweave into the fabric of the nation's future, Malick envisioned a nation where their ideas, concerns, and solutions shape policy, drive solutions, and lead towards a brighter tomorrow. This vision was not portrayed as a mere dream but as a collective brilliance waiting to be unleashed.

The roundtable, according to Malick, served as a catalyst to transform aspirations into concrete strategies. The collective call was to dismantle barriers, foster collaboration, and ensure that in 2024 and beyond, women's voices rise, their vision resonates, and their leadership shapes the destiny of Pakistan.

A poignant reminder was given that women are an undeniable key part of the nation's collective brilliance. The call extended to join hands and unlock it together, reinforcing the idea that women's empowerment is integral to the broader brilliance of the nation.

Amna Syed Gender officer at UNDP:

"In the unfolding of "Empowering Pakistan's Future: Roundtable Ignites Dialogue on Women's Rise in 2024 Elections," Amna Syed, the gender officer at UNDP, echoed the sentiments expressed by many participants. She drew attention to the critical necessity of translating political pledges into actionable strategies that can propel women into influential positions and positions of decision-making power. Stressing the importance of representation in the political arena, Amna underscored the significance of advocating for an increased number of women's seats in parliament. She highlighted that beyond mere rhetoric, it is the collaborative effort and concrete reforms that will pave the way for gender equality and inclusive governance in Pakistan.



Amna urged stakeholders to capitalize on the momentum generated by the roundtable, transforming promises into policies. She emphasized the need to ensure that women's voices resonate not only in the halls of discussion but also in the corridors of power, actively shaping the future trajectory of Pakistan's democracy.

Barira from Gender Unit Ministry of Planning and Special Initiative:

At the pivotal roundtable discussion, Barira, representing the Gender Unit at the Ministry of Planning and Special Initiative, passionately emphasized the transformative potential embedded within the session. In her impactful address, Barira urged participants to channel their aspirations into actionable strategies, stressing the crucial need for unity and collaboration among diverse stakeholders.



Highlighting the imperative of amplifying women's voices, Barira articulated the belief that their leadership should serve as a driving force in shaping Pakistan's future beyond the 2024 elections. She provided insightful perspectives on the multifaceted challenges that women face in various spheres and underscored the importance of targeted policies to address these challenges. Barira also shared success stories of initiatives promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, serving as inspirations for future endeavors.

In her call to action, Barira encouraged the formulation of concrete plans and policies that go beyond rhetoric, ensuring the integration of women's perspectives into the fabric of national decision-making. Her remarks contributed significantly to the ongoing dialogue, sparking discussions on the practical implementation of inclusive policies and collaborative efforts needed to empower women at all levels of society. Barira's compelling insights resonated with the

participants, adding depth to the discourse and reinforcing the commitment to a more equitable and empowered future for Pakistan.

Ms. Tanzeela Mazhar, the Co-Founder of Women in Media Alliance and Head of Program GTV:

In the event, Ms. Tanzeela Mazhar, the Co-Founder of Women in Media Alliance and Program Head of GTV, resonated with the sentiment that the roundtable marks a pivotal moment for change. In her impactful address, she not only emphasized the urgency of breaking down systemic barriers hindering women's progress but also delved into the multifaceted aspects of these barriers.



Tanzeela underscored the significance of collaborative efforts, shedding light on the need to create an environment where women's voices are not merely heard but genuinely valued. Expanding on this theme, she provided insights into the specific challenges women encounter in the media industry, advocating for reforms that promote gender equality and inclusivity.

The role of media itself became a focal point of her discourse, as Tanzeela stressed its power in amplifying diverse perspectives and acting as an influential advocate for gender-inclusive policies. She illustrated the impact of media representation on shaping societal perceptions and urged for responsible journalism that promotes positive narratives surrounding women.

In a call to action, Tanzeela urged for sustained commitment, emphasizing that women's leadership should become an integral part of Pakistan's societal fabric and future trajectory. Her comprehensive and insightful remarks contributed significantly to the ongoing dialogue, urging participants to consider not only the immediate challenges but also the long-term commitments required for meaningful and lasting change.

