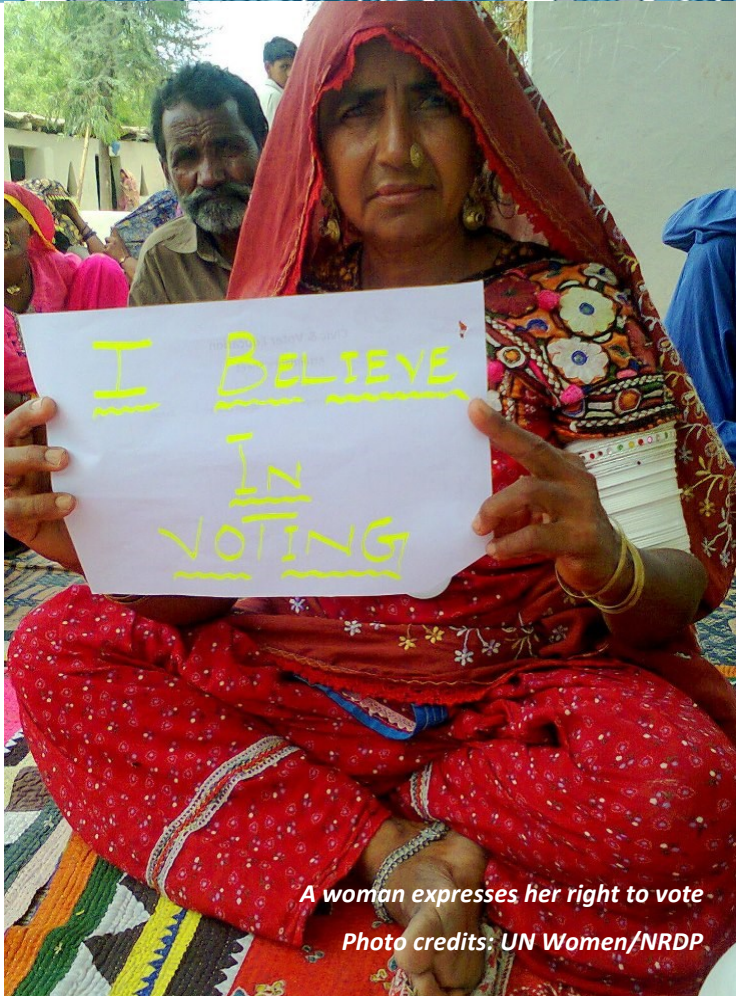


Newsletter Special Issue:

Women and Elections 2013



A woman expresses her right to vote

 Photo credits: UN Women/NRDP

Inside this Special issue:

1. "I Believe in Voting"
2. Women's Political Participation
3. Tum Pakistan ki Beti Ho
4. Advancing Civic and Voter Education
5. Your Identity Counts
6. Physically Challenged Voters Lead the Pursuit for Equality
7. Tribal Men have Spoken... "Our Women will Vote"
8. Engaging and Mobilizing Minorities
9. Youth as roaming CVE messengers
10. Including Women as Electoral Administrators
11. Promises to Deliver on: Political Party Manifestos and Women Leaders
12. Counting the Invisible Voter
13. E-Day and a Demographic Analysis
14. Moving the 'Electoral Cycle' Forward
15. My Thoughts.... Our Future

I BELIEVE IN VOTING... "I will educate my peers in the community who are uneducated like me. I had never seen my mother vote so I did not know much about voting but today I have learned all there is to know about the procedure"

Danjyani, a young uneducated lady from Sindh Province was married off in her early teens and believes in using her right to vote. Danjyani was encouraged to vote after attending a number of community based interactive events aimed at raising awareness on women's right to vote and the voting procedure. Through civic and voter education sessions, performances and mock polling sessions, Danjyani learned how to fill in and fold her ballot papers and after being captivated by a local theater performance, Danjyani and her friends made a promise to themselves that during the 2013 Elections they would be first time voters. With such a simple voting procedure, Danjyani shared, "I will educate my peers in the community who are uneducated like me. I had never seen my mother vote so I did not know much about voting but today I have learned all there is to know about the procedure".

In honoring the promise she made to herself 'to be a first-time voter', not only did Danjyani cast her vote on Election Day, but she also took her family members to cast their votes, and Danjyani is very sure that she will be voting again in future elections.

UN Women's 'Women and Elections' programme falls under the larger 'Election Support Cycle Project to the Electoral Commission of Pakistan (2012-2014)', launched by UNDP to support the Election Commission in building long-term institutional capacity and increasing the participation of voters (particularly women and youth) in the electoral process

2. Women's Political Participation - A Situational Analysis

Besides other forms of inherent social and economic discrimination against women in Pakistan, their political marginalization remains a longstanding issue. Women account for half the population of Pakistan but unfortunately, even to-date in many parts of the country they are under-registered and under-represented in the political arena as voters, political candidates and electoral administrators.

