

Challenges and Impediments Against Women in Politics



**A seminar of Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians -
Women's Parliamentary Caucus
at
5th CPA Asia Regional Conference**

July 31, 2019, Islamabad



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A very special thanks to all our distinguished guests and panelists whose presence and participation made this seminar more than just an event but an inspiring experience.

I appreciate the tremendous support extended by all relevant departments of the National Assembly.

Tireless work and excellent coordination of WPC team deserves all applauses.



Ms. Munaza Hassan
Member Steering Committee, CWP
Elected Secretary, Women's Parliamentary Caucus (WPC)
Member National Assembly, Islamic Republic of Pakistan

Acronyms

AJK	Azad Jammu and Kashmir
BAP	Balochistan Awami Party
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CNIC	Computerized National Identity Card
CWP	Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians
CPA	Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
ECP	Election Commission of Pakistan
GDA	Grand Democratic Alliance
JUI-F	Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Fazl-ur-Rehman)
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
MNA	Member of National Assembly
MPA	Member of Provincial Assembly
MP	Member Parliament
PPP	Pakistan People's Party
PIPS	Parliamentary Institute of Parliamentary Services
PML-N	Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz
PTI	Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf
PTV	Pakistan Television News
U.K	United Kingdom
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
WPC	Women's Parliamentary Caucus

Executive Summary

The 5th CPA Asia Regional Conference, organized by the National Assembly of The Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was held in Islamabad from 29th July to 2nd August 2019. The theme for this year's Conference was 'Envisioning Parliamentary Paths towards a Diverse and Developed South Asia'. Parliamentarians from UK, Malaysia, Uganda, Cameroon and Sri Lanka participated in this conference.

A CWP Seminar "Challenges and Impediments Against Women in Politics" was hosted by WPC on 31st July 2019. It consisted of four technical sessions namely, Prioritizing Women's Issues as National Issues, The Push Towards Backbenches in the House, The "General Seat" vs the "Reserved Seat" Bias and Male Dominant Party Structure. Distinguished panelists included three leading women rights experts, one woman legislator from Uganda and ten Pakistani legislators (2 men and 8 women including 2 Federal Ministers from Pakistan). More than 120 participants including Legislators, CSOs, diplomatic corps, academia, and media attended the seminar. The seminar was covered positively on print, electronic and social media. The welcome address was delivered by Dr. Fehmida Mirza. She is a member the CWP's Executive Committee, Patron of WPC and the Federal Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination. Dr. Mirza emphasized, that political parties should ensure women's participation at the decision-making forums. The opening address was presented by WPC Secretary, and CPA Steering Committee Member, Ms. Munaza Hassan; who also moderated the seminar. She elaborated on how PTI's government aims to achieve the vision of 'New Pakistan', under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan. She also acknowledged all strategic partners and alliances who are working with WPC to increase capacities of women parliamentarians and create enablers for pro-women legislation. The seminar was chaired by Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Cameroon and Chairperson of CPA Executive Committee, Honourable Ms. Emilia Lifaka. In her concluding remarks she appreciated the Pakistani government on providing political space to Pakistani women. She related that as an indicator of willingness of men to ensure that voices of women are heard. Additionally, she stated that women's political participation affects the choice of policy issues and types of solutions that are offered.

Candid conversations were generated on, how to practically increase women's role in politics and remove societal, cultural and institutional barriers that prevent women from participating in politics. The consensus was that, Pakistan needs more political participation of women through added and effectual affirmative action; so that reduction in gender inequalities could be visible.

Key recommendations that emerged from the seminar were as follows, i. a quota for women parliamentarians in Parliamentary Sub-Committees as Chairwomen and as participants may be allocated, ii. enhancing the skills and information base of backbenchers through structured capacity building exercises, iii. customization and context-specific adoption of best practices from other countries such as UK, iv. awarding of reserved seats to genuine political workers should be on merit, v. identification of the need for a law which ensures, women parliamentarians (general and reserved seats) are given development funds and are trusted to invest on issues they resonate with, vi. quota for women where they could contest direct elections against other women.

Powerful and passionate messages by all distinguished speakers and participants provided a pedestal with an invigorated focus on issues of people. Strategic calls for action to expand involvement, representation and accomplishment of women in politics and parliament included, i. elimination of all barriers to women's participation in politics, ii. working with men for pro-women legislation and enabling environment, iii. initiation of an international women's caucus.

In conclusion, it was an inclusive forum where representatives of people emerged as their voice and served as power of the powerless. It is hoped that learnings from this important seminar will be applied by all legislators, in their specific contexts.

1. Context

1.1 An Overview of 5th CPA Asia Regional Conference

Pakistan had the honour of hosting the 5th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Asia Regional Conference in Islamabad from 29th July – 2nd August 2019, under the theme ‘Envisioning Parliamentary Paths towards a Diverse and Developed South Asia.’

The CPA is an international community of 185 Commonwealth Parliaments and Legislatures working together to deepen the Commonwealth’s commitment to the highest standards of democratic governance. CPA brings together Parliaments of Commonwealth countries to exchange ideas among themselves and with experts in various fields, to identify best practices and new policy options they can adopt in the governance of their societies.¹

CPA activities focus on the Commonwealth’s commitment to its fundamental political values including: just and honest government, alleviation of poverty, fundamental human rights, international peace and order, global economic development, the rule of law, equal rights and representation for all citizens, the separation of powers among three branches of government and the right to participate in free and democratic political processes.

During the 5th CPA Asia Regional Conference, Members discussed a wide range of topics including: the challenges for poverty eradication in South Asia; the Sustainable Development Agenda; priorities of States in the region; and parliamentary partnerships and oversight for SDGs.

The Session on 31 July 2019, hosted by WPC, consisted of four technical sessions under the overall theme “Challenges and Impediments Against Women in Politics”².

About CWP

The Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) is a network within CPA. It was founded in 1989 to increase the number of elected women representatives in Parliaments and Legislatures across the Commonwealth and to ensure that women’s issues are brought to the fore in parliamentary debate and legislation. The Chairperson of CWP is Honourable Dr. Noraini Ahmed, MP from Malaysia. The CWP network provides a means of building the capacity of women Parliamentarians to be more effective in their roles – legislation, oversight, and representation and help parliaments become gender-sensitive institutions.

¹ “Commonwealth Parliamentary Association” (<http://thecommonwealth.org/organisation/commonwealth-parliamentary-association-cpa>). August 7, 2019.

² The technical implementing team of WPC started preparations for the CWP Session on 25th June, 2019.

