

# Introduction

1. The government under General Pervez Musharraf, President of Pakistan has taken many steps which are landmarks for the women of Pakistan. Amongst them, is the formulation of the first ever national policy for development and empowerment of women.
2. In support of government's policy of public \_private partnership, it is stated with pleasure that the ownership of this policy rests with the stakeholders. It is the outcome of an exhaustive countrywide consultative process which stretched over yeas and extended from grass\_ root to national level, using all the Information media available, thus obtaining the broadest national consensus to support its contents.
3. It contains a vision, goals, aims and objectives, lays down the guiding principles, give the key policy measures, specifically addressing the empowerment dimensions in the social, economic and political fields. The crosscutting issues are fully reflected in identification of the key policy measures. These measures have been drawn from the national health policy, education sector reforms, labour policy, access to justice programme, police reforms, Poverty alleviation programme and political participation in the democratic structure.
4. The policy is a statement of intent of the government of Pakistan to specify its measure for the development and empowerment of women with the policy providing the guidelines, this ministry will ensure with in the overall operating framework of the government that the gender perspective is reflected in all national policies and plans.

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## VISION

In accordance with the vision of the Quaid-e-Azam, achievement of:

- Gender equity & equality;
- Social, Political & Economic Empowerment of all Pakistani women at all levels;
- A just, humane & democratic society
- Economic prosperity through sustainable development.

## GOAL

Empowerment of Pakistani women, irrespective of caste, creed, religion, or other consideration for the realization of their full potential in all spheres of life, especially social, economic, personal & political & in keeping with our Islamic way of life.

### **I. AIMS & OBJECTIVES**

- 1.1 To remove inequities & imbalances in all sectors of socio-economic Development & to ensure women's equal access to all development Benefits & social services.
- 1.2 To ensure the full participation of women in all partners in national development & decision-making processes in the community & society.
- 1.3 To ensure the full participation of women in all political processes & to enhance women's representation in all elective bodies.

- 1.4 To safeguard & ensure the protection of women's human rights including economic, legal, political & social rights, especially the Rights of minority women, rural & poor women, girls & women with Disabilities, elderly women & women in vulnerable circumstances & Situations.
- 1.5 To provide women & girls access to quality health care services & all others pre-requisites to enjoying full health, including reproductive & Mental health.
- 1.6 To expeditiously & substantially enhance women's literacy rates, improve Attainment levels of girls & women at all levels of education (both academic & professional) to reduce the gender gap & to reorient existing curricula by making them gender sensitive.
- 1.7 To provide equality of opportunity & to create space for women to realize their full potential.

## **2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The policy shall be guided by:

- 2.1 The constitutional guarantees and accession to international instruments on hum rights, as the reiteration of the Islamic principles of justice and quality
- 2.2 Non-discrimination and gender equity at all levels.
- 2.3 Priority to the poorest of the poor, viz. women, especially in rural and isolated areas; girls and women in vulnerable situation/circumstances.
- 2.4 Recognition of the value of women's worth and work and their contribution in all spheres of life.
- 2.5 Women as equal partners in development and agents of change in economic, social and political processes.
- 2.6 The universally recognized rights and responsibility-based approach.

## **3. KEY POLICY MEASURES**

Key policy measures shall focus on:

- 3.1 Ensuring that government agencies adopt a gender sensitive approach to development in preparing needs based, participatory and implement able programmers and projects. Gender sensitization to be institutionalized and integrated into all sectors of development and to include the private sector as well.
- 3.2 Developing multi-sartorial and inter disciplinary approaches for women's development, with horizontal and vertical linkages at every level.
- 3.3 Mainstreaming gender issues through integration into all sectors of national development.
- 3.4 Eliminating all negative social practices.

## **4. SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN**

### **4.1 Education**

As per the 1998 census, female literacy rates remain low at 32.6%. Although enrollment of girls has increased at a higher rate at all levels, their participation rate is much lower so that gender gaps continue to persist. And while participation rates of girls in urban areas have increased due to a policy of co education at the primary level, high drop out rates beyond primary persist as a result of lack of opportunities, mobility issues as well as traditions and cultural norms constraining the access of girls and women (especially in the rural areas), to higher education.