Highlights of 2008 General Elections

- ⇒ *17% reserved seats in National Assembly and 17 seats in Senate were secured by women*
- ⇒ *Outstanding performance of women Parliamentarians and members of Provincial Assemblies in legislative processes demonstrate the meaningful role in strengthening democracy in Pakistan*
- ⇒ *Despite increase in overall voter turnout in 2008 (44.57%) compared to 2002 elections, the female voter turnout was lower than expectations*
- ⇒ *The lowest women voters turnout was in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, then Sindh, Balochistan and Punjab*

Key Issues

Key issues and challenges that create obstacles for women in accessing their political rights include:

- Deeply entrenched patriarchal values and cultural and social norms mean women are still denied the right to cast their vote
- A large number of women and girls over 18 years of age still do not possess Computerized National Identity Cards (CNICs)
- Many women CNIC holders are not registered as voters
- Shortcomings/inaccuracies in electoral voter lists highlight **10 million** unregistered women
- Non-availability of sex disaggregated data on voter turnout
- Women representation as employees in the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) is less than 2%
- Political party structures and policies restrict women's full political participation

Key Actions

Key measures to be taken on a priority basis include:

- **The State has to view gender inequity as a key issue in electoral reform**
- **National/Provincial strategies on gender equality policies** to ensure increased women's political participation at national, provincial and local government level need to be developed
- **Agreements amongst political parties for not letting women and girls cast their votes** must not be allowed - action should be taken by the ECP against concerned individuals/parties
- **Electoral management, oversight and dispute resolution services must be gender sensitive** so as to promote women and girl's participation in the electoral process
- **Increased commitment and focus of political parties** on how they are planning to protect and improve women's human rights in their manifestos should clearly articulate the party position on gender equality and empowerment of women and girls
- **Where women and girls are barred from voting** and evidence exists, an investigation should take place prior to the election being declared null and void by the ECP. Where such incidents occur strict punishment should be awarded to those violating the law
- **The National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) must facilitate women and girls in registering as voters**, particularly in far flung remote areas
- **Raising awareness of male household and community members** on the importance of the female vote is needed on a national scale
- **Sex disaggregated data** on voter registration and voter turnout in elections and number of votes cast must be made available by the ECP
- **The ECP needs to include women in its decision-making levels** and a quota of at least 10% women officers should be implemented in electoral management bodies



Mobilizing women and youth first time-voters, Sindh Province

Photo credits: UN Women/NRDP

National and International Commitments

Women's political representation and participation is guided by National and International Commitments including the Constitution of Pakistan (1973), CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women, ratified 1996) and the ICCPR (International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, ratified 2010).

Role of UN Women

UN Women strives to promote gender equality and women's human rights, strengthen implementation of gender sensitive policy and legislation and eliminate all forms of violence against women. The Global Strategic Plan of UN Women (2011-2013) identifies women's political participation and representation as an important goal. In working effectively towards this goal, UN Women Pakistan in using an 'electoral cycle' approach rather than an 'election event' approach, has built a number of partnerships with key government organizations, National and Provincial Women Machineries (such as National Commission on the Status of Women, Women Parliamentary Caucus and Women Development Departments) civil society and UN agencies particularly UNDP to work around the issues of women participation and representation in political and electoral processes.

Results and Achievements

UN Women's efforts with key partners contributed to:

1. **Over 40 MILLION newly registered women with NADRA**, increasing the CNIC registration rate to 86% from 44% in just 4 years
2. **Outreach and Mobilization of over 10 MILLION voters**, particularly women, youth, minorities and people with disabilities through nationwide media campaigns
3. **Over 1 MILLION women voters mobilized** through civic awareness and education campaigns (community level)
4. **Adoption of 5 gendered electoral Codes of Conduct by ECP** - Political Parties and Candidates; Observers; Media; Polling Personnel and Security Personnel
5. **Draft Gender Mainstreaming Strategy** developed to highlight barriers to women's political participation and identify measures to facilitate women in elections
6. **A system to collect voter turnout data disaggregated by sex**, a first time in Pakistan's electoral history, for consolidation and analysis of voter turnout data from 73,000 polling stations
7. **Development/dissemination of knowledge products** on rights of women voters, civic and voter education and initiatives of ECP to carry out free and fair elections



Educating women on their role as voters, Sindh province
Photo credits: UN Women/NRDP

3. Tum Pakistan ki Beti Ho

The Challenge

With over 80.9 million registered voters during the 2008 Elections, the ratio of registered male to female voters was 56:44 (male voters was 45.3 million and female voters was 35.6 million). For women, this figure was 2% less than the percentage of registered women voters in the 2002 Elections.

How a Vote is Registered

STEP 1: Citizens register with NADRA to get a CNIC

STEP 2: To add or change voter registration details citizens are required to fill out the requisite forms via the DEC's office

STEP 3: Electoral rolls are prepared by ECP using NADRA's data and through door-to-door verification

STEP 4: ECP manages voter data disaggregated by sex and location, and all aspects of the electoral process

The ECPs final electoral rolls included 48 million men and 38 million women. Given the roughly equal gender division in population figures, there was a

clear discrepancy where approximately 10 million Pakistani women were **unaccounted for in the electoral roll** and consequently not entitled to vote.

One challenge for UN Women in supporting efforts of the Government to increase women's political participation was not only to mobilize the 10 million 'unaccounted' women but to also 'mobilize' women who are registered as voters to cast their votes during the General Elections on 11 May 2013.

