

Islamabad, 05 March 2017

## **1. Recommendations for Media and Social Media**

With the media landscape evolving, it is crucial to harnesses new media to support democracy. New media have increasingly become an integral component of the media landscape and an important outlet for candidates, political parties, election management bodies, and citizens. Today citizens have more avenues to reach candidates and campaigns and share information than ever, presenting new opportunities and challenges for democracy promotion and new possibilities for democratic consolidation in Pakistan.

This group was assigned to seek recommendations regarding the following:

- How media supports all aspects of female participation in electoral process both as voters and candidates?
- What needs to be done to make information and reporting gender sensitive?
- Which structure owns the respective actions?

The recommendations are divided on thematic basis:

### 1. Capacity building and Sensitization

- It was strongly recommended that capacity of representatives of media outlets be built in gender sensitive reporting and gender responsive information sharing as well gender disaggregated electoral information dissemination.
- They also need to be sensitized about the negative reporting regarding women candidates and female elected representatives
- Anchor persons be sensitized to provide equal opportunities to female political leaders as panelists during talk shows and Operas.
- Political parties should be sensitized to the need of giving equal opportunities to female candidates for projection and presentation in electronic media.
- An election specific gender sensitive **Code of Conduct** be developed by media itself and should then its implementation be ensured and monitored by CSOs and political parties both.
- Media outlets particularly state owned ones should be capacitated to be **agenda creators** and particularly should come up with concrete theme related to importance of women political participation and to ensure its dissemination across the national and local media channels.

### 2. Reaching out

- It should be included in the Regulatory Framework that both state owned and private media outlets should allocate time to create awareness regarding importance of women participation in electoral process as voters and candidates and also educate voters on how to vote, why to vote etc.
- Political parties, candidates and Election Commission can use Cell phones, Face book, Twitter , FM radio, Telephones and other social media tools to proactively engaged with citizens to address inquiries related to electoral process, create awareness among masses

on importance of voting and women's participation in electoral processes as well get political information and follow election news during elections.

- Civil society groups, media outlets and Election Commission of Pakistan should develop gender sensitive messages on importance of participation in electoral processes to put on electronic, print and social media.
- Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), CSOs and media should engage female influential, role models and celebrities to inspire women to vote, to participate in electoral process as candidates, observers and as active citizens.
- NGOs along with media outlets should make an effort to reach out to women and other marginalized groups in remote, far flung areas and areas with zero or minimum women turn out.

### 3. Electoral processes in FATA

It was suggested that ECP, media outlets and NGOs should take extra measures to carry out gender sensitive voters' education in FATA and reach out to women to participate in electoral processes as candidates also.

## **2. Recommendations for Access and Mobility**

### 1. Vigorous efforts to maximize registration of women as voters prior to General Election 2018

All election stakeholders must make coordinated efforts to ensure the registration of around 12 million women as voters before the General Elections 2018. Such a national effort should be led by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to be fully supported by the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA). The following actions have been recommended:

- a. The government should exempt women from the fee for the registration of their Computerized National Identity Cards (CNIC).
- b. NADRA must provide Mobile Registration Vans (MRVs) to pockets of population with unregistered women
- c. NADRA offices and MRVs must be staffed by female staff to ensure a conducive environment women registration
- d. ECP must engage local government councilors and community-based organizations for mobilizing women to register for CNICs

### 2. Measures to create conducive environment for women's participation in electoral processes

Keeping in view the cultural sensitivities to women's electoral participation in some areas of Pakistan, the ECP may undertake following measures to ensure conducive environment for women to participate in the electoral processes:

- a. Establish an increased number of female polling stations especially in areas where electoral participation of women is inhibited due to social and cultural barriers
- b. Deploy female election and security staff at the women polling stations and booths
- c. Set up polling stations, as far as possible, within a walking distance from the voters of an electoral area
- d. Train female facilitators to assist women voters on Election Day

- e. Arrange transport for female voters in areas where they face difficulty in reaching to polling stations
- f. Involve local police in ensuring women voting in areas where they are barred under local/tribal/bradari agreements from voting
- g. Criminalize actions by individuals or groups to bar women from voting
- h. Hold re-polling at polling stations where less than 10 percent of the registered women had turned out to vote
- i. Consider innovative solutions to encourage women voting such as postal ballots, Online Voting System, etc.
- j. Special measures for vulnerable groups among women such as women who are pregnant are have disabilities