1.2 WPC Working Council Meeting

On 29th July, 2019, the WPC organized its Working Council meeting in honour of the CPA President Designate and Speaker of the Parliament of Uganda Honourable Rebecca A. Kadaga; the Chairperson of CPA International Executive Committee and Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Cameroon Honourable Ms. Emilia Lifaka; the CWP Chairperson and MP Malaysia Dr Dato' Noraini Ahmad; and Member Executive Committee of CPA Branch-Uganda and MP Uganda Honourable Ms. Jalia Bintu.

This meeting was attended by members of the WPC Working Council (Annexure 1). The Patron of WPC, Dr. Fehmida Mirza welcomed the CPA delegation. The meeting started with introductions and exchange of pleasantries. Secretary WPC, Ms. Munaza Hassan, gave a brief overview of the WPC including its history, its role and its achievements. Former Secretary of WPC, Honourable Ms. Shaista Malik, also gave an account of the major achievements of the WPC during 2013-2018.



Meeting of WPC Working Council in Honour of Foreign Dignitaries

The foreign dignitaries shared the role of women parliamentarians in their respective countries. Following this, there was a series of questions and answers between the members of the Working Council and the foreign delegation. This engaging session conducted in a semi-formal setting offered great peer-to-peer learning. This conversation concentrated on issues around structural patriarchy, opportunities and challenges for women legislatures. Souvenirs were presented to each member of the CPA delegation at the end.

The meeting concluded with a tour of the floor of the National Assembly of The Islamic Republic of Pakistan.



Tour of National Assembly

2. CWP-WPC Seminar

On 31st July 2019, WPC organized an interactive seminar on the four thematic areas namely: Prioritizing Women Issues as National Issues; The Push towards Backbenches in the House; The “General Seat” versus “Reserved Seat” Bias; and Male dominant Party Structure.

This powerful and thought-provoking activity was part of the 3-day CPA conference. The Conference’s theme was *Envisioning Parliamentary Paths Towards a Diverse and Developed South Asia*. A sizeable number of parliamentarians from five countries including Pakistan assembled not only to determine structural and cultural patriarchy faced by women in politics but also to explore realistic solutions to expand their effective presence in politics.

Parliamentarians, as community leaders, are transformative changemakers and impact the lives of others. They are mandated to ensure development outcomes are efficient, effective, and achievable. However, the evolution of modern democracy and the political system has witnessed political isolation and exclusion for women. Women around the world face gender-based discrimination in both party nominations and key leadership roles. Gender discrimination in Parliaments and political parties need to be identified, challenged and reconstructed. Parliaments must adopt a gender-sensitive approach and act as a gold standard for other institutions to follow.

2.1 Aims and Objectives of CWP-WPC Seminar

Aim:

To create and strengthen an enabling environment for women’s empowerment for a sustainable, secure and fairer society that is free from violence and coercion.

Key Objectives:

To create an important opportunity for learning by:

1. Articulating the need and relevance of gender equality and mainstreaming
2. Sharing best practices on augmenting women’s voices in legislatures
3. Recommending precise procedures and processes to advance the gender-responsiveness of parliaments

Expected Outcomes:

1. An inclusive and diverse space shall be materialized with a focus on ensuring that marginalized voices are heard.
2. Ideas and strategies (on how governments can work together to support and improve opportunities for women becoming more involved in politics and decision-making processes) shall be generated.
3. Succinct but rich in content programme will disseminate valuable information.
4. Strategic networking opportunities shall be created.

2.2 Opening Session

Dr. Fehmida Mirza, Member CWP Executive Committee and Patron of WPC, formally started the seminar by delivering her welcome address. This was followed by opening remarks of Ms. Munaza Hassan, Secretary WPC.

The programme of the seminar is included as Annexure 2. Bios of all panelists are included as Annexure 3.

Dr. Fehmida Mirza, Member Executive Committee CWP, Patron WPC & Federal Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination

Dr. Fehmida Mirza welcomed the distinguished foreign parliamentarians from the Commonwealth fraternity as well as the audience including legislators, members of civil society, academia, media and all other guests.

She described how Women's Parliamentary Caucus (WPC) was formed in 2008 and how it has gone from strength to strength since then.

Under her patronage, WPC brought about many legislative reforms including the Protection Against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, the Acid and Burn Crimes Act, and much needed election reforms pertaining to women. At least 10% of votes cast have to be of women otherwise the results would be void.

She explained that women's exclusion in the formal political processes is a result of multiple structural, institutional and functional obstacles that are present in the country. Political parties should ensure women's participation at the decision making forums.

"Political parties should ensure women's participation at the decision making forums."

Moreover, she highlighted that during her Speakership, she ensured participation of women on backbenches and tried to reduce the disparity between women elected on reserved seats and those elected on general seats.

Dr. Mirza said that the deliberations of this seminar shall command the attention of CPA and build a transformative agenda for advancing gender equality, creating peaceful societies and removing structural patriarchy.



Dr. Fehmida Mirza delivering opening remarks

Ms. Munaza Hassan, Member Steering Committee CWP & Secretary WPC

Ms. Munaza Hassan, in her opening remarks said that the 5th CPA Asia Regional Conference marked yet another milestone of continued collaboration between Pakistan national and provincial assemblies, CPA regional branches and the CPA secretariat.

She stated that there was a patriarchal consensus against women in leadership positions. She stated that every country required country-specific analysis and solutions to overcome barriers for women in politics. Many of the solutions are available through the SDGs.

Ms. Munaza Hassan underscored the importance of gender-responsive legislation and social protection programmes in empowering women in any society and state. She highlighted the renewed focus on improving health and happiness of women and girls.

She elaborated on how PTI's government aims to achieve the vision of 'New Pakistan' under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan. She marked this as the start of a new era, where the focus would be on eradicating corruption, and promoting human development. Furthermore, this era will ensure that underprivileged and marginalized segments of society are uplifted, and women play their rightful role in society.

She shared some salient features of some community-centered programmes introduced by PTI's government. The Prime Minister's National Social Protection Programme aims for social protection and financial security with the budget of 158 Billion Rupees.

"Inclusion of women in different disciplines including politics is still debated across the globe. There is a patriarchal consensus against women in leadership positions. We all need country-specific analysis and solutions to overcome barriers for women in politics."

"Many solutions are possible through SDGs Gender-responsive legislation social protection programmes can definitely empower women in any society and state."

Ehsaas is Pakistan's biggest program for poverty eradication which aims to collaborate with all stakeholders—public, private, civil society, philanthropists, and expatriate Pakistanis towards one collective goal – poverty alleviation.

She also highlighted the widespread issue of child marriage, against which significant amendments are being planned to increase the effectiveness of the legislation.

Furthermore, she described how the current government of PTI is revolutionizing the justice system in order to protect inheritance rights of women and was establishing Gender Based Violence Courts at district levels.

She gave a brief overview of WPC's activities as well.

She conveyed to the foreign dignitaries that the Pakistani parliament strongly believes in multilateralism and stands with the Commonwealth family of institutions.