To address these problems measures to be taken are:

- a) Placing emphasis on primary school enrollment and on secondary schooling for girls through provision of scholarships and subsidies for girls education to low income households, equality of access and quality education for girls to narrow the existing gender gap, revision of curricula and text books at all educational levels for gender sensitization and provision of vocational and skills training, particularly in information Technology.

- b) Affirming Government's Education Policy (under Education Sector Reforms) of Education for all and provisions and recommendations for compulsory primary education, incentive scheme for girls including improved input through female teacher training.

## 4.2 Health

Pakistan's maternal mortality rate continues to be amongst the highest in the world. It is estimated that for every women who dies, approximately 16 survive with chronic and long drawn out reproductive tract diseases. Advocacy and implementation of the life cycle approach, with improved health care and nutrition programmes for girls and women, promotion of ante and postnatal care, and enhanced provision of emergency obstetric care, curbing the spread of HIV/AIDs, remain a national challenge to better health.

The following measures will be taken to address the issues related to women's health:

- a) Affirming the Government's Health Policy for All that underscores the emphasis for preventive and Affordable primary health care provision for people, in particular reproductive health services for women;
- b) Strengthening of basic health facilities for emergency obstetric care services at Tehsil/district levels to reduce women's morbidity and mortality rates and addressing the spread of HIV/Aids and drug abuse, through setting up of counseling and rehabilitation clinics.
- c) Ensuring provision of quality health cover including for the mental health and well-being of women in line with the recommendations outlined in the ICPD Programme of Action.
- d) Ensuring reproductive health rights by involving men, women and adolescents, through non-coercive measures for family planning and promoting the small family norm in recognition of the principle of population stabilization through the adoption of a rights – based approach.

## 4.3 Law & Access to Justice

Women are prevented from enjoying existing rights because of the prevalence of negative customary practices and attitudes; a general ignorance about rights and poor access to, and procedural problems in the justice system, and a generally poor implementation of the law. Other rights are denied through an absence of law. Moreover, affirmative provisions of the Constitution are seldom implemented to establish real and substantial equality. Consequently urgent action is needed to start addressing the multiple challenges in this area.

Key policy measures to be undertaken are:

- a) Eliminating negative customary practices by increasing knowledge of women's existing rights under the law and of law itself, to access judicial relief and redress.
- b) Ensuring effective implementation and the enforcement of existing rights.
- c) Removing discrimination through legal reforms.
- d) Promoting women's access to justice by providing legal aid, assistance and counseling.

An overall policy measure would be that, the Ministry of Law, Justice, Human Rights & Parliamentary Affairs, the Pakistan Law Commission, and the National Commission on the Status of Women shall review all Laws and formulate new legislation wherever needed.

## 4.4 Violence Against Women

Violence against women plagues all societies and needs to be eliminated in all its forms. All space must be made safe form women and girls in the family, workplace, other private and public institutions including in police stations, lock-ups and jails, and public spaces in general. Violence against women persists because of cultural norms and attitudes that condone such acts, inadequate laws and access to shelters that fail to protect women from

violence and/or to provide relief and justice to survivors of violence. Therefore, measures to address this issue are:

- a) Adopting a zero tolerance policy regarding violence against women.
- b) Declaring 'honour killings' as murder.
- c) Reviewing and revising police and medico-legal procedures.
- d) Introducing positive legislation on domestic violence and reform.
- e) Reviewing government policies for women's shelters, and improving shelters for women in the public and private sectors and promoting direct interaction and cooperation of all institutions/departments.
- f) Establishing family protection programmes at district level that provide women legal and psychological counseling and referrals to medical and legal aid mechanisms.
- g) Undertaking police reforms to increase the number of women in the police. Providing training to them and increasing women's sections in all police-stations which are fully equipped to deal with cases by having legal and medical officers and required facilities.
- h) Sensitizing all the police force on issues of violence against women.

