

Women participation in new local government System and its impact on the development of Balochistan (case study of Quetta district)

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Women community covers half of the world's population who must have the right to live accordingly and utilize the resources. But, every coming day brings news of discrimination against women executed consciously or unconsciously. This growing trend in the sense of discrimination is further creating more problems and mostly the women of the third world countries are suffering from it. Now different countries are trying and taking affirmative actions to uplift the living standards of women at their regional level so that the processes of development take place smoothly.

Introduction

In Pakistan Where women cover almost half of the population, but suffer with discriminated issues. The total population of the country, according to the provincial results of the 1998 population census, is 130.6 million, of which 55.6 % in Punjab, 23 % in Sindh, 13.4 % in North western Frontier Province (NWFP), 5 % in Balochistan, 2.4 % in FATA and 0.6 % in Islamabad. About 67.5 % of Pakistan's population is in rural and 32.5% urban. Its human development Index (HDI) is 46%, ranking it at 63 out of a list of 77 developing countries. Nearly two third of its adult population can not read and write, and nearly half the population does not have access to basic social services like primary health care and safe drinking water (Government of Pakistan, 1998).

Pakistan society is characterized by tremendous linguistic, ethnic, and culture diversity. Further different types of disparities i.e. gender disparity, economic disparity, political disparity and cultural differences are the part of Pakistani society.

The ups and downs in the country due to martial laws, and internal sectarian problems and war etc affected the overall political picture in term of democracy, development of human right, rule of law and people's confidence on government. These issues have not only affected at national level, but they also affected in different way at provincial and regional level. Further the social, cultural economic and historical factors directly and in directly affected the status and rights of women at every level and in all spheres of life. In every field of life women are paying more and gaining less or nil. In urban area female literacy rate is 52.2 % whereas male literacy rate is 74.3%, similarly in rural areas female literacy rate is 19.1% and male literacy rate is 48.6%. [Government of Pakistan, 1999-2000]

The report on the state of Human Rights in 2001, noted that the situation of women within society remains precarious, with indicators that increasing numbers of female population are suffering extreme violence.

Further, there is considerable disparity between the status of men and women in Pakistan. According to the report of commission of inquiry for women (1997), observed that different social, cultural behaviors and discriminatory laws are making this disparity gap between men and women wider and wider. In this situation, it has become the need of time to take affirmative action at the macro level so that women can come in the main stream of the development.

Controversial behavior has been observed by patriarchal societies like Pakistan for women participation in every field of life. It is assumed that women cannot play effective and impressive role in decision-making process at every level of life, that's why women are not bothered to participate equally in all spheres of life. But, on the other hand many experiences show that women can play a pivotal role in society's different disciplines, which cover different aspect, i.e. political, social, economic, traditional, cultural etc. The main objective of the paper is to explore one of the other aspects of society, where woman was given a considerable opportunity to be a representative. For the study primary data was collected through questionnaire and interviews with the targeted population.

Keeping in view the visionary approach of development, present government of Pakistan took an affirmative action by increasing the reserve seats at every level of political bodies especially in the side of local government. The local government elections 2000-2001 are a landmark in the political history of Pakistan. Further the importance of these elections was because, for the first time powers were devolved to the

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grass root level. Secondly, women were given 33 % reservation at all levels of the local government. But just after announcing the devolution plan, the point of 33% reserve seats for women, became the burning issue for the people, and very strong censure revealed that how that much participation can be possible from women side, as already women in our society are involved numerous activities.

More over, it was believed that these women cannot fulfill the rules and regulations of councils because of their less exposure, low literacy rate and orthodox norms. These types of arguments normally came from those areas, which have considerable tribal values.

Basically Balochistan is the name of a tribal, traditional and conservative society. Men play dominating roles, especially in the rural areas. Any issue concerned with women takes hard time to explore and discuss. The issue of women participation in development processes is another difficult issue to write on, as participation by women, in any sphere of life is considered a threat towards the orthodox customs of Balochistan. The women here are not allowed to take part in any activity which is not approved by males.

Balochistan is composed of three main linguistic groups the Baloch, Pashtoon and Brahvi and different other small minorities. This situation is creating a social problem of empowerment in decision-making process in terms of using the acute scarce resources. Each group is affiliated and attached with its own manmade rules and systems. The distinctive futures of Balochistan have a significant implication for community development efforts. These attributes also have particular implications for women, whose role and status are conditioned and limited under the particular norms of Balochistan.