Ms. Munaza Hassan delivering the welcome address

2.3 Technical Sessions

Session 1: Prioritizing Women's Issues as National Issues

As women face various forms of discrimination based on gender, race, disability, gender identity and age, there is an inevitable need to focus on seeing and believing women issues as national issues. This requires active promotion of women's leadership, economic empowerment and political participation in decision-making processes.

The first technical session aimed to discuss the ways and means on how to mainstream women's issues. The panel had the following notable speakers:

1. Dr. Shireen Mazari, Federal Minister for Human Rights
2. Ms. Moneeza Hashmi, Women's Rights and Media Expert
3. Ms. Julia Bintu, MP Uganda



Panelists from the First Technical Session, including the Speaker of National Assembly

Dr. Shireen Mazari: Federal Minister for Human Rights

Dr. Shireen Mazari stressed that any issue pertaining to women, minorities or any other marginalized segment of society should be treated as a national issue.

She highlighted that women in Pakistan are constricted by the notion ‘what will people say?’, which is reinforced from a very young age starting from the household. This flawed and stifling societal mindset leads to the discrimination of women and girls in various sectors including health, education, workplace, and politics.

She emphasized that the empowerment of women starts with women empowering themselves. If mothers tolerate discrimination, then it will be passed on the next generation.

*“Empowerment of Women
Starts with Women
Empowering Themselves”*

Dr. Mazari pointed out that there are many existing laws for the protection of women in Pakistan. However, it is of utmost importance that the implementation of these laws is carried out. If these laws are to be effective, it is imperative that the change first comes from within families and households first.

Dr. Mazari expressed the need to change some of the existing laws that were obsolete and undermined women. She cited Article 10 of the Citizenship Act which disallowed a Pakistani woman from transferring her nationality to her non-Pakistani husband.

She shared some of the achievements of her ministry, including the awareness raising on child abuse. This was considered a taboo topic previously, but the campaign run by the Ministry of Human Rights was well-received in schools and by society at large. For the first time, the difference between good touch and bad touch can be discussed openly.



Federal Minister for Human Rights Dr. Shireen Mazari addressing the audience

Another important point that Dr. Mazari raised was the need to have reliable disaggregated data on women. Progress on women’s issues can only be effectively monitored if there is a strong baseline.

Dr. Mazari highlighted the double standards of the western liberal countries who accuse Muslim countries such as Pakistan of suppressing the rights of women, while they themselves discriminate against Muslim women.

Dr. Mazari said Pakistan’s Constitution - Article 25 (2) - specifically protected women from any kind of discrimination. Moreover, Pakistan is a signatory of many international agreements

including the 2030 Development Agenda, CEDAW, and Beijing Platform for Action which aim to mainstreaming women in society.

There is a dire need of including women in policy discussions in areas such as foreign policy, defense, natural disasters and conflict management – areas which disproportionately affect women, but they are under-represented.

Dr. Mazari took exception to the quota system of reserved seats for women currently in place in Pakistan. She maintained that such a system was actually impeding the mainstreaming of women in political arena as they are not participating directly in the electoral process.

She urged the audience to start looking at societal issues through the human rights lens and not the gender lens.

Ms. Moneeza Hashmi: Media & Women Rights Expert

Ms. Moneeza Hashmi highlighted that although a significant proportion of women in Pakistan face serious impediments and are denied basic rights, we as a society have come a long way, as at least we can openly discuss considering women issues as national issues. It is a long journey that has led us here.

Pakistani women have made tremendous progress in various fields in recent years; we have had a female Prime Minister, a Nobel Prize winner, an Oscar winner, fighter pilots, business tycoons, educationalists, political leaders and many more exceptional women achievers.

“Media can be a tool to lead the change.”

Ms. Hashmi said that it is not just the men or misogynist society who stand between women and progress, but the centuries old patriarchal mindset. This mindset sees empowered women as a threat to the existing power structure and is unwilling to see them in decision making positions as this would mean sharing power.

As a seasoned media practitioner, she proposed that media can be an instrumental tool to bring about change in societal mindsets and to increase space for women so that they fulfill their maximum potential and contribute even more. The need of the hour is to have a well-designed and well thought out media strategy taking into consideration all stakeholders aimed at protecting and upholding women’s rights.

Ms. Hashmi concluded by saying that Rome was not built in a day. It takes persistent focused efforts and most importantly commitment, which is being manifested by this Seminar, to achieve our goal.

Ms. Jalia Bintu: Uganda MP

Ms. Bintu said that in Uganda, traditional and cultural barriers discouraged women to participate in politics. These barriers emerge at a very young age as the girl child is at a disadvantage as she is often not allowed to go to school and compete with the boy child.

There is a rule that at least 30% of Committees in Uganda's Parliament have to be led by women.

Women parliamentarians in Uganda have to fulfill multiple roles simultaneously - as legislators, representatives, mothers - which makes it tougher for them to compete with their male counterparts. We are in the process of enacting electoral laws to remove certain barriers for women. Moreover, women face financial barriers to participate in politics.

In Uganda, a law has been passed which requires every bill, policy brought forward on the floor of the Parliament needs to be issued a certificate of gender equity. The government has to explain how the law will benefit women and how much funds will be allocated towards them.

The Uganda Women's Parliamentary Caucus for example refused the annual budget objecting that not enough was allocated towards reducing the maternal mortality rate. This objection was welcomed by the male parliamentarians and they increased funds allocated towards increasing the socio-economic conditions of women.

In Uganda, women parliamentarians also take their male counterparts on board and to champion a pro-women agenda. They are provided with information, and they push for women friendly reforms.

"The Challenges faced by women in Uganda can be traced back to historic cultural norms and practices."

Concluding Remarks by Chair - Honourable Ms. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, Deputy Speaker Parliament of Cameroon

In Cameroon, women have to go through primaries and compete with men of their own political parties and then compete in general elections. Pakistani women are lucky to have reserved seats.

She thanked the Pakistani government on providing political space to Pakistani women. This shows willingness of men to ensure that voices of women are heard.

Women representation in national parliaments globally has incrementally increased from 11.8% in 1998, 17.8% in 2008 and 23.5% in 2018.

Access to resources is a big issue. Even if women have the resources, their resources are often not spent in politics as priorities are different.

"Women's political participation affects the choice of policy issues and types of solutions that are offered."

Entering into politics is often a risk. As soon as women enter politics, their private life becomes public life. Women are held to a different standard compared to men.

Men should not feel threatened by women. We are not trying to go ahead of them. We just want to walk side by side with them.

Most political parties are owned by men. They take all the lucrative positions and sideline women. We have discriminatory laws that limit women's options to participate in politics. Even when women achieve leadership, they face discrimination, harassment and even violence.