The Strategy

UN Women's strategic initiatives as an implementing partner under UNDP's 'Electoral Cycle Support to the Election Commission of Pakistan (2012-2014)' project, included:

- **Citizen's engagement** (particularly women, youth, disabled and marginalized persons) to participate in elections, as voters, candidates and electoral administrators
- **Gender mainstreaming** within the ECPs electoral processes to deliver and implement its Five-Year Strategic Plan (2010-2014)

The Campaign

'**Tum Pakistan ki Beti Ho**' (translated: 'You are a daughter of Pakistan') is an electronic media education campaign launched by UN Women under the branding of ECP and contributed to the ECP's national voter education campaign '**Bula Raha Hai Pakistan**' (translated: 'Pakistan is calling You') to educate voters on their rights and responsibilities, and highlight initiatives of the Election Commission to ensure free, fair and transparent elections.

The ECP's Voter Education Plan (2012-2013), in addressing Goals 13, 14 and 15 of its Five-Year Strategic Plan, had set a goal to achieve 63% voter turnout in the 2013 Elections with outreach to a number of key demographic groups including women and youth first time voters in urban areas where voter turnout has historically remained lower than in rural regions.

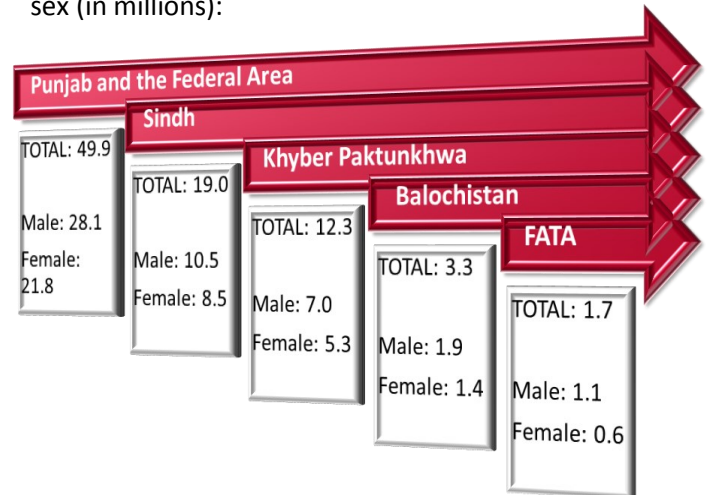
UN Women in supporting these efforts piloted a Civic and Voter Education (CVE) outreach and mobilization campaign in 20 districts across 4 provinces, through:

- **Seminars and community fairs** on the right to vote and the voting procedure educational institutions and local gathering targeted youth, women, minorities and people with disabilities
- Production and distribution of **IEC material** such as bags, banners/hoardings/standees, caps and t-shirts, certificates, CNIC pouches, pen and badges, stickers, and polling process leaflets and posters
- Development and dissemination of gender **sensitized education and training manuals** including a Handbook for Voter Education and a Training Manual for Polling Staff

Results and Achievements

- 2013 saw an **increase of over 5.3 million registered voters** from 80.9 million in 2008 to 86.2 million (of which 48.6 were male and 37.6 were female)
- Number of **registered women voters increased by nearly 2 million** over the last four years, and number of registered male voters increased by 3.3 million
- The **voter turnout rate (% of votes polled) rose to 55%**, as recorded by ECP; in 2008 this figure was 44% (sex disaggregated data on voter turnout is currently unavailable)

- ECP's 2012 final electoral rolls, published in March 2013, reveals there are **86,189,802 registered voters** across the country who would potentially exercise their right to vote in the 2013 Elections (held 11 May). Registered voter data broken down by province and sex (in millions):



- To increase voter turnout the ECP and UN Women led a public awareness campaign coupled with direct outreach to women through local and community based civil society groups, through which:
 - ◇ **Over 1 MILLION women voters were mobilized** under a Civic and Voter Education Programme focused in 20 selected districts
 - ◇ **A number of seminars, community fairs and awareness raising events** were held
 - ◇ **Dissemination of over 1.5 million items of IEC material**
 - ◇ **Launch of a nationwide media campaign** using TV commercials, and radio shows/slots and social media (facebook and twitter)
- **Adoption of a gender responsive Voter Education and Outreach Handbook by ECP** which is supported with election and polling staff training material
- **Endorsement of 5 Codes of Conduct endorsed** for Political Parties, Candidates, Observers, Polling Staff and Security Officers
- **Adoption and implementation of mechanisms to record and collect gender disaggregated voter turnout data** - 3 forms of critical importance for collection of voter turnout data by sex and a digitalized results management system to tabulate the election results

4. Advancing Civic and Voter Education

The Concept

With focus on 20 select districts across 4 provinces (Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Sindh), UN Women put together a series of planned activities to take place over a 3-month period to advance Civic and Voter Education (CVE) with the Election Commission which complimented NADRA's drive to increase registration and issuance of CNICs to women, providing them with the 'tool' to vote.

The selected districts were:

Province:	Balochistan	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	Punjab	Sindh
District 1:	Gawadar	Abbottabad	Attock	Badin
District 2:	Khuzdar	Bannu	Bahawalpur	Dadu
District 3:	Pishin	Mardan	Mianwali	Hyderabad
District 4:	Quetta	Peshawar	Rahim Yar Khan	Khairpur
District 5:	Sibi	Swabi	Sargoda	Malir

With over 50% of the population being female, the number of registered female voters was less than 47% in the 2008 elections and women's voter turnout (including marginalized women) was significantly low. Demographics of Pakistan also reveal that 63% of the population is under the age of 25 years and hundreds of thousands are reaching the age of voting (18 years) each year.