Nayer Ali Broadcast Journalist, Secretary Finance National Press Club:

Nayer Ali, a distinguished Broadcast Journalist and Secretary Finance at the National Press Club, commended the roundtable as a catalytic force propelling the advancement of women's political representation. With insightful perspectives, she emphasized the transformative importance of translating electoral pledges into actionable measures that guarantee increased parliamentary seats for women.



Nayer underscored the pivotal role of media in shaping public discourse and becoming a powerful advocate for gender-inclusive

policies. Drawing on her experience in broadcast journalism, she delved into the influence of media in shaping societal perceptions and championing the cause of women's active participation in political processes.

In her address, Nayer stressed the urgency of sustained efforts, expressing the need to ensure that women's voices resonate prominently in Pakistan's political landscape, particularly with the approaching 2024 elections. She outlined the challenges faced by women in media and politics, shedding light on specific barriers that impede their progress. Nayer called for collaborative initiatives to overcome these challenges and pave the way for a more inclusive and equitable political environment.

Her comprehensive insights and calls to action resonated with the audience, contributing significantly to the ongoing discourse on the role of media and the urgent need for tangible actions to enhance women's representation in the political sphere.

Sumaira Khan Journalist:

In reflection upon the event, journalist Sumaira Khan was effusive in her praise for the roundtable's pivotal role in catalyzing discourse on women's empowerment within Pakistan's political arena. From her perspective, the event represented a significant stride in translating electoral promises into tangible actions, with a specific emphasis on the critical allocation of more parliamentary seats for women.



Sumaira passionately underscored the indispensable role of media, emphasizing its power to amplify the voices of marginalized groups and advocate staunchly for gender-inclusive policies. Her insights extended beyond the event, urging for the sustained momentum generated by the roundtable to ensure substantive progress towards gender equality within Pakistan's governance structures.

In her vision for the future, Sumaira expressed her belief in a trajectory where women's leadership not only shaped the nation's destiny but resonated far beyond the 2024 elections. Her commitment to the cause highlighted the ongoing need for concerted efforts to maintain the event's positive momentum and pave the way for a more inclusive and equitable political landscape in Pakistan. Sumaira's perspective reflected a broader call for lasting change and a steadfast commitment to advancing women's empowerment in the political sphere.

Dr. Saad Ali Khan. Assistant Professor:

In retrospect, Dr. Saad Ali Khan, the Assistant Professor of Gender Studies, was commendatory of the roundtable, acknowledging its role in initiating crucial discussions to enhance women's participation in Pakistan's political landscape. From his perspective, the event emerged as a pivotal platform that facilitated the translation of electoral commitments into tangible advancements, with a specific focus on augmenting women's representation in parliament.



Dr. Khan, in his reflections, emphasized the paramount importance of addressing systemic barriers that impede women's political and social empowerment. His insights delved into the intricacies of these barriers, shedding light on the challenge's women face in navigating the political sphere.

Furthermore, Dr. Khan underscored the imperative for sustained advocacy efforts, stressing that the objective should extend beyond merely ensuring that women's voices are heard. He envisioned an active role for women in shaping policy-making processes, contributing significantly to the overarching governance structure.

In envisioning the future, Dr. Khan expressed his anticipation of a scenario where increased women's representation would lead to more inclusive and equitable governance, transcending the scope of the 2024 elections. His reflections resonated as a call for ongoing efforts to dismantle barriers and pave the way for a more empowered and inclusive political landscape in Pakistan.

Uzma Bukhari believes PML-N Leader:

Representing PML-N, Uzma Bukhari, in hindsight, recognized the roundtable as a pivotal moment in Pakistan's political landscape. She emphasized the imperative of active women's involvement in shaping the nation's future, transcending the role of mere voters to become influential leaders. Uzma underscored the importance of implementing concrete measures aimed at increasing women's representation in parliament, delving into specific challenges and proposing solutions.



In her reflective stance, Uzma advocated for collaborative efforts extending beyond party lines. Her insights delved into the need to dismantle existing barriers and foster gender equality in

governance. Uzma's call for collaboration highlighted the necessity of a unified approach to address systemic challenges and create a more inclusive political environment.

Envisioning the future, Uzma painted a picture of Pakistan where women's voices and aspirations would be central to policymaking, contributing to a brighter future for all citizens. Her vision emphasized the transformative power of gender-inclusive policies and the integral role women play in shaping the nation's destiny. Uzma Bukhari's reflections served as a reminder of the ongoing commitment required to realize a more inclusive and equitable political landscape in Pakistan.

