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Surmounting all odds

Only six women make it to national and 10 to provincial assemblies

Women faced a host of challenges in contesting elections: report

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If it were not for the 60 seats reserved for women, the next National Assembly would have practically been a male-dominated affair as women's representation on general seats suffered during the 2013 elections.

According to results released by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) so far, barring the few constituencies where elections were postponed or where re-polling is planned, only six women have been elected to the lower house of Parliament — a 66.6 per cent reduction from 18 women MNAs in the 2008 legislature.

According to ECP data processed by a non-profit organisation, The Researchers, out of the 150 women candidates who had filed nomination papers for the NA elections from 111 constituencies across Pakistan, only six won the elections. Sixty women candidates contested the election on party tickets.

Three female candidates each from Punjab and Sindh won the NA elections on a general seat, according to ECP results analysed by The Researchers. No woman suc-

ceeded in winning a National Assembly seat from Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa or Balochistan.

The three successful candidates from Punjab — Sumera Malik, Ghulam Bibi Bharwana and Saira Afzal Tarar all belong to the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) while the three winning candidates from Sindh, Faryal Talpur, Fehmida Mirza and Azra Afzal Pechuho were contesting on Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP)

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tickets. Among the six women MNAs elected, four completed hat-tricks. Malik, Pechuho and Mirza had all won from the same seat in the past two elections.

Among the women, Talpur won by the largest margin — 64,438 votes — and Bharwana had the lowest winning margin — 18,152. Among the women who lost, Samina Khalid Ghurki had won from NA-130, Lahore for the past

two elections but lost her seat to a PML-N candidate by over 50,000 votes this time. Mehtab Akbar Rashdi of PML-F and Ghinwa Bhutto of the PPP-Shaheed Bhutto, lost to Talpur.

Provincial assemblies

The overall number of women elected to provincial assemblies remained unchanged in the 2013 elections, according to The Researchers.

Only 10 of the 313 women who filed nomination papers from 213 constituencies will sit in the legislature for the next five-year term. Out of the 10, eight belong to Punjab while one candidate each is from Sindh and Balochistan. Not a single woman won a seat in the K-P Assembly.

All eight successful candidates in the Punjab Assembly are from the PML-N as is the sole woman to win a general seat in the Balochistan Assembly. One PPP candidate, Saniya, won from PS-109 Karachi to be a part of the Sindh Assembly.

Two Punjab Assembly candidates, Nazia Raheel from PP-88 Toba Tek Singh-V and Naghma Mushtaq from PP-206 Multan-II, were re-elected

from their constituencies. Out of the 313 women contesting for provincial assembly seats, 198 were independent candidates.

Aazar Ayaz, Executive Director of The Researchers, said the data reveals that voters in Punjab voted along party lines rather than for candidates. "The politics of electable candidates and the removal of educational qualification as a pre-requisite for

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contesting general elections has affected the chances of women candidates, such as former federal minister Hina Rabbani Khar, to be awarded party tickets. Security threats in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan also hampered their chances of actively running election campaigns."

The Researchers works for community empowerment and women's participation in decision-making.

COMPARISON

Seats won by women in NA in the last two elections

S. No	Province	Constituency	Name	2013		2008	
				Pol Party	Votes	Pol Party	Votes
1	Punjab	NA-69 Khushab I	Ms. Sumaira Malik	PML-N	118,108	PML-Q	61,076
2		NA-88 Jhang (Jhang Cum Chiniot)	Ms. Ghulam Bibi Bharwana	PML-N	87,002	PML-Q	63,515
3		NA-102 Hafizabad I	Ms. Saira Afzal Tarar	PML-N	93,013	PML-N	56,313
4	Sindh	NA-207 Larkana IV	Ms. Faryal Talpur	PPPP	83,916	PPPP	Un-Opposed
5		NA-213 Nawabshah I	Dr. Azra Afzal Pechuho	PPPP	111,667	PPPP	108,096
6		NA-225 Badin II	Dr. Fahmida Mirza	PPPP	110,684	PPPP	88,983

SOURCE: THE RESEARCHERS

COMPARISON

Seats won by women in PAs in the last two elections

S. No	Province	Constituency	Name	2013		2008	
				Pol Party	Votes	Pol Party	Votes
1	Punjab	PP-34 Sargodha III	Dr. Nadia Aziz	PML-N	33,744	PPPP	16,723
2		PP-53 Faisalabad III	Ms. Iffat Miraj Awan	PML-N	44,018	-	-
3		PP-78 Jhang II	Ms. Rashida Yakoob	PML-N	42,194	-	-
4		PP-88 Toba Tek Singh V	Ms. Nazia Raheel	PML-N	36,622	PML-N	23,550
5		PP-101 Gujranwala XI	Riaz Amanat Ali Virik	PML-N	24,413	-	-
6		PP-116 Mandi -Bahuddin	Ms. Hameeda Waheeduddin	PML-N	52,712	PML-Q	19,638
7		PP-185 Okara I	Samina Noor	PML-N	26,621	-	-
8		PP-206 Multan III	Ms. Naghma Mushtaq Lang	PML-N	43,050	PML-Q	28,109
9	Sindh	PS-109 Karachi XXI	Ms. Saniya	PPPP	53,926	-	-
10	Balochistan	PB-26 Jaffarabad II	Ms. Rahat Jamali	PML-N	12,521	-	-

SOURCE: THE RESEARCHERS