The CVE programme therefore, primarily targets women, youth (first-time voters) and marginalized communities. Activities included:

- ⇒ **Community outreach and mobilization** through a range of approaches, including: community meetings, street theatre and other cultural activities, and awareness raising marches
- ⇒ **Engaging youth volunteers** to aid awareness raising and mobilization of local communities and in particular youth first-time voters
- ⇒ **Engage with a media partner** to develop and disseminate CVE material (electronic, print and social) to reach a wide segment of selected communities and offer individuals, especially young people, anonymous access to valuable information and resources

- ⇒ **Training of 4 CSOs at each provincial level** to: (i) Train volunteers; (ii) Disseminate CVE material; (iii) Carry out orientation of DEC staff; and (iv) Reach out to communities through behavioral change based activities and mock polls. The partnering CSOs with UN Women were: Society for Human Assistance and Development (SHAD, Balochistan), Devolution Trust for Community Empowerment (DTCE, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), Association for Gender Awareness and Human Empowerment (AGAHE, Punjab) and National Rural Development Programme (NRDP, Sindh)

- ⇒ **Strengthening of District Election Commissioner (DEC) offices** as local 'convergence bases' to: (i) Build capacity of DEC staff; (ii) Interact with CSO partners and campaign coordination; (iii) Public outreach; (iv) Facilitate women candidates; and (v) Collate evidence of violation of women's voting rights on election day

Results and Achievements

- **Direct outreach to over 780,600 people** (men, women, boys and girls) by linking education with entertainment through an array of community and student sessions, minority gatherings (Easter and Holi), street theatres, corner meetings and awareness walks (figure 1)
- **Engaging and enabling around 472,638 women and girls** to know their 'voting' rights and role in elections, including participation in mock polls
- **Educating around 308,029 men and boys** on importance and benefits of: (i) their vote; (ii) the vote of women and girls including issuance of a CNIC; and (iii) engaging community men and boys to take up discriminatory issues faced by women and advocate for their voting rights
- **Sensitization of 777 religious leaders** (630 males, 147 females) educating them on the benefits and process for women's electoral participation



A team of youth volunteers mobilizing local communities in civic and voter education, Balochistan Province

Photo credits: UN Women/SHAD

- **Engagement of 344 youth volunteers** (206 males, 138 females) to support door-to-door IEC distribution and awareness raising during community and youth sessions (figure 2)
- **Awareness raising of 68,932 youth and students** (24,471 males, 44,461 females) in educational institutions on the importance of voting to support democracy and good governance in the country

Figure 2: Number of youth volunteers engaged in raising awareness on citizen's electoral rights as part of the CVE programme

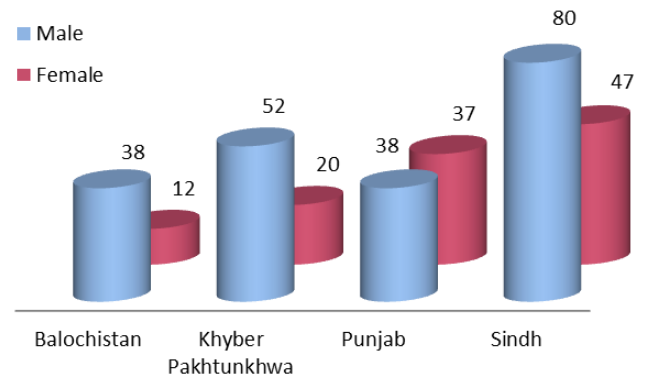
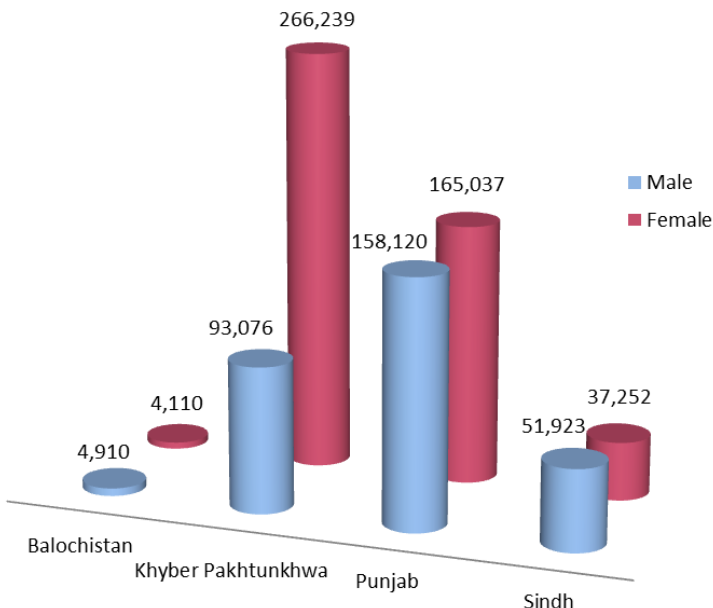


Figure 1: Number of males and females mobilized through community based initiatives as part of CVE Initiatives