Farzana Yaqoob is a former Minister for Social Welfare and Women Development, Azad Jammu and Kashmir:

Farzana Yaqoob, having served as the former minister for Social Welfare and Women Development in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, identified the roundtable as a pivotal platform that galvanized women's active engagement in shaping Pakistan's political landscape. From her perspective, the event presented a valuable opportunity to harness diverse expertise and unwavering commitment toward advancing women's empowerment. Farzana underscored the profound significance of collective action in dismantling barriers, emphasizing the shift from women merely participating to assuming leadership roles in nation-building.



Reflecting on her experience, Farzana emphasized the need for sustained momentum beyond the 2024 elections, recognizing it as essential for ensuring enduring progress towards gender equality and inclusive governance. Her insights delved into the challenges faced by women in decision-making processes, stressing the importance of persistent efforts to create an environment where women's voices resound prominently.

Farzana's visionary outlook extended to an aspirational Pakistan where women's voices would not only be heard but actively shape decision-making processes, driving positive transformations across society. Her reflections served as a call for continued dedication to fostering inclusive policies and empowering women to play pivotal roles in the nation's ongoing development.

Asia Ishaq Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) Pakistan :

In reflection, Asiya Ishaq, representing MQM Pakistan, deemed the roundtable a significant milestone in Pakistan's journey towards gender inclusivity and empowerment. Recognizing the

impending 2024 elections, she underscored the pivotal role of active women's involvement in shaping the nation's future.

Asiya acknowledged the diverse gathering of stakeholders from academia, media, and political spheres as a testament to the broad support for advancing women's rights and participation. The presence of esteemed representatives from organizations like the National Commission for Women, COPAIR, and UNDP was seen by her as a demonstration of the urgent commitment to comprehensively address gender disparities.

Her perspective emphasized the need for concrete actions beyond rhetoric, advocating for tangible strategies to dismantle barriers obstructing women from assuming leadership roles in all sectors. Asiya positioned the roundtable as a catalyst for fostering collaboration and dialogue among diverse stakeholders, leveraging collective expertise and resources to drive meaningful change.

Furthermore, Asiya highlighted the role of MQM Pakistan in championing policies and initiatives for women's empowerment. She emphasized the party's commitment to ensuring that women's voices are not only heard but actively contribute to shaping the trajectory of Pakistan's political and social landscape towards a more equitable future. Her reflections resonated as a call for sustained efforts and collaborative initiatives to drive transformative change in the realm of women's empowerment in Pakistan.

Shagufta Malik ANP Leader:

Shagufta Malik from ANP perceived the roundtable as a beacon of hope, illuminating the path for women's active participation and leadership in Pakistan's political landscape, especially in anticipation of the transformative 2024 elections. The gathering of distinguished guests from academia, media, and politics stood as a testament to the collective commitment toward sparking a wave of change for women's empowerment. With representatives from esteemed organizations like the NCSW, COPAIR, and UNDP, Shagufta acknowledged the diverse perspectives and unwavering dedication they brought to the table.



She viewed this event as a crucial turning point where women were not merely seen as voters but as architects of the nation's future, actively contributing their voices to shape policies and decisions. Shagufta emphasized the urgent need to break down societal barriers, fostering an environment conducive to the flourishing of women's leadership. Advocating for concrete measures and actionable strategies, she aimed to ensure that women's empowerment transcended rhetoric, translating into tangible and meaningful change.

Furthermore, Shagufta highlighted the significance of collaboration across political divides and various sectors to champion gender equality and inclusivity. Envisioning a Pakistan where women's voices were not just heard but amplified, their vision resonating, and their leadership paving the way for a more equitable society, she saw ANP's role as pivotal in driving forward progressive agendas. The party was committed to prioritizing women's rights and representation, aligning their aspirations with the collective aspirations of the nation for a brighter future.

Samiyia Raheel Qazi Leader JI:

In hindsight, Samiyia Raheel Qazi from JI perceived the roundtable as a pivotal opportunity that catalyzed women's active involvement in shaping Pakistan's political landscape, especially in the lead-up to the historic 2024 elections. Viewing the gathering of diverse stakeholders from academia, media, and politics as a positive step, she emphasized its role in fostering collaboration and dialogue for women's empowerment. The presence of esteemed representatives from organizations like the NCSW, COPAIR, and UNDP underscored, in Samiyia's eyes, the importance of leveraging their unique perspectives and unwavering dedication to advancing the cause of gender equality.