She shared her personal experience of the problems she faced when she entered politics. Her own mother opposed her decision to enter politics as she feared that her children would be neglected.



Closing Remarks by Honourable Chair

The full and equitable participation of women in leadership in public life is essential to build strong and vibrant democracies. Women's political participation results in greater responsiveness to citizens' needs. It affects the choice of policy issues and types of solutions that are proposed.

Women leaders tend to work across party lines and prioritize health, education, nutrition, water and other key development indicators.

Session 2: The Push Towards Backbenches in the House

As in many countries, politics in Pakistan is male-dominated, with men controlling the legislative agenda and marginalizing women party members. Due to such hindrances, women parliamentarians struggle to represent the interests of women and other constituencies and find it difficult to effectively articulate progressive policy agendas.

The second technical session discussed the important contributions of women legislators and deliberated on how to further increase their role so that they are not confined to the backbenches.



Panelists of Second technical session

This session had the following panelists:

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|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Honourable Ms. Rehana Leghari | Deputy Speaker, Sindh Assembly |
| 2. Honourable Dr. Aisha Ghaus Pasha | MNA |
| 3. Honourable Ms. Kishwar Zehra | MNA |
| 4. Honourable Mr. Firdous Shamim Naqvi | Leader of Opposition, Sindh Assembly |

Ms. Kishwar Zehra: MNA

Ms. Zehra cited the important role of women in Islamic history and gave examples from Prophet Muhammad's (SAW) life on how he raised the status of women in a society that treated them like commodities and articles of trade with minimal rights.

She then highlighted the important role that women played in the creation of Pakistan by citing Muhatarma Fatima Jinnah who made numerous sacrifices and became a pillar of strength for his brother and founder of Pakistan Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

"Women are symbols of peace and can play a positive role in resolving global conflicts by joining hands."

Ms. Zehra proposed a global caucus for women, where parliamentarians from all countries can work together towards the common goal of uplifting women. She expressed that women are symbols of peace and that they can play a positive role in resolving global conflicts by joining hands.

Ms. Rehana Leghari: Deputy Speaker Sindh Assembly

Ms. Leghari contested that the statement that women were being pushed towards the backbenches was not entirely true. She cited her own example of being the only woman Deputy Speaker in Pakistan.

According to independent research on women's legislative performance, in the last ten years Sindh passed the most progressive pieces of legislation. Moreover, women MPAs account for more than 75% of the legislative business of the Sindh Provincial Assembly. Women MPAs' attendance in the Provincial Assembly as well as its Committees always exceeds that of its male counterparts.

She, however, did highlight the various issues faced by women MPAs in Sindh. The Women's Parliamentary Caucus in Sindh is not a fully recognized body and hence does not have the resources to thrive.

"Women MPAs account for more than 75% of the legislative business of the Sindh Assembly."

Moreover, women MPAs face human resource challenges and are not getting the required Secretariat support to carry out their parliamentary business. There is a need for research support as well as capacity building.

Ms. Leghari also pointed out that the resources to graduate from reserved seats to general seats were also lacking, which is another important barrier faced by women in politics.

She urged CPA and other international organizations and networks to come forward in helping the women parliamentarians through capacity building.

Dr. Ayesha Ghaus Pasha: MNA

Dr. Pasha emphasized that no society can achieve social, economic or political transformation if it excludes half of its population. According to UNDP's Gender Quality Index 2017, Pakistan ranks 133 out of 189 countries.

We have enhanced political participation through affirmative action. Pakistan has 20% of women representation in Assemblies as opposed to 11.6% in India. However, the critical question is whether this increased participation is translating into effective action towards reducing inequalities. The answer is no, as reflected by multiple indicators such as the one mentioned before.

"Unfortunately, the role of women in Assemblies has been confined to ensuring quorum and to cheer for male party leaders."

Most women in Pakistan are elected for the first time and hence are sidelined as 'backbenchers'. They do not have the influence, lack knowledge and parliamentary experience. They are unable to make linkages. Unfortunately, the role of women in Assemblies has been confined to ensuring quorum and to cheer for male party leaders. The attitude of the bureaucracy towards female backbenches is also not encouraging.

We can learn from The House of Commons that made certain decisions to improve procedures and rules to enhance participation of backbenches in 2009. The backbenchers legislative business was not left at the disposal of ministries, but was instead assigned to the House, through the Speaker. Moreover, backbenchers are assigned one day in a week in which they could move Bills.

However, such measures alone cannot ensure that the attention of party leaders and the media is captured. The answer to the problem is to mainstream women.

Backbenchers are full of zeal. They are here to make a difference, but our forums are not letting them make a difference. Women in particular need to participate actively in standing committees as this is forum where they can make their presence felt. There should be a quota for women who chair and participate in the Sub-Committees.

The need of the hour is for women to adopt Strategic Essentialism, whereby they transcend partisan, ethnic, and cultural differences and work towards a common pro-women agenda. Women should undertake horizontal and vertical integration with various stakeholders on the basis of issues. There has to be an impetus to move women from political participation to substantive representation.

Mr. Firdous Shamim Naqvi: MPA & Leader of Opposition, Sindh Assembly

Mr. Naqvi pointed out that there are no specific impediments that need to be removed, but instead there is a discriminatory mindset found worldwide that needs to be combatted.

He articulated the need to set clear objectives, with specific timeframes, with resources allocated accordingly. Progress should be measured through the rights tools. Success needs to be defined. For example, success for women is to have equal likelihood of getting elected on a direct seat.

“There should be clear objectives, with specific timeframes, and resources allocated accordingly.”

He said that in his experience as a legislator, he has found women to be more competent and hardworking compared to men. However, women do not receive the respect they deserve in majority of households in the country due to a lack of enlightenment.

Although Pakistan has a high level of women’s representation in governing bodies through reserved seats, currently ranking 49th in the world, this numerical strength has neither translated into women having decision-making power nor serving as key policymakers.

The third technical session discussed substantive ways on how to enhance women’s role in the political process, and had the following distinguished panellists:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Honourable Mr. Shah Ghulam Qadir | Speaker, Legislative Assembly of AJK |
| 2. Honourable Ms. Zubaida Jalal | Federal Minister for Defence Production |
| 3. Ms. Rukhshanda Naz | Ombudsperson, Government of KP |

Mr. Shah Ghulam Qadir: Speaker Legislative Assembly AJK

Mr. Qadir expressed his concerns regarding the nomination of women for reserved seats. He stated that women legislators in Pakistan are mostly awarded reserved seats on the basis of their relationship with the party leadership instead of their own merit or talents. Moreover, mostly these women come from privileged backgrounds denying the political workers the opportunity to be part of Assemblies.