- **Capacity strengthening of 119 staff** from DEC offices to support volunteers in CVE mobilization and outreach
- **Production and distribution of over 1.5 million items of IEC material** (including posters, stickers, leaflets, videos, banners, standees, pens, sling bags and sports bags, badges, T-shirts, caps, certificates for youth and children, CNIC holders, and handbooks and training manuals)
- **Targeted CVE media outreach through 3,360 TV and radio spots** (655 TV slots and songs, 2,705 radio slots) over a 35-day period using 10 national TV channels and 19 local radio stations



NADRA facilitates CNIC registration using Semi-Mobile Registration Units in 'remote' areas, Balochistan province

Photo credits: UN Women/NADRA

5. Your Identity Counts

Towards Political Empowerment

The first step towards political empowerment for the people of Pakistan (men, women, youth first-time voters, minorities and people with disabilities) to have real choices and exercise their rights (including the right to vote) is to have 'identity' proof.

The Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC) is the source of this verification in Pakistan and requires one to be registered with the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA). Recording citizen data is the responsibility of NADRA and voter registration is managed by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

The ECP's 2012 final electoral rolls, published in March 2013, revealed that there are 86,189,802 registered voters (male 48,592,387 and 37,597,415 female) across the country who would potentially exercise their right to vote in the 2013 Elections (held on 11 May 2013). During the 2008 Elections, the total number of registered voters was just over 80.9 million (45.3 million male, 35.6 million female).

National Women Voter Registration Drive

NADRA in commemorating the 100th Anniversary of International Women's Day on 8 March 2011, launched a **Nationwide Women Registration Drive** in offering free CNIC registration to the unregistered Pakistani woman through its various programmes and incentives based schemes.

UN Women's advocacy and lobbying for gender responsive institutional mechanisms within NADRA (through a 5-year agreement, initiated in 2011), to provide women and marginalized citizens with access to basic rights including the 'right to vote' contributed to:

- Establishment of **dedicated registration centers for women** (including Fridays as 'women only' days)
- Overall **infrastructure expansion by 83%** with the inclusion of Mobile Registration Vans (MRVs) and Semi-Mobile Registration Units (MRU) to access 'remote' pockets and increase accessibility for unregistered women and marginalized populations

In a statement released by NADRA, (March 2013), over 86% of the country's female population registered for CNICs compared to 44% just four years ago. NADRA's latest data reveals :

- ⇒ Number of CNIC holders reached around 94.36 million in 2013 (53.28 million men, 41.08 million women) as compared with almost 54.1 million in 2008 (33.3 million men, 20.8 million women), highlighting a trend in realization of the importance of 'legal identity' as (i) a right of all women and (ii) behavioral change at the community level among men, women, boys and girls
- ⇒ Out of the total population, 96% of men and around 76% women are now registered with NADRA
- ⇒ Ratio of women CNIC holders increased at the rate of 94% in the last four years, while the increase in the ratio of men having CNICs remained static at 60%

Total (# of CNIC holders)	• 94.36 (2013) • 54.1 (2008)
Men	• 53.28 • 33.3
Women	• 41.08 • 20.8

The Campaign

UN Women and NADRA in linking advocacy efforts with outreach and mobilization at the community level launched the 'Naam to Diya Hai.... Pehchan Bhi Do' campaign (translated as 'You have given me a Name...Give me an Identity too') which fed into NADRA's nationwide women's registration drive to make the Pakistani woman an integral part of real change at national level and to ensure there are no disenfranchised voters in the 2013 Elections.

This 6-month campaign ran from September 2012 to March 2013 and targeted the five most vulnerable districts of Balochistan (Pishin, Killa Saifullah, Lasbela, Zhob and Gwadar) with low women CNIC registration as identified by NADRA following the 2008 Elections. The project outreach was through electronic media (TV channels and radios), print media (newspapers), outdoor media (posters, flyers and banners) and mobile vans.

Campaign banners and posters were displayed at different

locations including NADRA registration centres and in public places throughout rural villages. Door-to-door leaflet distribution was undertaken to disseminate information and create awareness on the benefits of having a CNIC, the process of registration and becoming an eligible voter.

Tehsil level meetings were held in each district with local communities (particularly males and tribal elders), on the importance and impact of legal identity not only for women but for all household members to access basic services and benefits, such as education, healthcare and social security.

Results and Achievements

- With a projected number of 127,139 unregistered women in the targeted rural areas, the pilot successfully **facilitated 8,512 women** to be issued with CNICs and registered as eligible voters
- A **6.7% increase in women issued with CNICs** during the 6-month pilot highlights legal identity as a right of all women has started to take root in the local areas
- Though the 6.7% increase is below expectations of the project that has been challenged by the local security situation and deeply entrenched tribal and cultural customs, there has in fact been a **100% increase in women's CNIC registration** across the districts. In the 6-months preceding the pilot, women's CNIC registration was 4,275 (March to August 2012), as compared to 8,512 (September 2012 to March 2013)

Before Pilot: 4,275

During Pilot: 8,512

- **Behavioural change and improved prevailing attitudes towards women's rights issues has 'taken off'** with women accessing information, resources and services
- According to NADRA, the **establishment of registration centres and mobile registration units** in far-flung areas, particularly to facilitate women and girls' registration over the last few years is one of the **contributing factors in the increased ratio of women's CNIC registration**
- NADRA will continue their **mobilization and awareness raising campaigns post-elections** to reach out and issue CNICs to nearly 24% of women across Pakistan



A physically challenged voter in Dadu, Sindh Province, is leading the pursuit of equality

Photo credits: UN Women/NRDP

6. Physically Challenged Voters Lead the Pursuit for Equality

“I had always thought I am bound to vote for one particular candidate and that if I did not vote for them I will face repercussions. After this session I feel liberated and am glad to know I have a right to vote for a candidate of my choice”



Photo credits: UN Women/NRDP

It was in rural Hyderabad, Sindh province, where we found Bano, a 71 year old visually impaired woman.