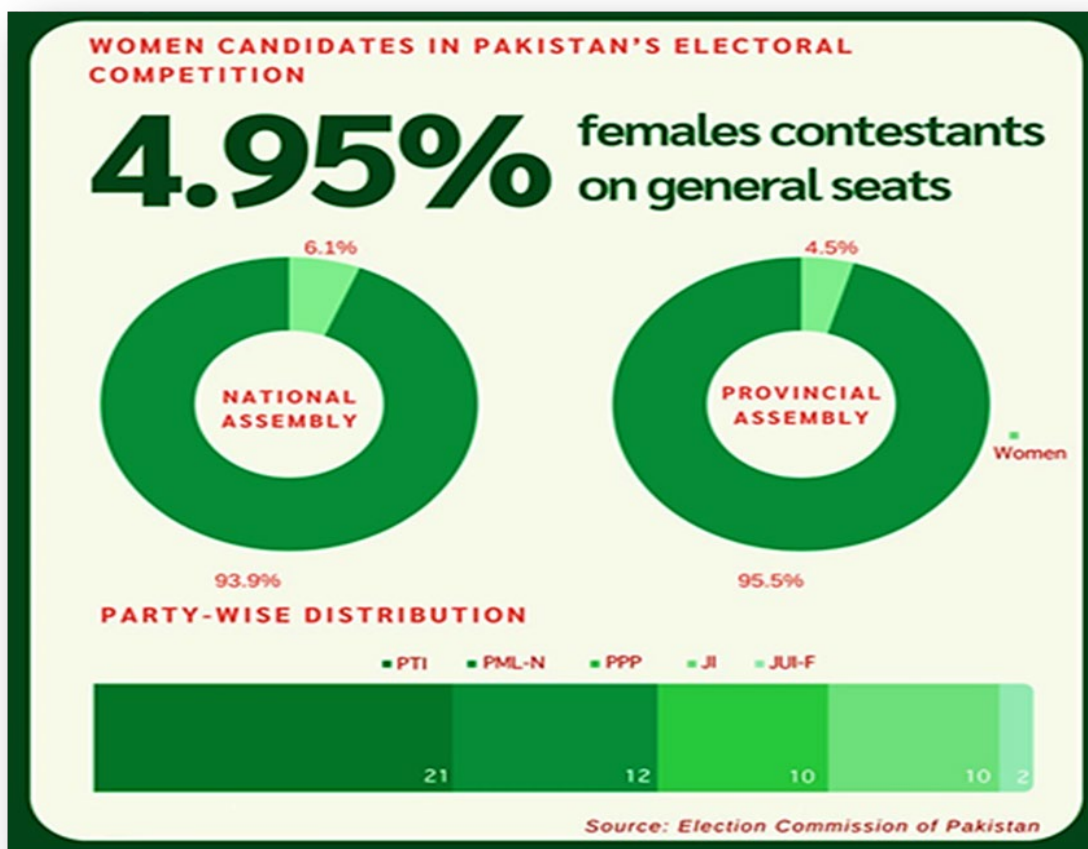
As a member of JI, Samiyia underscored the need for concrete actions and policy reforms, aiming to ensure that women's voices were not merely heard but influential in decision-making processes. She believed that the roundtable served as a platform to amplify the concerns and aspirations of women across Pakistan. Samiyia urged for concerted efforts to dismantle barriers and create inclusive opportunities, allowing women to contribute meaningfully to the nation's progress.

Envisioning the future, Samiyia saw a transformative landscape where women rose as leaders and architects of change, contributing to a more equitable and prosperous Pakistan beyond the 2024 elections. Her reflections encapsulated a vision for sustained empowerment and active participation of women in the nation's ongoing journey towards progress and inclusivity.

Experts on Gender Studies from Academia, Civil Society and Media Persons Attended the Consultation Session and Shared their Critical Analysis

Scholars specializing in gender studies from academia, representatives from civil society, and media professionals participated in the consultation session, offering their insightful analyses.