“Women legislators in Pakistan are mostly awarded reserved seats on the basis of their relationship with the party leadership instead of their own merits or talents.”

He said that in AJK, there was only one woman legislator that was directly elected, and that too after winning on reserved seat for four terms.

Ms. Zubaida Jalal: Federal Minister for Defence Productions

Ms. Jalal emphasized that having women in the political process, whether on general seats or reserved seats, was very important. Moreover, she added that the only way to truly empower women is through education, especially those residing in rural areas. Education enables women to break taboos and live their best lives.

“There should be a law that ensures that women parliamentarians are free to use development funds as they choose.”

She gave an account of her personal inspiring struggle of running and winning on a general seat from Balochistan province including an anecdote of campaigning while she was pregnant.

Ms. Jalal pointed out certain drawbacks in the current political system of Pakistan. She elaborated that women parliamentarians, especially those on reserved seats, are often not given development funds. Instead funds are instead channeled to their male counterparts higher up in the political hierarchy. This prohibits women parliamentarians from standing on their own and developing a relationship with the people they represent. Hence, she proposed that there should be a rule according to which development funds are allocated to women parliamentarians who are free to use them as they wish.

Similarly, she pointed out shortcomings in the directive of the Election Commission of Pakistan, according to which all parties are required to award 5% of their party tickets to women on general seats. Ms. Jalal very pertinently pointed out that this rule was being exploited as parties were awarding tickets to women in those areas where they knew their candidate would lose.



Federal Minister for Defense Production Ms. Zubaida Jalal addressing the audience during the third technical session

Ms. Rukhshanda Naz: Ombudswoman, Government of KP & Women Rights Expert

Ms. Naz pointed out that women elected on reserved seats are considered lesser than those elected on general seats as do not have a constituency. Moreover, they are often considered for party tickets on general seats, as they are told by their male counterparts to contest for reserved seats instead.

Furthermore, Ms. Naz highlighted the lack of media coverage for women candidates. She provided insightful statistics on airtime given to women candidates contesting the general elections of 2018 on various TV channels. She said that even the national broadcaster, PTV, gave only 4% of airtime to women candidates, which was less than some private channels (ARY – 5%, Express TV -7%).

“Women on reserved seats are considered lesser than those elected on general seats as they do not have a constituency.”

She commended the increase in women’s representation in Assemblies at the National and Provincial levels. She pointed out that there were only 2 women in Pakistan’s first Constituent Assembly, whereas now there are 21% of women represented in all Assemblies. She proposed that there should be special seats reserved for women where they contested against each other in direct elections on general seats. This would increase the capacity of women parliamentarians and make them well-versed in the electoral process.

Session 4: Male Dominant Party Structure

Research suggests that the presence of women leaders has a positive impact on governance, reputation, financial success and further encourages other women to become leaders. However, political parties in Pakistan are dominated by a patriarchal culture, which often does not allow women to come forward in leadership positions.

The fourth panel discussed how political parties can be made more inclusive so that more women can emerge in leadership positions. This session had the following panelists:

- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| 1. Honourable Ms. Romina Khursheed Alam | MNA |
| 2. Honourable Ms. Nadia Sher | MPA, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly |
| 3. Dr. Salma Malik | Academic & Author |

Ms. Romina Khursheed Alam: MNA & Treasurer WPC

Ms. Alam shed light on her struggle of gaining prominence from humble beginnings. She described her journey from being a non-Muslim backbencher to a notable and productive member of her party PML-N. She urged all women to take inspiration from her example and tap into their inner strength. Women are naturally endowed with the ability to multitask as they have to carry out multiple roles simultaneously.

“Women need to raise their voices for each other and stand together.”

There is still room for women to leave a mark on politics by working hard and overcoming all kinds of obstacles including limited financing, patriarchal culture of political parties and others.

She emphasized the need for women parliamentarians to raise voices for each other. She said that together women can make a big difference.



Panelist Ms. Romina Khurshid Alam addressing the audience during the fourth technical session

Ms. Nadia Sher: MPA KP Assembly

PTI has always been a party of women from the beginning. PTI came in power in KP in the last term, which is a conservative region dominated by men. As seen in the *dharnas*, there has been a willingness by women to participate in politics and civic life.

The first Deputy Speaker of the country was in PTI's last term, Dr. Mehr Taj Roghani. She pointed out that she herself was appointed the Parliamentary Secretary for Chief Minister KP for Home and Tribal Affairs, a position that had previously been occupied only by men.

"We need to stand up for ourselves and not rely on others."

Ms. Sher stressed women to stand for themselves, and not to rely only on discussion and seminars to get their rights.

Dr. Salma Malik: Peace & Security Expert

There is constant struggle for women to break the glass ceiling and to prove that they are no less than men. Women are constantly donning different hats. Especially for women parliamentarians, it's a 24/7 job unlike other jobs.

Dr. Malik explained that there is a difference in achieving equality and equity. First women in Pakistan should achieve equity, and then aspire for equality.

"Women should first achieve equity and then aspire for equality."

She also commented that political parties in Pakistan are endocentric, stereotypical and male dominated. Moreover, women are mocked on national television. They are subject to ridicule by their male counterparts.

Out of total population of women, we only have 10 million women who carry a CNIC and hence are eligible to vote. According to ECP figures, 35% of eligible women did not vote as opposed to 10% in the 2018 general elections. There is a critical mass deficit which needs to be covered.

Our party structures require reforms and have to become more inclusive. We had no women representation not very long ago, but now we have 21%.

Finally, she stressed the need for women not only be looking at gender issues; instead they should be looking at all types of issues including in security, peace and conflict resolution.

The seminar ended with the exchange of souvenirs and vote of thanks, followed by lunch.

3. Analysis of the Seminar and A Way Forward

3.1 Evaluation of Seminar

The seminar was well-received overall and gained traction on electronic and social media. There were more than 120 attendees from various walks of life including the development sector, diplomatic community, academia, civil society and media. Based on the written evaluation gathered through evaluation proformas: 35% of respondents rated the event as “excellent” while the remaining 65% rated it as “good”. Moreover, 65% of the respondents identified “Prioritizing Women’s Issues as National Issues” as the most engaging technical session followed by “The Push Towards Back-benches in the House” (24%).

Many audience members mostly women highlighted the overarching importance of empowering women in Pakistan, and particularly highlighted the need and relevance for capacity building of women in politics. The participation of visiting foreign parliamentarians was greatly appreciated, as their presence considerably enhanced the profile of the event.

Audience members remarked how advocacy, communication, and proper data collection will be vital in transforming societal attitudes towards women. The role of media will be instrumental in this regard.

Recommendations for the betterment of the event included the following:

- Strict timekeeping and/or shorter sessions
- Greater participation from male parliamentarians
- Greater representation of people from rural backgrounds and disabled persons;
- More events such as these should be held in the future.