Bano has lived in rural Hyderabad since birth and has been under the influence of a feudal landlord, and has been bound to vote for him.

After attending awareness raising sessions Bano now knows she has ‘free choice’ to vote for the political candidate of her choice and being blind and disabled, she has the right to bring along a trusted individual who will aid her in the voting process.

On election day Bano went to vote accompanied by her daughter. She cast her vote without difficulty, but she did express that there was no priority given to disabled persons at her polling booth so she just had to wait her turn.

Zulfiqar, a 35 year old male residing in the District of Khairpur, is deaf and dumb.

Zulfiqar a member of the local deaf and dumb council, was sitting with fellow council members on a street corner in Khairpur, Sindh province, when spotted by Azeem, a CVE Educator and Social Mobilizer. On approaching them it was observed they had a sign interpreter seated amongst them. Seizing the opportunity to engage with this group of people, via the interpreter Azeem explained the role of a citizen in a democratic society, voting rights of disabled and challenged persons and the polling procedure. The initial reaction from the council members was that voting and elections did not include them.

Confronted with societal mindsets towards disabled and challenged persons, Azeem knew he had to raise the morale of this group and make them feel an important part of society. Azeem engaged them in mock polling sessions after which Zulfiqar through hand gestures expressed his appreciation and promised to take other members to the polling station to cast their vote... and this is exactly what happened. On the day of the elections Zulfiqar accompanied with his council members went to cast their vote.

In the village of Haji Sunara, Punjab province, lives Bibi Shaista, a disabled young woman who remained disheartened with the political parties and their promises as she and her village folk are still under privileged in terms of access to basic necessities of life.

Every year Shaista had wished to cast her vote in the hope that things will change but was afraid of venturing out and voting by herself firstly because of her disability and secondly from fear of the rush and security risks at the polling stations.

Having attended sessions on how to vote, Shaista wanted to check her polling station details and see if she was registered as a voter when told about the ECP's SMS '8300' service. Shaista was provided with a mobile phone and guided on how to type her CNIC number and send it to '8300' - she did it by herself and elated.

Realizing that each vote matters, Shaista promised to cast her vote even if she had to go alone to her polling station.

"I promise to carry out the message to other members of my [deaf and dumb] council, so that they can exercise their right to vote"



"I am afraid that with my disability I will not be able to vote"





Engaging and sensitization of tribal village elders, Quetta, Balochistan Province

Photo credits: UN Women/SHAD

7. Tribal Men have Spoken... "Our Women will Vote"

For decades, not a single woman in this dusty Pakistani village surrounded by wheat fields and orange trees has voted... And they are not likely to either.

The village's men have spoken.

"It's the will of my husband... This is the decision of all the families".

Confronting Norms and Traditions

Due to strict cultural and social norms, and decades old traditions, women in remote rural and tribal areas remain marginalized in political participation and are denied the right to vote.

Some reasons include:

- Deeply entrenched patriarchal values
- Women's general lack of awareness and importance of their voting rights
- Dependency on male family members for access to resources, transportation and basic civic amenities including issuance of a CNIC
- Prevention from exercising their right to vote by their families, tribes, clans, and local and spiritual leaders who oppose women voting
- Fear that local polling stations are combined for both male and women, and their wives and daughters will be harassed
- Tribal codes state that women live in purdah, confined to women's only quarters at home. They do not go shopping, they do not work outside the house and only go to the hospital in an emergency and that too with their faces covered - they do not need to go out to vote

Challenged with a general downward trend in the voter registration and turnout rate across Pakistan, UN Women supported the ECP in the uphill battle faced by Pakistani women to make their voices heard in the political process through sensitization and voter education sessions with village elders and male heads of households.

“We do not directly defy our fathers and husbands, but we do lobby with them to change their mind”

Speaking to village elders in a courtyard near the village mosque in Quetta, Balochistan province, on why their women were not being allowed to vote, we heard, “Women don't have the mental capacity to vote”, “We don't want our wives and daughters to leave the house” to “We simply don't see the point in their voting”.

Yar Mohammed, one of the village elders, insists it is not a matter of discrimination or tribal custom, “We stop our women from going to polling stations because we think if they go, men would tease them by staring or touching them”. One village resident, Shamshed, said the women in his family, “Come up to us and say, ‘We want to vote’, but we tell them it's a collective decision”.

During similar sessions, secluded within four walls, the village women sit on a concrete floor and listen to a female CVE Educator talk about the benefits of voting.

The village women certainly want a political voice. They talk of their desire to see better roads, schools where their daughters can get an education and a reliable supply of gas for cooking and heating.

They don't directly defy their fathers and husbands - but they do lobby them to change their minds.