Opportunities in education are very limited in the province, especially for girls and women. So Balochistan has a highest illiteracy rate within Pakistan.

In this article the case study of Quetta district was studied, Quetta covers 2,653 sqkm area of Balochistan. Primary and secondary information regarding women status were collected to support the document. To analyze the impact of women participation in local government, questionnaire was distributed among the district members and individual interviews were conducted.

Quetta district is ethnically very much diverse as compare to the other districts of Balochistan. There are five major ethnic groups and each group has its own cultural and traditional values. These include Pashtoons, Baloch, Barahvies, Hazara and Punjabies. More over some other ethnic groups are living in Quetta i.e. Mahajir, Sindhis and Sirikies. The way of

living varies from group to group. The role of women among major ethnic groups of district is very limited. Women are bound to live within the traditional and cultural values; where males determine the status and position of female.

The role of women is, however, changing in Quetta city. Number of working women in the social sector, NGOs and in banks is increasing significantly. Launching of decentralization plan and reserving the 33% seats for women are the major steps and a nice attempt toward filling these gaps, as sone in some other parts of the world (Table 1).

Table. 1. Women in local government in South Asia, 2000

Country	Women in local Government seats % Of total	Women in central Government % Of total
Sri Lanka	2	5.3
India	33.3	7.9
Pakistan	33	2.9
Nepal	24.1	7.9
Bangladesh	33.3	11.2

Source: Comparative analysis on women in local government in South Asia and the Pacific

The Local government election, 2000, 2002 are a landmark in political history of Pakistan on many counts, of which three are most important, firstly, these were held in the overall context of the plan to devolve power to the gross roots level, secondly, women were given 33 percent reservation at all level of local government and elections on women seats at the union council level were held directly, and thirdly, the strength of the primary tier, the union council, was increased substantially.

Women in Local Government

Some time a single event or step brings the magnify change not in the lives but also in the history. The local government elections proved to be an event that changed the scenario and processes of women participation in Pakistan.

The number of women who came in first phase of new local government system is marvelous. Thirty six thousand one hundred and five women were the members of local government institutions. Over 32,222

women came through constituency based direct election at the union council level. From the total, 3,741 women were at the higher tiers of the local government. Many women contested the elections for the seats of Nazim and Naib Nazim at different levels and 16 of them were successful (Mirza, 2002).

Aurat foundation's report on "women participation in elections" says that: these elections also saw the beginnings of a cultural shift in society, as the nominations of over 67,000 women for the election meant that their decision had backing of an equal number of families, where men inevitably take decisions on important matters"

The figures in Table 1 reveal that a wind of change in terms of participation is blowing across the globe, as a new vision is developing with gender equality and women's rights. Hence new realities are emerging, since half the population of all societies of the world, cannot be kept a side.

The UN's approach to issues of gender based on a number of internationally agreed commitments: following are the few examples;

According to the United Nations Charter (1945), every one is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this declaration, with out distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion (The universal declaration of human rights, 1948).

Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and pace. (Beijing Platforms for action, 1995)

In Pakistan women's participation in local government system is an expression of their commitment to be a part of this vision. As the constitution of Pakistan also supports the women rights, and especially the constitution of 1973 guarantees this equality between women and men. It has the following provisions for affirmative action for women:

Article 25 states that 'All citizens are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection before the law; there shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex alone; nothing in this article shall prevent the state from making any special provision for the protection of women and children.

Pakistan has also signed and ratified the international convention for women right, called 'convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women' (CEDAW) in 1996. In 1979, the United Nations general assembly adopted the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. The convention sets out, in legally binding form, internationally accepted principles on the rights

of women, which are applicable to all women in all fields

The present Devolution system

On 23rd March 2000, the present government announced and introduced the new local government system, called devolution of power plan. The devolution plan was prepared and drafted by the National reconstruction Bureau (NRB). The draft covers seven points agenda, provides the foundation to the plan.

Civil society organizations initiated a countrywide consultation with people of different spheres of life, when the draft was placed for public debate. These organizations suggested some important amendments to the plan i.e. holding of local councils elections on part-basis, direct constituency based elections at the Tehsil and district level, abolition of separate electorates etc. anyhow government did not incorporate recommendations, when it put forward. Further, 50% reservation of seats for women was proposed in first draft, but it reduced to 33% in final draft. [Mirza.N.2002]

The government announced the final plan called Local government plan 2000, on 14 August 2000.