"Multi-Sector Experts Analyze Gender Dynamics: Insights Shared" marks a transformative juncture in Pakistan's political landscape as the nation approached the significant 2024 elections. It became a platform that ignited a critical conversation on the active participation of women, positioning them not merely as voters but as architects of the nation's future.



Distinguished guests from academia, media, and the political sphere converged to deliberate on strategies and initiatives aimed at advancing women's empowerment and enhancing their representation in pivotal decision-making processes. Representatives from the National Commission for Women (NCSW), the Center of Pakistan and International Relations (COPAIR),

and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) brought their unique perspectives and unwavering commitment to the forefront.

Academic experts specializing in gender studies played a pivotal role in the consultation session, offering scholarly insights and research findings to inform discussions on gender equality and women's rights. They stressed the need for evidence-based policies and interventions to address systemic barriers hindering women's progress and participation across various societal spheres.

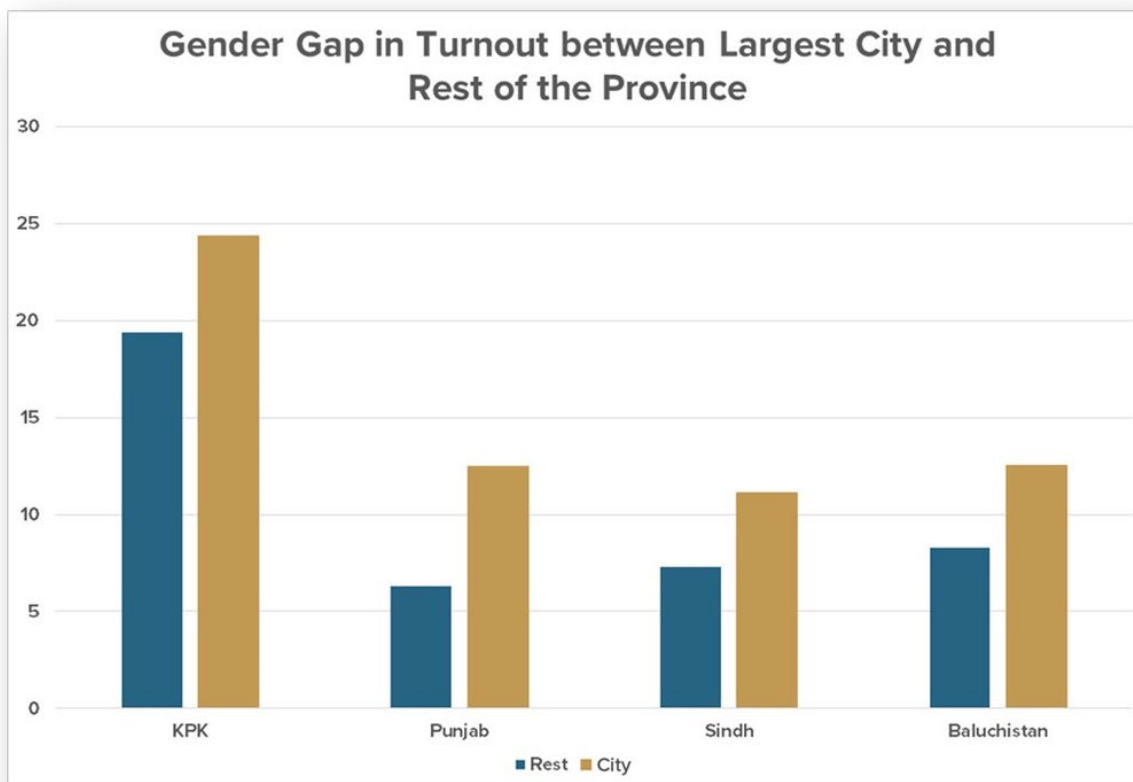
Civil society representatives, renowned for their grassroots activism and advocacy work, contributed valuable perspectives on the challenges faced by women and marginalized communities. Drawing on firsthand experiences and community-driven initiatives, they underscored the importance of inclusive approaches prioritizing the needs and voices of those most affected by gender disparities.

Media professionals, representing diverse outlets and platforms, emphasized the influential role of media in shaping public discourse and perceptions on gender-related issues. They highlighted the significance of responsible reporting and storytelling in challenging stereotypes and promoting greater awareness and empathy towards gender equality.