Benefits of voting being shared with local women, Quetta, Balochistan Province

Photo credits: UN Women/SHAD

Changing Mindsets “No - but yes...”

After 10 focused group discussions with 80 religious leaders and tribal elders in Balochistan, the religious leaders agreed “Our women can vote” - they do have a right to vote and it is duty of the males to allow their women and girls to vote.

With this ‘approval’ 5,160 males, 4,160 women and 80 religious and tribal elders were engaged in voter education sessions and community gatherings across Balochistan. Through these interactive events, awareness was raised around:

- ⇒ Importance of vote and role of citizen
- ⇒ Elections code of conduct
- ⇒ Polling days’ procedures and processes
- ⇒ Mock poling process with male and female-only booths
- ⇒ Importance of women in elections (as females constitute nearly half of the total population)



A religious leader engages in voter education, Quetta, Balochistan province

Photo credits: UN Women/SHAD



Voter education taking place during the Hindu 'Holi' festival, Khairpur, Sindh province

Photo credits: UN Women/NRDP

8. Engaging and Mobilizing Minorities

“As transgenders we feel we are outcasts and not accepted by society. Most of us have CNICs but we do not know how to vote. We are happy to know we can vote, we will go as a group to cast our vote - this is our fundamental right”

A Session with Transgenders, Sibi

In 2012 the Supreme Court of Pakistan declared that a transgender has equal rights in obtaining a CNIC and is eligible to vote and stand as a political candidate.

In District Sibi, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, a dialogue session on the roles and responsibilities of transgenders in the electoral process was organized with ‘Dad Guru’ and some Gurus (each transgender has an elder called a ‘Guru’ while all Gurus are headed by a ‘Dad Guru’).

‘Dad Guru’ listened very attentively and asked the Gurus if “Anybody knows about this [voting rights and voting procedure]”? The unanimous reply was “No”. Fascinated by the fact that the transgenders had a right to vote and stand as a candidate, sessions on the electoral process and a mock polling exercise

were carried out by the District Commissioner and his team.

Following these sessions, ‘Dad Guru’ continued to raise awareness among other transgenders educating them on the importance of their vote, and the voting procedure itself. On election day, led by ‘Dad Guru’, the transgenders of this area made their way to their allocated polling station to cast their vote.

Awareness Raising at a Hindu Mela, Khairpur

“On my way back from a tea hotel as I was passing the bank of Mir canal view, tents caught my attention” narrates a District Coordinator. “I saw a large scale Hindu event in progress and this intrigued me. Upon further inquiry I found out that the Hindu community were celebrating their new year ‘Holi’. With permission from the Mukhi (Hindu religious

head) voter education sessions were organized for this gathering of nearly 2,500 Hindus. Banners were displayed, and leaflets and other informative material were distributed to the participants. Inside the ladies Mandir (prayer house), only the female volunteers entered and shared informative material on women and girls right to vote and the voting procedure”.

Emily, a widow from a minority group, Marecha, residing in Khairpur district shared, “Me and my clan keeps away from politics as kings may come and kings may go, we [the Marecha’s] keep going in our own way being thankful for what we have”. It was explained to Emily and members from other minority groups in the area that times have changed and that the ECP on behalf of the Government has made elaborate arrangements to engage all eligible voters and simplify the polling process. Participants at the various gatherings and melas across the district learned how to obtain the location of their polling station and block code via the ‘8300’ SMS service. With promises made to promote democracy amongst their community, the CVE team moved on to their next location.

“Me and my clan keeps away from politics as kings may come and kings may go, we [the Marecha’s] keep going in our own way being thankful for what we have”

Engaging the Christian Community

In a local church in Bannu District, province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, religious elders from the Christian community gathered together with CVE volunteers. The elders in highlighting the challenges their community face said, “We have been living here for centuries and are Bannuchis (residents of Bannu), and like any other Bannuchi we also have equal rights but it is very sad that we are not considered equal”. It was also shared that as the Christians are a minority across Pakistan they could not elect a Christian representative and thus had to vote for a Muslim candidate who they felt would give less importance to their community. The main message of the CVE campaign here in Bannu was that every part of society plays a vital role in building a better tomorrow, and using ones right to vote and elect a candidate of their choice is the first step.

In District Attock, Punjab province, after a sensitization session with Christian leaders on the importance of voting and the participation of all eligible voters in the upcoming elections, a pledge was made to spread messages of civic and voter education amongst community members, encouraging them to go come out and cast their votes for a better future for minorities in Pakistan.

This pledge was reemphasized by Father Joseph who wholeheartedly supported and encouraged his fellow Christians to “Say yes to vote”.

In District Bahawalpur, Punjab province, a female group from the Christian community visited civic and voter education stalls and participated in signature campaigns set-up at Bahawalpur Zoo.



Making a pledge to participate as voters, Bahawalpur , Punjab province

Photo credits: UN Women/AGAHE

The group, led by Sister Sarah Joseph in showing their appreciation for the encouraging steps taken by ECP to create an enabling environment for people to cast their vote, joined CVE volunteers by asking members of the general public to commit to taking part in the 2013 elections and bring a positive change towards democracy in the country.