The local government system, according to the local government plan, 2000, is based on five different basic principles: that are, devolution of political powers, decentralization of administrative authority, decentralization of management functions, diffusion of the power authority nexus and distribution of resources to the district level.

In the new system almost it was visualized that the component of community participation worked with it maximum strength.

Local bodies mean small units at the public or community level, to whom national government assigns some powers to operate and handle community level functions. It is also known as third tier of government.

In Pakistan, it has been observed that whenever the democratic governments came into power, they never gave any or due importance or even ignored the structure of local government.

On the other hand this system had always remained quiet due to the military governments, as it provides democratic cover to such governments. Hence a chain of local bodies system has always developed through out the military governments. In Pakistan for the first time, this system of government was indirectly formed in the name of "basic democracies" in 1962.

The new system is designed to ensure that the genuine interests of the people are served and their rights safeguarded. The new system visualizes an enabling environment in which the people can start participating

in community welfare and be the masters of their own destiny.

Before moving towards the detail I just want to give a view of old and new structure of district government by a table as below

Figure 1. Old structure of district government

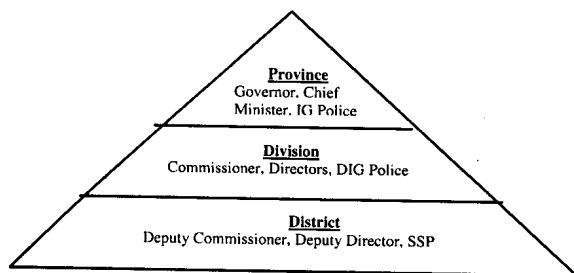
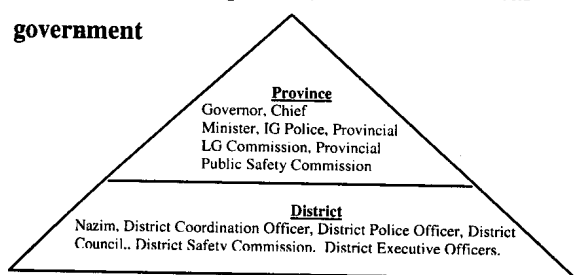


Figure 2. The New (present) structure of Local government



The past local government system was the subject of the provincial government.

The present local government system consists of three main levels: District, Tehsil and Union. Each level has a political structure comprising Nazim and Naib Nazim, an elected body and several committees and an administrative structure.

Local Government Elections 2000-2001 were held to elect:

1. Councilors for 6022 union councils;
2. Councilors for 305 Tehsil councils;
3. Councilors for 30 town councils; and
4. Councilors for 96 districts, including the city districts of Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, Quetta.

Composition of Councils

Union Council

This is the primary tier of the local government. It comprises 21 seats:

Eight general (Muslim) seats (open for men and women).

Four women's (Muslim) reserved seats (only for women).

Four workers and peasant's reserved seats (open for men and women).

Two workers and peasant's seats reserved for women (only for women).

One reserved seat for minorities (open for men and women).

One Nazim and 1 Naib Nazim (in a panel) (open for men and women).

Tehsil /Town Council

This is the intermediary level for the local government and comprises: All Naib Nazims of union councils in a town or a Tehsil automatically become members of the town council, or, as the case may be, of the Tehsil council, which also has:

- One Nazim and 1 Naib Nazim (in a panel)
- 33% seats reserved for women
- 5% seats reserved for peasants and workers
- 5% seats, subject to a minimum of one seat, reserved for minorities

District Council:

This is the highest decision-making tier of the local government and comprises:

Nazims of the union councils, in a district, automatically become members of the district council, which also has:

- 1 Nazim and 1 Naib Nazim (in a panel)
- 33% seats reserved for women
- 5% seats reserved for peasants and workers
- 5% seats, subject to a minimum of one seat, reserved for minorities

Now in forthcoming elections the number of composition is going to be changed. Now total seats for union council are 13 in spite of 21.