Feedback:

“We are entering a new era. I firmly believe that by promoting female legislators we will essentially be working towards a better Pakistan.”

Ms. Saira Bano,

MNA

“Excellent selection of speakers, as well as excellent programme and arrangements.”

Ms. Nafeesa Inayat Ullah Khattak,
MNA

“The challenges facing women are daunting but not impossible to overcome. There should be more programmes for women awareness.”

Senator Seemi Ezdi

“Women empowerment begins with women empowering themselves without discrimination on the basis of gender. More such events should be held.”

Ms. Shams-un-Nisa, MNA

3.2 Where do we go from here?

The indicators of success of this seminar included but are not limited to attendance, degree and quality of participation and dialogue and social media engagement. This forum shaped an enabling and energizing environment that ensured candid conversations and difficult dialogues on sensitive issues.

A sizeable number of experts, leaders, mentors, influencers, learners and facilitators from different walks of life got connected thus impressively broadening the spectrum and scale of this learning forum. Not only the need and relevance of gender equality and mainstreaming was articulated loudly in different deliberations, but diplomacies, devices and discretion were also spelled out.

A consensus was built on the value of continuously communicating best practices on amplifying women's voices in legislatures and gender-responsiveness of parliaments towards national development.

Inclusion of women in policy discussions on areas where they are traditionally underrepresented is not a societal or social kindness but a technical necessity for progress of Pakistan on human development and gender inequality indices.

Uganda provided a best practice where at least 30% of Committees in Ugandan Parliament have to be led by female parliamentarians. Uganda has a law that requires every Bill that is presented, or policy introduced on the Floor of the House needs to explain how it benefits women and needs to be issued a 'Certificate of Gender Equity.

Effective implementation of existing laws on protection of women and to upgradation of existing laws which undermine women's rights supplemented with a well-designed and well thought out gender sensitive media strategy are needed for protecting women's rights and mainstreaming them.

Pakistan needs more political participation of its women through added and effectual affirmative action; so that reduction in gender inequalities could be visible. There is a critical deficit in the number of women that cast their vote. Political parties require major reforms to make them more inclusive and representative. The 5% rule introduced by ECP is being exploited as parties often

Number of thematic areas (panel discussions)	4
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Number of women legislators who participated as panelists	11
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Number of countries represented	3
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Number of political parties represented in panels	6
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Total number of Participants	121
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Number of CSOs, diplomats, academicians in attendance	78
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Number of women Parliamentarians who attended seminar	18
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award tickets to women on those seats, which they are likely to lose on. Women candidates running for elections are not given sufficient airtime compared to their male counterparts. For instance:

- a) A quota for women in Sub-Committees, as Chairwomen and as participants may be allocated*
- b) Backbenchers quite often lack influence, knowledge and experience. Their skills and information base can be enhanced through structured capacity building exercises. Customized and context-specific adoption of best practices from other countries such as U.K can be adopted to ensure backbenchers receive the attention they deserve.*
- c) Reserved seats should be awarded to genuine political workers on merit and not based on relationship to the party leadership.*
- d) There should be a law which ensures that women parliamentarians on both general and reserved seats are given development funds and are free to invest on issues they resonate with .*
- e) Women should have special quota where they could contest direct elections against other women.*








Powerful and passionate messages by all distinguished speakers and participants provided as a pedestal with an invigorated focus on the issues of people. Strategic calls for action to expand involvement, representation and accomplishment of women in politics and parliament are summarized as follows:






- 1) **Eliminate all barriers to womens' participation in politics:** Women parliamentarians face numerous resource and capacity challenges, which put them at a disadvantage compared to their male counterparts. These challenges primarily rooted in structural and cultural patriarchal need to be defeated in to ensure the participation and presence of women in politics and parliaments. Women, when provided the opportunity, excel in leadership roles in politics. Women have and continue to contribute in the legislative business in Pakistan. In fact, they dominate the legislative business in the Sindh Provincial Assembly.
- 2) **Work with men for pro-women legislation and enabling environment:** To champion certain causes of national importance, to get gender sensitive outcomes and social inclusiveness, it is inevitable to work with fellow male parliamentarians and politicians.
- 3) **Initiate an international women's caucus:** This idea if materialized could give greater visibility and connectedness to women in parliaments where women parliamentarians from all over the world can work towards the common goal of uplifting women.

In conclusion, it was an inclusive forum where representatives of people emerged as their voice and served as power of the powerless. It is hoped that learnings from this important seminar will be applied by all legislators, in their specific contexts.

4. Annexures

Annexure 1: WPC Working Council Members

1	Ms. Munaza Hassan, Secretary (PTI), MNA	
2	Ms. Romina Khurshid, Treasurer (PML-N), MNA	
3	Ms. Kishwar Zehra, Member (MQM), MNA	
4	Ms. Tahira Aurangzeb, Member (PML-N), MNA	
5	Ms. Shagufta Jumani, Member (PPPP), MNA	
6	Ms. Nafeesa Inayatullah, Member (PTI), MNA	
7	Ms. Rubina Irfan, Member (PML-N), MNA	

8	Ms. Farrukh Khan, Member (PML) , MNA	
9	Ms. Shahida Akhtar Ali, Member (JUI-F), MNA	
10	Ms. Saira Bano, Member (GDA), MNA	
11	Ms. Shahnaz Baloch, Member (BNP), MNA	
12	Ms. Sitara Ayaz, Member (ANP), Senator	

Welcome address by the Patron, WPC

(MNA / Federal Minister of Inter Provincial Coordination, Government of Pakistan)

09:40 a.m. – 09:50 a.m.

Honourable Ms. Munaza Hassan

09:50 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

Theme: Prioritizing Women's Issues as National Issues

10:00 a.m. -10:40 a.m.