#### **4.5 Women In The Family & Community**

The family is the basic unit of society and women play a critical role by contributing to its welfare and to the development of society as a whole. However the importance of women's role in the family and society is neither fully recognized nor appreciated. Socially prescribed roles of women become a basis for discrimination and restrict the full participation of women in society. Women in Pakistan are especially disadvantaged by their lack of decision making within the family and community, and restricted mobility that obstructs access to services. To address these issues, the following measures are proposed:

- a) Enabling women's access to all forms of information, resources, services and decision-making.
- b) Providing transport to facilitate access to basic facilities.
- c) Upholding and ensuring women's right to inheritance and share in all kinds of joint property and financial rights in marriage.
- d) Enhancing the role of the media as means of information, education and communication on women's issues and for a positive portrayal of women in all media.
- e) Initiating awareness campaigns-especially in the media and in schools through textbooks-to promote the positive benefits of an equal sharing of responsibilities, decision-making and power between family women and men inside and outside the home with focus on gender sensitive men and caring fathers and husbands.
- f) Encourage and further strengthen women's active participation in peace and conflict resolution at all levels of society.
- g) Maximize for the benefit of society on women's concern for a sustainable environment, notably their efforts to ensure healthy food, clean water and air for future generations.

#### **4.6 The girl child**

Girls in general suffer due to social conditions, from low self – esteem, minimal awareness of rights, very few opportunities (inadequate educational systems) and limited aspirations. To improve the situation of the girl child the following measures will be undertaken: Enabling girls without exception (including those with disabilities) to develop their full potential and skills through equal access to education and training, nutrition, physical and mental health care and related information and services in line with Pakistan's own national vision and its commitment at regional (SAARC) and

international (UN) level. Though women are an essential part of the country's economy, their share in economic benefits, opportunities and access to resources is not proportionate to their share in the population. Furthermore, increasing poverty as a result of structural adjustment programmes and globalization, disproportionately impacts women. The following key policy measures are therefore to be undertaken:

## **5.1 Poverty**

- a) Affirming government policies for poverty alleviation of the poorest of the poor, in particular women and endorsed the provision of safety nets, food support schemes, and of provision of funds through Zakat.
- b) Providing adequate relief and safety measures to alleviate the disproportionate impact of poverty on women by ensuring access of poor rural women to land, agricultural and livestock extension services and support mechanisms and facilities
- c) creating access to affordable housing schemes for women and Promoting equality and the empowerment of women in all housing activities as espoused in the Government's Housing Policy 2001

## **5.2 Access to Credit**

- a) providing women easy access to micro-credit especially through available windows such as Pakistan poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF); Rural support programmes (RSPs); First women Bank (FWB); Agricultural Development Bank (ADB) and Khushali Bank.
- b) Ensuring that women in general and female headed household, women bread earners, and women with disability in particular, have priority in accessing credit on soft terms from FWB and the Khushali Banks and other financial institutions for setting up their business, for buying properties, and for house building.

## **5.3 Remunerated Work**

- a) Increasing women's capacity to earn by improving
  - Access to sources of livelihood, particularly in agriculture and livestock production.
  - Providing equal opportunities for women in remunerated employment which also accommodate women-oriented work patterns.
  - Improving facilities for the education, training and skills development for women, to enter and re-enter the Labour force, including special arrangements, as specified in the draft Labour Policy for women relatives of workers.
- c) Ensuring appropriate legislation, including the following measures as proposed in the draft Labour Policy.
  - Give effect to the ILO Convention 100 ratified by Pakistan in 2001 by enacting a law to ensure equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal.
  - Undertake measures to make work places conducive for women workers so they can work without fear of discrimination and harassment.
  - Enact a law and guidelines to provide protection against sexual harassment at the workplace and relief/remedy in cases where it occurs.
  - Providing special courses for women in entrepreneurial skills to assist and engage them to establish their own small-scale enterprises.

## **5.4 Women In The Rural Economy & Informal Sector**

- a) Recognizing, counting and making visible women's real economic contribution and productivity in both the formal and informal sectors of the economy in national economic indicators.