Women participation

A total of 39,964 seats were reserved for women at all tiers of the local government. Of these, 36,066 seats were in the union councils, 1,749 seats in the Tehsil councils, 161 in the town councils and 1,988 in the district councils. In addition, another 95 seats were allocated to women belonging to religious minorities based on the population ratio in some union council in Sindh.

Overall, the reserved seats for women comprised 27.7% of the total seats in the entire local government system. The number of women's seats reserved as a percentage of the total number of seats is given below:

Table.4.Women seats reserved as %age of total seats

Level of council	No. of council	Total seats	Seats reserved for women	Women's seats as % of total
Union council	6,022	126,462	36,066	28.5%
Tehsil council	305	8,192	1,749	21.3%
Town council	30	773	161	20.8%
District council	96	8,806	1,988	22.6%
Total		144,233	39,964	27.7%

Source: Naeem Mirza, *Women's participation in local government Elections 2000-2001*

Overall seats filled by women:

On the contrary of people thinking, during the elections of 2000-2001, women were quite successful in nomination and filling the reserved seats. They were able to fill nearly 90% of these reserved seats in the union council, 96% in Tehsil councils, 100% in town councils and 95.8% in district councils. Hence the numbers in Table 5 depicts the empowerment and success of women.

Table 5. Situation of elected women

Women elected on reserved seats in all councils	35963
Women elected on reserved seats for minorities	126
Women elected as Nazim, Naib Nazim	16
Total no. of women in local councils	36105

Impact and Analysis

After observing all the relevant aspects of women participation, now the question arises, what is the developmental impact of this all. But before it I want to discuss some problems briefly faced by female councilor. Hence we can analyze the current situation of women councilor. (These problems were identified during the provincial conference of female councilors at Quetta, in March, 2003).

Following are the problems, identified by female councilors.

- Women did not have grip on information about new system and ordinance because of their non-mobility, illiteracy.
- In the beginning of program, Funds were allocated with out the consultation of female members, as

other members did not consider the women rationality.

- Women were deliberately not allowed to speak in session.
- In the beginning, No honorarium was given to those members, who came on reserve seats.
- Copies of Local government ordinance were not distributed to all members, especially women, as it was said; there is no need to read it.
- Female were not being selected for district committees.
- Female were not informed about the assembly session agenda of meeting.

Before moving towards I want to depict some data that is very much concerned with this analysis portion:

Table 6.Women of Balochistan in Local Government (at a glance)

Council	Women's seats	Women elected	Seat vacant	% Coverage
Union council	3108	2374	734	76%
Tehsil council	151	129	22	85%
Town council	22	22	00	100%
District council	173	152	21	88%
Total	3454	2677		77%

The above data pertain to the period before by-elections.

Table7. Data of district members Quetta

Male member	68
Male members on reserve seats	06 (3 on minority, 3 on peasant/worker seats)
Female on reserve seats	22
Total members	96

Table 8. Numbers of benefits to women Councilors

Sr No	Activity	Coverage
1	Allocation of Funds	Rs. 2,75,000/- per person (annually)
2	Honorarium	Rs. 5000/- per month
3	Training of women councilors	100 %
4	Exposure	100%
5	Extra amount from federal government	Rs.3, 00,000 per person in 2003-2004
6	Net working meeting	Monthly basis

After summing up the problems and finding the data, finally I want to come toward the impact of women participation. Although women found difficulties in all the process, but they are still fighting for the truth and what is truth? That is obviously their equal rights and equal participation. For the analysis, different variables were taken and put them into account on the basis of validity.

Table.9. Analysis table

Variable	Poor	Low	Moderate	High
Mobility	0.000	0.000	69%	31%
Level of confidence	0.000	14%	36%	50%
Vocal	0.000	54%	37%	9%
Interaction	0.000	0.000	30%	70%
Linkages development	9%	9%	50%	32%
Developmental schemes	0.000	0.000	0.000	100%
Exposure	5%	14%	69%	12%
Mobility in term of attending the regular session	5%	5%	14%	76%
Respect during sessions	0.000	0.000	0.000	100%
Nos. of completion of schemes	0.000	0.000	0.000	100%
Inner satisfaction in term of feeling no burden	0.000	14%	9%	77%
Decision making power in sessions	0.000	0.000	50%	50%

(Percentage was derived through number of responses divided by total number of units, multiply by hundred) Now, on the above information we can develop our analysis and see the developmental impact very easy and quickly. Further when I will follow the developmental impact, I also depict some case studies accordingly. For analysis some variables and the questionnaire were developed (Attached in annexure). Above-mentioned analysis table is based on information collected through questionnaire. These variables will be discussed one by one appropriately. For the analysis and impact rest of information is divide in following three parts.

