

Publication Date: 18 May, 2013

Newspaper: Pakistan Observer

A catalogue of women seats shows progressive polls picture

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KARACHI—At least 16 Women get elected National Provincial general seats in the May 11 elections. In all 150 women filed nomination papers at National level from 111 constituencies of which 60 were on party tickets. At Provincial levels 313 women filed nomination papers from 213 Constituencies of which 115 were party ticket holders
The Researchers (TR) under its initiatives - Pakistan Governance Forum (PGF) and Women & Politics in Asia Forum (WPAF) - undertook observation of Election 2013 with a gender lens. This was in pursuance of organizations ten years effort to observe and document women role in electoral and political processes since 2002. Mr. Azar Ayaz, the Executive Director, informed that a complete report focusing women performance in

pre-poll, poll day and post poll phases will be launched as soon as ECP completes election result and government formation is completed. It may be recalled that in the 2008, 16 women joined National Assembly and 10 at respective Provincial Assemblies on general seats. For 2013 elections, up-till now, 6 (3 Each from PML-N & PPP) women have made it to National Assembly and 10 to the four Provincial Assemblies i.e. 8 in Punjab, 1 each in Sindh & Balochistan whereas no women could win a general seat in Khyber Pakhtunkhawa. 6 female winners of 2008 National Assembly could find their way back for 2013, along with 4 from Provincial Assemblies. Interestingly 2 women each from Punjab (Ms. Sumera Malik & Ms. Ghulam Bibi Bharwana) and Sindh (Dr. Azra Afzal Peechu & Dr. Fahmida Mirza) have made a hat trick of winning their seats in National

Assembly since 2002. Whereas, 2 women of 2008 Punjab Assembly (Ms. Nazia Raheel & Ms. Naghma Mushtaq) have been re-elected.
Among the winners Ms. Sumaira Malik of NA-69 Khushab I, wining by a margin of 38,253, has bagged highest number of votes 118,108 with estimated voter turnout of 61.72% in her constituency. The lowest win has come on 83,916 Votes by Ms. Faryal Talpur of NA-207 Larkana IV who won by a margin of 63,438 in a constituency where voter turnout was 54.24%. The lowest wining margin is of 18,152 votes for Ms. Ghulam Bibi Bharwana from NA- 88 Jhang-Cum-Chinniot where the voter turnout was 64.54%, which is highest among the six women winning constituencies. In 2008 & 2002 Dr. Nadia was PPPP candidate as a Loser and Winner respectively but with

less votes than 2013; **In 2008 & 2002 Amanat Ali Virik her husband was a candidate as Independent & from PML-Q respectively
Among the winners of Provincial Assemblies Ms. Saniya of PS-109 Karachi XXI, won by a margin of 44,054 votes besides bagging highest number of votes 53,926 casted with estimated voter turnout of 49.17% for her constituency. Ms. Rahat Jamali of PB-26 Jaffarbad II secured 12,521 votes, which is lowest number of vote taken among the winners. She won by a margin of 5,758 in a constituency where voter turnout is informed to be 40.25%. Whereas, the lowest wining margin is 1,859 votes of Ms. Rashida Yakoob from PP-78 Jhang II; where the voter turnout has been 51.93%.
Analyzing the results of 2013 women contested constituencies one factor has clearly emerged that in Punjab voters' casted their

ballot for the party rather than the candidates as all the women candidates who have switched their parties were able to bag more votes than before or converted previous losses to wins this time.
Mr. Ayaz appreciated ECP effort to collect and disseminate Gender Disaggregated data, which has happened for the first time in Pakistan. This is a good omen to document women role and will bring institutional focus to women issues in electoral processes. This will also provide space for advocacy with political parties to further mainstream women in political processes leading to their equitable share within political parties and institutional democracy. He informed that 2013 elections have been phenomenal for women form the perspective of number of candidates and voters by way of their political experience as large number of first timers women were given

opportunity to contest under PTI and other parties.
In 2002 and 2008 elections many came from politically elite backgrounds, and could benefit power and Privilege; but largely due to education as eligibility criteria. Removal of this criteria was seen to be damper for women being awarded party ticket and its first victim, among other reasons, was Ms. Hina Rabbani Khar who had been contesting on her fathers seat. Women in KPK were threatened both as candidate & voters limiting their active political life. Whereas, in Balochistan overall security threats hampered the whole process. Political parties in Khyber Pakhtunkhawa once again joined hands to bar women form voting. However, there is still a long way to go, but if these elections are any indicator then the women of Pakistan have put down a marker on the democratic map in the country.