Throughout the consultation session, participants engaged in robust dialogue and debate, grappling with complex issues such as gender-based violence, economic empowerment, political representation, and cultural norms perpetuating gender inequities. By fostering constructive discourse and knowledge sharing, they sought to identify actionable strategies and best practices for driving meaningful change.

The session also provided a platform for networking and collaboration, fostering partnerships and alliances among stakeholders committed to advancing gender equality and social justice. By leveraging collective expertise and resources, participants aimed to effect positive change at both individual and systemic levels.

The consultation session underscored the interconnectedness of gender issues with broader societal concerns, highlighting the need for intersectional approaches addressing the intersecting forms of discrimination faced by individuals based on various factors.



As the conference concluded, participants emerged with renewed determination and a shared sense of purpose, committed to translating insights and recommendations into tangible actions and policies upholding the rights and dignity of all individuals, irrespective of gender identity or expression.

Moving forward, the conference served as a catalyst for ongoing dialogue, advocacy, and mobilization efforts aimed at building a more inclusive and equitable society where every individual can thrive and realize their full potential, free from discrimination and oppression based on gender.

Recommendations for Women's Political Participation in Pakistan

The journey towards a more inclusive and equitable political landscape in Pakistan requires concerted efforts and strategic initiatives to empower women and enhance their active participation. As the nation approaches the transformative 2024 elections, a comprehensive set of recommendations emerges from a crucial roundtable discussion involving experts from diverse sectors. This roundtable marked a pivotal moment, bringing together voices from academia, media, civil society, and political spheres, all committed to shaping a future where women not only participate as voters but stand as architects of the nation's destiny.

The recommendations encompass a multifaceted approach, addressing challenges ranging from gender-based stereotypes and financial constraints to institutional strengthening and leveraging technology for inclusivity. With a focus on actionable strategies, these recommendations aim to transcend rhetoric, fostering a political environment where women's voices are not only heard but actively influence decision-making processes.



As the political landscape evolves, these recommendations serve as a roadmap, guiding stakeholders towards a more gender-inclusive and responsive governance structure. The commitment to gender equality is not merely an electoral promise but a collective determination to reshape the narrative and ensure that women play a central role in defining Pakistan's political trajectory beyond the 2024 elections.

- **Challenge Stereotypes:** Initiate comprehensive public awareness campaigns that actively challenge traditional gender roles and promote positive narratives surrounding women in leadership positions.
- **Financial Empowerment:** Establish dedicated funds to provide financial assistance for women candidates' campaign expenses, ensuring equitable access to resources and a level playing field.
- **Mentorship Initiatives:** Implement robust mentorship programs connecting established women politicians with aspiring candidates, fostering guidance, and support to navigate the political landscape effectively.
- **Capacity Building:** Conduct extensive training workshops focusing on leadership skills, public speaking, and effective campaigning, equipping women candidates with essential tools for success.
- **Gender-Neutral Media Coverage:** Advocate for media outlets to adopt gender-sensitive reporting, ensuring balanced and nuanced coverage of women candidates, free from sexist bias or stereotypes.
- **Combat Online Harassment:** Implement robust measures to combat online harassment and trolling targeted at women candidates, creating a safer digital space for their campaigns.
- **Electoral Laws Reform:** Consider comprehensive revisions to electoral laws incentivizing political parties to field more women candidates. This could include offering additional campaign funds or reserved seats in parliament.
- **Data Collection and Analysis:** Regularly collect and analyze data on women's political participation, identifying key challenges and areas for improvement to inform evidence-based policy decisions.
- **Youth Engagement:** Actively encourage young women to participate in politics, both as voters and potential candidates, creating a pipeline for future leadership.
- **International Collaboration:** Foster collaborations with international organizations and NGOs working on women's political empowerment to share best practices and leverage external resources for comprehensive support.