3. Multi-pronged strategy for information, education and awareness on need of women's participation in electoral and political processes

All stakeholders particularly ECP, political parties and civil society organizations must invest in the electoral and political education of society in general and women in particular on the need and importance of women's participation in electoral and political processes. Unless there is a societal efforts, the objective of an improved and informed participation of women in such processes may not be achieved. Some of efforts that were recommended include:

- a. ECP must undertake a long-term public education campaign using electronic, print and social media on the need and importance of women voting. Such campaign must also focus on information needed for the voter registration, candidature, voting process, etc. State-run radio and television may be used for such campaigns.
- b. Civil society organizations must reach out to, particularly, areas where women participation has remained low during previous elections to engage with communities on the need and importance of women's participation in electoral and political processes. Such community mobilization efforts must be long-term, targeted and result-based. Important local actors such as local social elite and local government representatives may be involved in such efforts.
- c. Political parties must undertake education programmes for their male and female workers to ensure that they understand the critical importance of women's participation in the electoral and political processes. Such education programmes should focus on importance of political choice that must be based on party ideology, programme and manifesto and should be free of traditional linkages and clientelism. In addition, political parties should award more tickets (as much as 35 percent) to women to contest on general seats.
- d. Elected representatives may use their influence to dilute local level factors that restrict women's participation in electoral and political processes.

**3. Recommendations for Monitoring and Observation**

The discussions in three groups focused on aspects of monitoring and observation of elections that could capture, report and facilitate women participation in electoral processes. The general recommendations of groups are listed below:

- The domestic observation groups must ensure at least 40 to 50 percent participation of women observers as part of observation groups
- The observers' groups need to be sensitized on the issues of gender. Standardized guidelines around gender issues need to be developed. In order to mainstream gender sensitization across the board a training cell should be formed with significant expertise on issues of gender for across the board sensitization of gender issues.
- Local community should be made part of the observation and monitoring processes to not only make it more participatory but also get a buy in from the local communities.
- The criteria that is developed by ECP for observation groups/observers applying for accreditation should be made part of the Election Law.
- The Election Law should ensure the access of observers to all the stages of elections including the RO office at the time of consolidation of results.
- The observer groups need to review and refine observation tools to be able to report more coherently on issues pertaining to women participation in electoral processes.
- The observers groups must ensure that hotspots in which women were barred from voting in previous elections should be vigilantly observed by the observation groups for the whole of the election cycle- pre-election, election day and post- election phases. The observer group must relay the immediately to media and other stakeholders, in case of illegalities and irregularities found so that ECP can take timely actions.
- ECP must ensure, during the pre-election phase that none of the political parties join hands to bar women from voting and if any such activity is observed ECP should immediately take action against the political parties involved in such action.
- Observer groups should have a robust mechanism to share observation and monitoring information in pre- election phase with media.

#### **4. Recommendations for Gender and Political Parties**

##### Level of Act / ECP / Other partners/programs

- Political Parties Act to be amended, requiring each political party to give at least 35% of tickets to women candidates.
- Strengthen intraparty elections requirements to make the inclusive and promote equal opportunity.
- Make the registration of political parties contingent upon meeting the required benchmarks (number of female office bearers, etc.).
- Monitor the performance of political parties during the last elections and take proactive measures to support women gender mainstreaming in the upcoming elections.
- Provide gender training for political parties, particularly to promote a gender sensitive code of ethics.

##### Level of Political Parties

- Political parties should play a strong role in mobilizing and facilitating women voters, including support for CNIC registration. Special attention should be given by political parties to do this in remote and vulnerable communities, and also in FATA with reference to integration of FATA.
- Political parties' own internal processes for promoting women as holders of office and in leadership positions should be encouraged and monitored.
- Political parties should put more female candidates on mainstream tickets, especially for "winnable" seats and not just on reserved seats
- Political parties also need to promote broader inclusive practices for ethnic and religious minorities in key party positions and in mainstream tickets
- More capacity building of women candidates and party office bearers needs to be done to give a stronger voice to women who work for the party and are not necessarily connected with a political family. This will give more voice to women's issues.
- Political parties should also play a proactive role in engaging youth party workers, including strengthening student councils/unions and promoting constitutional education among the youth.