Honourable Dr. Shireen Mehrunnisa Mazari Federal Minister for Human rights, Government of Pakistan

Honourable Ms. Jalia Bintu MP, Uganda

Honourable Ms. Mahjabeen Sheran MPA Balochistan Assembly

Ms. Moneeza Hashmi Women's Rights & Media Expert

Q & A

Concluding Remarks by the Honourable Chair & distribution of souvenirs to the distinguished panellists


<p align="center">Second Technical session</p> <p align="center">Theme: The Push Towards Backbenches in the House</p> <p align="center">10:45 a.m. -11:30 a.m.</p>	
Honourable Ms. Rehana Leghari	Deputy Speaker, Sindh Assembly
Honourable Dr. Aisha Ghaus Pasha	MNA
Honourable Ms. Kishwar Zehra	MNA
Honourable Mr. Firdous Shamim Naqvi	Leader of Opposition, Sindh Assembly
<p>Q & A</p> <p>Concluding Remarks by the Honourable Chair & distribution of souvenirs to the distinguished panellists</p>	
<p align="center">Third Technical Session: Theme</p> <p align="center">The “General Seat” vs “Reserved Seat” Bias</p> <p align="center">11:35 a.m. -12:05 p.m.</p>	
Honourable Mr. Shah Ghulam Qadir	Speaker Legislative Assembly of Azad Jammu and Kashmir
Honourable Ms. Zubaida Jalal	Federal Minister for Defence Production, Government of Pakistan
Ms. Rukhshanda Naz	Ombudsperson, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan
<p>Q & A</p> <p>Concluding Remarks by the Honourable Chair & distribution of souvenirs to the distinguished panellists</p>	
<p align="center">Fourth Technical Session: Theme</p> <p align="center">Male Dominant Party Structure</p> <p align="center">12:10 p.m. -12:40 p.m.</p>	
Honourable Ms. Romina Khursheed Alam	MNA
Honourable Ms. Nadia Sher	MPA, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly

Dr. Salma Malik	Academic & Author
Q & A	
Concluding Remarks by the Honourable Chair & distribution of souvenirs to the distinguished panellists	
Closing remarks by the Honourable Chair Emilia Monjowa Lifaka MP, Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly Cameroon 12:40 p.m.-12:55 p.m.	
Souvenir presentation to the Honourable Chair Emilia Monjowa Lifaka MP, Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly Cameroon & Vote of thanks by the Honourable Secretary. WPC 12:55 p.m.-1:00 p.m.	
Lunch 1:00 p.m.	

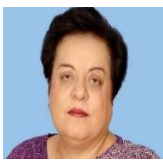

CWP-WPC Seminar: Challenges and Impediments against Women in Politics

31st July 2019, Islamabad, Pakistan




Bios


Sr. No	Picture	Name	Brief Bio
1.		Hon. Ms. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka MP, Deputy Speaker of Parliament of Cameroon. Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee Chair of the seminar	<p>She is the Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Cameroon since 2009. She has served her Parliament in various Sub-Committees such as Committee of Finance and the Budget, Constitutional Laws Committee, Committee of Good Governance, and also as Member of the National Commission for Human Rights and Freedom.</p> <p>Ms. Lifaka is Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee. Since 2007, she has been very engaged in CPA activities and attends meetings in both Africa and internationally.</p>
2.		Dr. Fehmida Mirza, MNA/ Federal Minister	<p>She is the Federal Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination of Pakistan since August 2018. Dr. Mirza served as the 18th and only woman Speaker of the National Assembly of Pakistan from 2008-2013 and was elected from Badin constituency. She holds the honor of being the first woman to be elected Speaker from the Muslim world. She is also the Patron of Women's Parliamentary Caucus (WPC) and has numerous contributions towards empowerment of women in Pakistan.</p> <p>Dr. Mirza is a member of the Executive Committee of CPA.</p>
3.		Hon. Ms. Munaza Hassan, MNA Secretary WPC/ Chairperson Standing Committee Climate Change Member CWP Steering Committee Moderator of the seminar	<p>Ms. Munaza Hassan is a seasoned politician, belonging to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). She is the Secretary of WPC and currently chairs the Standing Committee on Climate Change of the National Assembly.</p> <p>She served as Member National Assembly (MNA) from 2013-2018 and was reelected for the second consecutive term in 2018. She is a renowned champion of gender equality and empowerment of all Pakistani women. In addition, she is also a member of the CWP Steering Committee.</p>

First Technical Session: *Prioritizing Women's Issues as National Issues*
Panelists




4.		Hon. Dr. Shireen Mazari, MNA/Minister for Human Rights	<p>Dr. Mazari is the Federal Minister for Human Rights, in office since 20th August 2018. She is serving the second consecutive term as MNA for PTI.</p> <p>Dr. Mazari holds a B.Sc. (Hon) from the London School of Economics and later received her PhD from Columbia University in political science. She joined Quaid-i-Azam University as an associate professor and went on to head the university's strategic studies department. From 2000-2008, Dr. Mazari headed the government-funded Institute of Strategic Studies. Dr. Mazari also worked as the editor of <i>The Nation</i> from 2009-10.</p> <p>She has written extensively on issues of defense and security and has authored many books.</p>
5.		Hon. Ms. Jalia Bintu, MP, Uganda	<p>She is a Member of the Parliament of Uganda. She has also served as the Vice Chairperson of Uganda Women Parliamentary Association.</p> <p>Ms. Bintu is a teacher by profession. She has also been involved in social work and has greatly contributed towards promoting girl's education.</p> <p>She is a member of the Executive Committee of the CPA-Branch Uganda.</p>
6.		³ Hon. Ms. Mahjabeen Sheran, MPA	<p>She is a Member of the Balochistan Provincial Assembly, representing the Balochistan Awami Party (BAP). She has initiated a powerful campaign to push for daycare centres in assemblies and government departments to make them more inclusive for women.</p>
7.		Ms. Moneeza Hashmi	<p>Wearing several prominent and professional hats, she is presently into her second term as President of the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association, UK; is handling the international relations of HUM TV as General Manager, Pakistan; is the Project Advisor to Light Storm Entertainment; and Trustee of Faiz Foundation Trust and Faiz Ghar.</p> <p>Ms. Hashmi entered the world of television in 1974 as Assistant Producer of Pakistan Television (PTV), Lahore and she retired in 2004 as Director Programmes, the first female to date to head this</p>

³ Could not join the event but her practical contributions for establishing day care centres are valuable and inspiring.


			position. She is recipient of various national and international awards, including the President of Pakistan's Pride of Performance Award 2002.
Second Technical Session: The Push Towards Backbenches in the House			
Panellists			
8.		Hon. Ms. Rehana Leghari, Deputy Speaker Sindh Assembly	<p>She is the current Deputy Speaker of the Sindh Assembly. She was elected as a candidate of Pakistan People's Party (PPP).</p> <p>Ms. Leghari is also the Special Assistant to Chief Minister of Sindh on Human Rights.</p>
9.		Dr. Aisha Ghaus Pasha, MNA	<p>She is a member of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and serving MNA since August 2018. Previously she was a Member of the Provincial Assembly (MPA) of Punjab, from 2013-2018. She has also served in the Provincial Cabinet in Punjab as Minister for Finance in May 2015.</p> <p>She earned the degrees of Bachelor of Arts (Hons), Master of Arts in Economics and a Master of Applied Science in Economics from the University of Karachi. She also has a PhD in Economics from the University of Leeds in 1991.</p>
10.		Hon. Ms. Kishwar Zehra, MNA	<p>She is a prominent Pakistani legislator, and one of the founding members, of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM). She is serving her third term as MNA. She started her political career as a Councilor in the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation in 1987.</p> <p>Apart from her political pursuits, Ms. Zehra also has impressive contributions in the field of social work. She sits on the Board of Directors of the Sindh Institute of Urology and Transplantation (SIUT). She introduced the Volunteer program from which thousands of students have benefitted from. She also sits on the board of a trust of a charity institution, which focuses on unlawful sale and purchase of human organs in Pakistan.</p> <p>Moreover, she has actively worked for the protection, education, and employment of women.</p>