- Impact on personal lives
- Impact on community level
- Impact on official level

Impact on personal life

As it has been mentioned before that within the orthodox set-up of Balochistan, it is quite difficult for women to take part in such activities, which are time demanding. Because as a public representative it is too hard to full fill the expectations of people either appropriate or not. This situation definitely, direct or indirect affect their lives. Where, even, female could not make a simplest decision of their daily life without the consent of male family members. It's just because of lack of confidence and ignorance of females as active member of society. But this new step of government provided an opportunity to women, for becoming successful and making some difference in their lives. Anyhow following are the points, which clearly depict the picture of change in their lives:

- Women are more confident than before, as they are earning some money in the form of honorarium on monthly basis, which enhanced their economic prosperity.
- They are playing a role of decision maker, as before they were just decision taker. This decision making power is reflected by very strong figure that are falling 50% in both categories i.e. moderate and high.
- They have got respect, although the component of respect was already existed there, but now they got this respect by considering their role in the society and people rely on them.
- Women are more mobile, even beyond this; they are not regular attending the meeting, but also complete their other tasks from out side the houses.
- They are also playing a model role for other women in family.
- Although most of the members are quite busy in different task within home and out side as well, but they don't take it as burden, and according to al of them we are really enjoying our lives and satisfied with this full fledge extra task.

Though, all variables were not 100% reflected in questionnaire, but analysis shows the positive upper trend of variable's validity. Following are few case studies of union and district members:

Case study I

Shehnaz Liaqat is a married woman, mainly involved and responsible for the household activities. She never thought of any social and political activity in her life. As her family was quite conservative, even in her home females were not allowed to go outside for education. After the announcement of local government election, she decided to start social work and activities in the area. So she joined a CBO and from this plate form she solved many problems of the people. But at the start of

her social and political activities, she faced resistance from her family and people of the area. They created many problems for her, but she did not forget her aim. In this struggle of her she was fully supported and always motivated by her husband. After becoming a councilor she attended the regular session of the assembly. She tried her best to solve the problem faced by the people and specially women during their daily lives. Even, some time she has to play a role of arbitress in family matters of the community people.

Case study II

Fareeda Kakar is a district member elected from Hana Urak. She belong to a hard area of Quetta in a sense of enable working environment for women. Ms. Fareeda informed that she faced numbers of problems during this all but she never thought to leave this work. At last Her persistence gave her a position in society that she wished before. Ms. Fareeda Kakar spent her allocated budget in construction of a complete road between the village and the main road of Hanna. More over she utilized the funds for installing the streets light. She informed, that this work is not only giving us the confidence but also pushing up the passion of dedication. She has given her land to government for constructing the middle school for girls, as the said school is already working as primary girls school. She is quiet confident now and feel happy with her job. She shared again, that a big change that came in my life is my access to different institutions, and now I can move alone everywhere with out any hesitation.

Case study III

Ms Samin Saeed is a district member; on asking she responded that after becoming the councilor I have my own identity in society. People give the respect, and there is a major change not only in the behaviors of the area people but also of the male members of the assembly towards them. She informed, that she never found her as much confident before. Again she said that before becoming the part of this job, I had had limited exposure of work, but due to number of trainings and linkages development programs, enhanced my capacity of work. Samina has utilized the given funds in different heads i.e. construction of road, channels in Halqa 2/3 and construction of water tank and latrines and construction of cemented floor in schools.

Above case studies clearly show the picture of impact of their participation in local government as public representatives.

Impact on Community level

Above mentioned case studies and statistical analysis showed that to some extent Women have strong position not only within homes, but also in the community. Following points cover the impact on community level.

- Women got respect from community and people rely on them and consider their efforts.
- Women have developed reputa as strong society members by doing developmental activities.
- Women become a model for other females of the society, and this was, one of the reasons that women took part actively in by- election of local government.
- They have strong interaction with community people, as they have launched different scheme.
- They are full filing very strong responsibilities in the context of women development issues and defend these issues at every plate form as women representatives.