- **Electoral Quota Enforcement:** The Election Commission of Pakistan should proactively identify political parties that fail to comply with the mandated 5 percent quota for women candidates, compelling non-compliant parties to rectify this matter in line with the Elections Act 2013 (amended 23).
- **Strengthening Institutions:** Bolster human machinery by enhancing the capacity and capabilities of institutions, crucial not only for the 2024 general election but also for subsequent ones, contributing to a more robust and inclusive electoral process.
- **Security Measures:** Ensure foolproof security for all women contestants in upcoming elections. The Election Commission should take proactive measures, and the media should provide equal coverage to women candidates, fostering a safe and inclusive electoral environment.
- **Timely Legislation Follow-Up:** Emphasize the urgency of promptly following up on pending pro-women legislation immediately after the new cabinet is sworn in, ensuring proper representation of women in the cabinet for advancing gender equality in decision-making processes.
- **Leveraging Technology:** Recognize the potential of technology in facilitating women candidates, voters, and supporters. The Election Commission should ensure the inclusion of women facing accessibility and mobility challenges in the electoral process, and political parties are encouraged to base their manifestos on women-led political processes for gender political equality.

Event Gallery



Media Coverage

Women Demand lawful share in politics and equal rights to contest, vote and demands appropriate security

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson NCSW Nifkar Bakhtiar holds a seminar with partner organization COPAIR demanding political participation for women in upcoming general elections as candidates and voters. Participants of the program were Anna Manawwar Awan President COPAIR, Nabila Malik UN Women, Anna Sayid UNDP, Barira from Gender Unit Ministry of Planning and Special Initiative, Tanzeela Mazhar, Nayyer Ali, Sumaira Khan, Dr Rakshanda, Dr Usman, Dr Saad Ali, Saira Ayyaz, Dr Zahid, Dr Shuja and all major political parties.

Anna Bakhtiar from PML-N, Farzana Shuja from PPP, Saira Ayyaz from MQM Pakistan, Shagufta Malik from ANP, Samiyya Raheel Qazi from JJ and experts on gender studies from academia, civil society and media persons attended the consultation session. Participants of the program shared their recommendations for rights of women mentioned in their manifestos and told the attendees that these parties have allocated seats for women for reserved seats. They said women are facing severe issues in their political campaigns and also face security concerns. In order to achieve favorable response from their voters they shared their experience of going door to door for demanding votes for their parties. Recommendations of the seminar agreed unanimously by all participants and announced by Ms. Nifkar Bakhtiar Chairperson NCSW were as under: Political parties must prioritize women's representation, the fight for a 3% quota to be progressed, yet not achieved. We demand to integrate women into the general pool, not a separate category as reserved seats. It was demanded to ensure security for all female candidates contesting elections and media shall provide equal airtime to the female candidates equally, reporters shall be assigned for these constituencies. She said women drive policymaking in offices and play key role in designing of bills, we demand women should have their representation in assemblies instead of working in secretariats. For the upcoming governments we are committed to make the child marriage bill as a law to be passed by national and provincial assemblies. It was demanded women shall keep an eye on parties manifesto for their rights and support them for their own rights. Cabinets without women, ministries without women's voices are unacceptable.

NCSW seminar demands women's political participation in elections

By Abid Ali Narejo

ISLAMABAD: Speakers at a seminar organized by the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) in collaboration by Center of Pakistan and International Relations (COPAIR) on demanded political participation for women in upcoming general elections as candidates and voters.

Besides NCSW Chairperson Nilofar Bakhtiar, other participants of the seminar were Anna Manawwar Awan President COPAIR, Nabila Malik UN Women, Anna Sayid UNDP, Barira from Gender Unit Ministry of Planning and Special Initiative, Tanzeela Mazhar, Nayyer Ali, Sumaira Khan, Dr Rakshanda, Dr Usman, Dr Saad Ali, Saira Ayyaz, Dr Zahid, Dr Shuja and all major political parties. Azma Bukhari from PML-N, Farzana Yaqub from PPP, Asiya Ishaq from MQM Pakistan, Shagufta Malik from ANP, Samiyya Raheel Qazi from JJ and experts on gender studies from academia, civil society and media personnel. The participants shared their recommendations for rights of women mentioned in their manifestos and told the attendees that their parties had allocated seats for women in general and reserved seats. They said that women were facing severe issues in their political campaigns, besides security concerns.

NCSW seminar demands women's political participation in elections

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ISLAMABAD, Feb 02 (APP): Speakers at a seminar organized by the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) in collaboration by Center of Pakistan and International Relations (COPAIR) on Friday demanded political participation for women in upcoming general elections as candidates and voters.