11.		Hon. Mr. Firdous Shamim Naqvi, Leader of Opposition, Sindh Assembly	Mr. Naqvi was elected as MPA in Sindh Assembly in August 2018 as a candidate of PTI. He was made leader of opposition on 24 September 2018. He has served as President of PTI's Karachi chapter.
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Third Technical Session: *The "General Seat" vs "Reserved Seat" Bias*
Panelists

12.		Hon. Mr. Shah Ghulam Haider, Speaker of AJK Legislative Assembly	Mr. Shah Ghulam Qadir is the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) since 30 th July 2016. He has been elected as member of the AJK Assembly five times since 1991. He has previously served as the Minister for Information and Social Welfare, as well as Minister for Finance, Planning & Development and Rehabilitation in AJK.
13.		Hon. Ms. Zubaida Jalal, MNA/ Federal Minister for Defence Production	She is the Minister for Defence Production of Pakistan assuming the office on 20 August 2018. She is member of Balochistan Awami Party (BAP), an ally of the PTI-led government. In addition, she is a teacher, libertarian, and social activist. She came to national prominence and public fame as Minister of Education in the cabinet of Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz from 2002–07.
14.		Ms. Rukhshanda Naz, Ombudsperson Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	She is an eminent women rights activist and advocate. Currently she is serving as the ombudsperson for the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. She is the first female to be appointed as ombudsperson in the province.

Fourth Technical Session: *Male Dominant Party Structure*
Panelists

15.		Hon, Ms. Romeena Khurshid Alam, MNA	She is a second term Parliamentarian belonging to PML-N. She has served as the General Secretary of PML-N 's Youth Women's Wing. She is currently part of the WPC's Working Council, serving as its treasurer. Internationally, she is serving as Convenor of Green Parliament Caucus, Convener of Philippines and Singapore, Coordinator of Friendship Group of Canada, and Coordinator of Netherland, Sweden and France Friendship Groups.
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16.		Hon. Ms. Nadia Sher, MPA	Ms. Nadia Sher Khan is MPA of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial Assembly, Pakistan. This is her second consecutive term as MPA, previously serving from May 2013 to May 2018.
17.		Dr. Salma Malik	She is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Defence and Strategic Studies, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad Pakistan. She specializes in the areas of War, Military Sociology, South Asian Affairs, Conflict Management & Transformation, Human Security, CBMs & Conventional Disarmament. She has authored several books and research papers.

About Women's Parliamentary Caucus

The Women's Parliamentary Caucus (WPC) is a cross-party forum for women parliamentarians of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The WPC was established to enhance women's participation and engagement in all Parliamentary affairs.

The caucus was created on 21 November, 2008, by a resolution of the National Assembly. WPC is run by an elected Secretary along with a Working Council comprising of women parliamentarians both from the government and opposition parties.

The WPC carries out the following functions:

Representation – Serving the cause of women of Pakistan and amplifying their voices

Awareness – Raising awareness and sensitizing the public about issues of utmost importance

Legislation – Developing gender-sensitive legislative responses

Oversight – Reviewing and supervising gender-inclusive programmes and policies

The Caucus has provided women legislators a forum where they could work for the development, empowerment and emancipation of women above the party politics. WPC connects with women parliamentarians across the globe by forming and strengthening alliances. WPC actively engages with international organizations and networks in order to enhance women's rights and lead towards greater empowerment through exchange of ideas and best practices.

WPC in Pakistan's Parliament has already established contacts with the women parliamentarians in the region. Currently, WPC is also in the process of facilitating provincial caucuses in Pakistan. WPC aims to offer our support towards sustainable foundations for all provincial caucuses. It looks forward to strong provincial caucuses so that they could take up gender concerns through the institutional structures of the parliament and ensuring pro-women legislations.

2008-2013

Patron	
Dr. Fehmida Mirza, MNA	PPP
Secretary	
Ms. Nafeesa Shah, MNA	PPP
Treasurer	
Ms. Tasneem Siddiqui, MNA	PML (N)

Members Working Council	
Dr. Azra Pechuho, MNA	PPP
Begum Ishrat Ashraf, MNA	PML (N)
Dr. Doniya Aziz, MNA	PML (Q)
Ms. Khushbakht Shujaat, MNA	MQM
Ms. Bushra Gohar, MNA	ANP
Ms. Aasia Nasir, MNA	JUI
Ms. Reena Kumari, MNA	PML (F)
Ms. Saima Akhtar Bharwana, MNA	IND
Senator Dr. Saeeda Iqbal	PPP

2013-2018

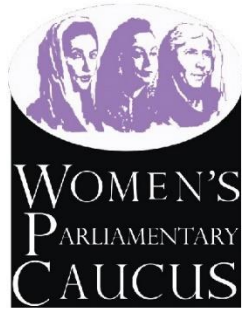
Patron	
Dr. Fehmida Mirza, MNA	PPP
Secretary	
Mrs. Shaista Pervaiz, MNA	PML (N)
Treasurer	
Ms. Shugfta Jumani, MNA	PPP

Members Working Council	
Ms. Tahira Aurangzeb, MNA	PML (N)
Ms. Munaza Hassan, MNA	PTI
Ms. Kishwer Zehra, MNA	MQM
Ms. Reeta Ishwar, MNA	PML (F)
Ms. Shahida Akhtar Ali, MNA	JUI (F)
Ms. Aisha Syed, MNA	JJ
Ms. Naseema, MNA	PKMAP
Senator Rubina Rauf Khalid	PPP

2018-2023

Patron	
Dr. Fehmida Mirza	GDA
Secretary	
Ms. Munaza Hassan, MNA	PTI
Treasurer	
Ms. Romina Khursheed Alam, MNA	PML (N)

Members Working Council	
Ms. Kishwer Zehra, MNA	MQM
Ms. Begum Tahira Aurangzeb, MNA	PML (N)
Ms. Nafeesa Inayatullah Khattak, MNA	PTI
Ms. Rubina Irfan, MNA	BAP
Ms. Farukh Khan, MNA	PML (Q)
Ms. Shahida Akhtar Ali, MNA	MMA
Ms. Saira Bano, MNA	GDA
Prof. Shahnaz Baloch	BNP
Ms. Shugfta Jumani, MNA	PPP
Senator Sitara Ayaz	ANP



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