Impact on Decision making or official level

On decision-making or official level, every body can observe and see the impact of their work as public representatives.

- With the passage of time, now they have say in the session, as, in the beginning of the program, no body ready to listen them in the houses, because male members were too much reluctant for their 33% representation in assemblies. Even women were ignored while the developmental schemes were announced. But, now a woman is performing her duty as acting deputy speaker and second one, as member of public safety commission.
- Discriminatory attitude are being removed gradually in term of distribution of funds and launching the schemes. Because whenever project proposal and feasibilities were prepared and submitted by lady councilors, they were strongly rejected by saying only this 'Women don't have any concern with roads, water supply schemes or street lights' so they don't need funds for any activity.
- Women have showed their spirit of work and balanced their tasks, that's why today, they all are involved in launching and completing the developmental schemes very rapidly.
- Women have easy access to different institutions and they have built the linkages between communities and institutions. I.e. WASA, QDA, WAPDA etc
- Women are given more opportunities (by government and non governmental organizations i.e. RDA, UNDP, AURAT FOUNDATION, IDSP etc) to participate in different trainings and get exposures that are why they are operating this activity very smoothly.

Over all analysis: Impact on the development of the Balochistan;

As every body knows Balochistan is treated as special as due to its tribal and sensitive nature in term of customs. But again conversely, position of female councilors is very strong at districts level in Balochistan. It may be just because of one of the other reasons that overall political nature of Balochistan is very much strong, that automatically push the participation of women in this scenario. Further devolution plan is powerful step towards consideration of women capabilities in development side.

Through out the Balochistan women are utilizing their funds in different schemes i.e. construction of roads, schools, installation hand pumps, streetlight etc. During the meeting it was revealed that only in Quetta city 40 schemes have been passed and completed through female district members so far. Further when female councilors planed and launched these schemes, they took place the women priority on top in terms of benefits. For example most of female councilors worked for girls school. Even a district member handed over her own plot to government for expansion of primary girls school to middle school. More over in the interior of Balochistan female councilors installed the hand pumps in center place, where women of the area can have access easily; hence mobility problem of area women can be mitigated. So proper planning of schemes is also another way to hitting the hindrances.

Further the level of interaction and coordination among civil society organizations is continuously increasing day by day.

Analysis table also shows that the severity of different barriers of women development is slowly and gradually going down., i.e. mobility rate has been increase than before (one of the reason in the situation of Quetta district, that most of women are educated and already involved in social work , but even in other district mobility ratio moved upward because of this developmental incentive. More over, now women are more vocal and have grip on the concerned information, which shows their rational participation in development. They have increased their confidence through getting knowledge. This is on of the reasons that their opinions about schemes, development activities and other programs are considered.

Thus we can say that issue of women representation has opened a new chapter for development of Balochistan.

Conclusion

Data analysis Table shows the up ward trend of variable in term of women success. But this should not be

considered that all the problems have been removed. For bringing perfection in this operation, there is need to give them more space and time for improving themselves. Since it is the first time in history that thousands of women are given chance to take part in decision-making process, so it has become a challenge of their persistence. But it could only be possible when all the government, non-government and civil society's institutions play their effective role.

Suggestions

Although 33% reservation for seats in local councils is an affirmative action of Government of Pakistan, but this process should be continued for the developmental aspect. Local bodies play the role of nurseries, where people get exposure and use it as a launching pad for mature positions. Further, they can use this platform for the betterment of their respective regions, where only local people can have access to the solution of problems by mobilizing the local resources.

These 33% women are also representing the 50% female population of the country. They know the problems of women and solution very well. That's why this program must be continued. Following are some suggestion for further strengthening the program.

- a. Constitutional cover is must for the consideration of local government system
- b. There should be one female representative in the panel of Nazim and Naib Nazim
- c. There should be allocation of 33% budget for women councilors in local government ordinance.
- d. There should be regular refresher courses for female councilors, so that any inefficiency can be removed.
- e. Time and date of assembly session should be finalized well before time and all the councilors should be informed alt least a weak before.
- f. For bringing the punctuality and regularity in attendance, a mechanism should be decided either through ordinance or through the inner decision of the house.
- Common rooms for female councilors should be constructed or managed within the premises of assembly hall.
- g. There should be effective legislation for ensuring thst women participation is not just for the numbers but in terms of playing effective role.

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