Women's participation in elections urged

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The seminar was attended by NCSW Chairperson Nifkar Bakhtiar, COPAIR President Anna Manawwar Awan, representatives of major political parties, and others. The participants shared their recommendations for rights of women mentioned in the party manifestos.

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They said that women were facing severe issues in their political campaigns, besides security concerns. In order to achieve favourable response from their voters, they shared their experience of going door-to-door campaigning for votes.

The seminar's recommendations included efforts to integrate women into the general pool and not a separate category as reserved seats and security for all female candidates and equal media coverage. The seminar stressed that cabinets without women and ministries without women were unacceptable.

NCSW Seminar Demands Women's Political Participation In Elections

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Way Forward

The roundtable has ignited a spark, and to transform this momentum into lasting change, a comprehensive and strategic way forward is essential. Here is a multifaceted approach to ensure sustained progress:

- **Establish Collaborative Task Forces:**
 - Create task forces with diverse representation to implement and oversee the recommendations arising from the roundtable.
 - Assign specific task forces for policy advocacy, mentorship programs, electoral reforms, and awareness campaigns.
- **Political Commitment and Legislation:**
 - Advocate for political parties to demonstrate commitment by incorporating women-centric policies and measures into their manifestos.
 - Push for legislative reforms that incentivize parties to nominate more women candidates, ensuring compliance with the mandated quotas.
- **Strengthen Institutional Capacity:**
 - Bolster the capacity of electoral institutions to conduct inclusive, transparent, and fair elections.
 - Provide continuous training for electoral staff, emphasizing gender sensitivity and awareness.
- **Security Measures:**
 - Implement robust security measures for women candidates, voters, and campaigners to create a safe and inclusive electoral environment.
 - Engage with law enforcement agencies to ensure the effective enforcement of security protocols.
- **Media Engagement and Sensitization:**
 - Collaborate with media outlets to promote balanced and unbiased coverage of women candidates.
 - Organize workshops and training sessions for journalists to sensitize them to gender-related issues and responsible reporting.

- **Technology Integration:**
 - Leverage technology to facilitate the inclusion of women facing accessibility challenges in the electoral process.
 - Encourage political parties to incorporate technology-driven strategies for reaching a wider audience, especially women.

- **Youth Involvement and Education:**
 - Develop programs to engage and educate young women on political processes and encourage their active participation.
 - Collaborate with educational institutions to integrate civic education that emphasizes the importance of gender equality.

- **International Collaboration:**
 - Foster partnerships with international organizations, NGOs, and women's advocacy groups to share best practices and resources.
 - Participate in international forums to showcase Pakistan's commitment to advancing women's political empowerment.

- **Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation:**
 - Establish a monitoring and evaluation mechanism to track the progress of initiatives and adherence to recommendations.
 - Regularly publish progress reports to maintain transparency and accountability.

- **Cultural and Societal Awareness Programs:**
 - Initiate cultural programs that challenge traditional gender norms and promote a more inclusive narrative.
 - Implement nationwide awareness campaigns to change societal attitudes towards women in leadership roles.

- **Educational Initiatives:**
 - Integrate gender equality education into school curricula to instill values of inclusivity from a young age.
 - Encourage educational institutions to promote gender diversity in leadership roles.

This comprehensive way forward recognizes the interconnected nature of challenges and addresses them systematically. It emphasizes collaboration, legislative reforms, capacity building, and cultural shifts to ensure that the progress achieved is sustained and transformative.

Conclusion

The roundtable emerged not just as a momentary gathering of minds but as a transformative launchpad propelling Pakistan towards a future where women don't merely cast votes but stand at the forefront of leadership. The collaborative exchange of ideas within the roundtable, fueled by a shared determination for change, has now become a resonating force extending beyond the confines of the event.

The torch of momentum now rests with each participant, empowering individuals to carry forth the spirit of the roundtable. Whether advocating for policy shifts, providing mentorship to aspiring candidates, or instigating critical evaluations of manifestos, every action, regardless of scale, contributes to the canvas of a more equitable Pakistan.

However, this dialogue must not signify an end but rather the commencement of a broader movement. It calls for sustained efforts where women continue to rise, their voices echoing louder, and Pakistan's future gradually taking shape. The narrative should be painted with vibrant hues, symbolizing inclusivity and the ascendancy of empowered leadership.



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