- b) Formally recognizing women working in the rural economy and the informal sector as workers and taking measures to ensure healthy and safe conditions of work.

## **5.5 Sustainable Development**

Maintaining natural resources to sustain livelihoods is the fundamental principle of sustainable development. Pakistan's natural resource base is rapidly depleting due to poor management and overuse and negatively impacting women in the process, particularly rural women, who depend on the available natural resources (water, fuel, fodder, herbs) for fulfilling their families' livelihood needs. Urgent measures are therefore required in this area:

- a) Including women from the tiers of local government to the national level in key decision-making bodies pertaining to the environment specially the Pakistan Environment Protection Council.
- b) Mandatory assessment of the impact of development and environment projects, programmes and policies on women.
- c) Providing training, skills and information to women in natural resource management including soil conservation, water, forestry, mangroves and rangeland management,
- d) Affirming and supporting the policies and principles related to women enunciated by the National conservation Strategy and the Provincial conservation Strategies of NWFP and Balochistan.
- e) Highlighting the close link between women and the environment through supporting and initiating research in order to develop appropriate programmes and policies to address women's needs in this sector.
- f) Conserving women's indigenous knowledge related traditional medicines, natural resource management practices, local foods and food preservation techniques.

## **6.1 Power & Decision Making**

A positive step in this direction has been taken by the present Government through the introduction of the reservation of 33% seats in the local councils on the basis of joint and direct elections and more than twice the number of reserved seats for women at the national and provincial levels. The following additional key measures are to be adopted:

- a) Ensuring effective implementation of existing provisions.
- b) Removing hurdles to women's political participation by effective implementation of existing legal provisions, and by removing procedural obstacles.
- c) Strengthening women in political decision making positions by providing training supervision/support and defining their authority and through engaging male colleagues in the development of gender quality in decision-making.
- d) Mandating the inclusion of women through merit in all decision-making bodies of the executive and judicial organs of the state at the federal, provincial and local/district levels, and by taking measures to remove obstacles in women's access to power and decision-making in the family, community and society, including on important global issues related to peace, conflict, resolution and presentations of a sustainable environment. Note: All measures outlined above for the social, economic and political empowerment of women will equally apply to elderly women, and girls with disabilities and other marginalized groups.

## **7. Policy Implementation**

Implementation of the development and empowerment of women will be the responsibility of the GOP, through its line Ministers and Provincial Departments.

## **7.1 Institutional Arrangements / Mechanisms.**

### **MoWD**

The Ministry of Women Development (MoWD) was established with a clear mandate of formulating policies and to recommend legislation to meet the specific needs of women creating and adequate infrastructure to implement the National Policy for Women's Development and Empowerment will necessitate functioning of a strong and revitalized Ministry for Women's Development. The Ministry will be provided sufficient human and financial resources in order to play an effective role as catalyst and for coordinating and monitoring. As the focal machinery, MoWD will be strengthened and structured to ensure effective gender mainstreaming at all levels. The MoWD will regularly brief Cabinet on progress of implementation of policy and facilitate gender sensitization and training programmes for all other Ministries. Women Development Departments (WDDs) at provincial & district levels, to do the same. MoWD will serve as the repository of information on women and will disseminate the same through linkages with various research and academic institutions, in particular, University based women Study Departments.

### **NCSW**

The role of the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) will be as stipulated in Ordinance NO. XXVI of 2000 paras 7a-f.

## **7.2 Coordination**

As the national focal machinery/point, MoWD will linkages with other line ministries at Federal level through designated focal points. At the provincial and district levels, MoWD will coordinate implementation through its departments and through designated focal points of other line departments including local government. It will also facilitate implementation through public/private sector coordination mechanism especially with NGOs.

For monitoring impact of effective policy implementation, MoWD will coordinate with the Federal Bureau of Statistics, research and academic institutions, to ensure collection of accurate information, desegregated by gender, age, socio-economic class and region and its analysis by relevant agencies.

## **7.3 Monitoring**

As the focal Ministry and focal departments, the MoWD and the WDDs will be the primary monitoring, review & coordinating bodies.