Youth volunteers carrying out door-to-door CVE mobilization in Malir, Sindh Province

Photo credits: UN Women/NRDP

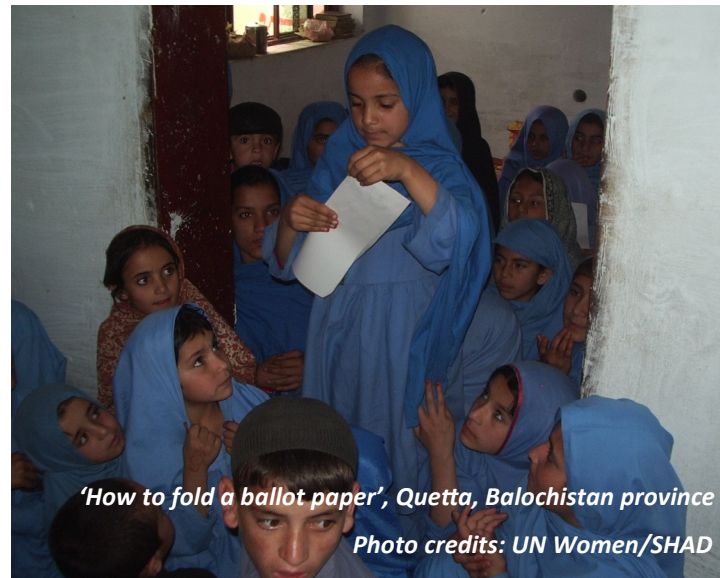
9. Youth as roaming CVE messengers

Engaging '63% of the Population'

With 63% of the population under the age of 25 years and hundreds of thousands reaching voting age each year, there is a whole generation of new voters who need to be more effectively engaged in the electoral process to increase overall voter turnout. Capitalizing on this 'youth bulge' through engaging youth (male and female) under a 'National Corps of Youth Volunteers' is a crucial component of the CVE programme.

Having undertaken orientation sessions and guided by a 'Voter Education' training manual (developed by ECP and UNDP with support from UN Women), the cadre of youth volunteers acted as 'change agents' and 'active citizens' in the electoral process. Selected from across the 20 districts, for a 6-month period the youth volunteers:

- Were anchored and supported in the civic and education programme by civil society groups
- Facilitated the DEC for CVE in terms of public outreach, interaction with local civic society groups and coordination support to social media campaigns
- Maintained regular contact with schools, colleges and universities
- Were actively engaged in community-stakeholder dialogue sessions and events
- Assisted women candidates approaching DEC offices



'How to fold a ballot paper', Quetta, Balochistan province

Photo credits: UN Women/SHAD

Roaming CVE Messengers

Kitted out with orientation training, CVE material (posters, leaflets, banners, stickers, brochures, sling bags, caps and t-shirts) and an information/resource kit, **344 youth volunteers (206 males, 138 females)** were engaged (figure 1) and supported door-to-door leaflet distribution and awareness raising during community and youth-focused sessions/events.

Tasked with telling the story of “why” and “how to vote” these roaming CVE messengers contributed to the outreach of **68,932 youth and students (24,471 males, 44,461 females)** in universities, schools and colleges across the 20 select districts, and informed them of their rights and responsibilities as citizens of Pakistan, all the while raising awareness of the ‘value’ of their voice towards democracy and good governance.

A youth volunteer carries out her passion for women’s empowerment

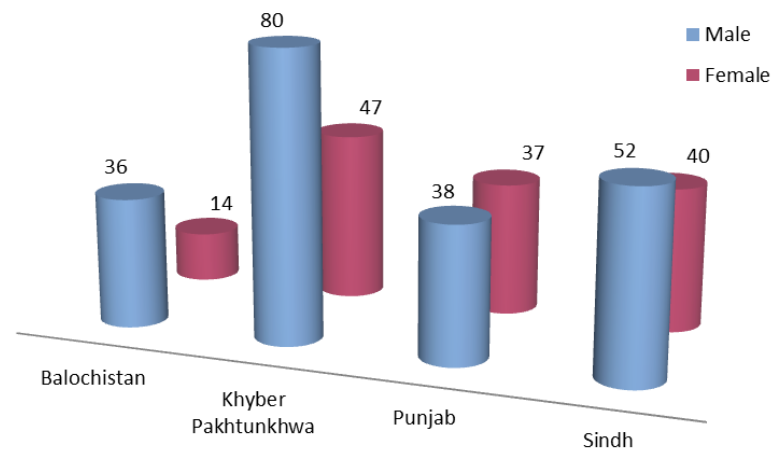
Umbreen a 20-year old, enthusiastically joined as a youth volunteer after graduating from Malir District, Sindh province. With a vision “not only to mobilize the youth majority” and “awaken half of the adult population [females]”, Umbreen also shared a passion with other youth volunteers for “accelerating women’s empowerment” for all women, regardless of who she is, what she does and where she lives.

Actively engaged in door-to-door campaigning, street theatres and dramas, awareness raising sessions and carrying out mock polling sessions, Umbreen and other volunteers have continued to catch the attention of many youth, young males and females and even children who were introduced to the polling process and voting rights and roles (including the role of their parents).

“First time voters had many queries” shares Umbreen, mainly regarding the ballot paper, the stamping procedure and the correct way of folding the paper. “I boldly demonstrated the process and made it look so simple” she narrates, “I received positive responses from youth and women who felt encouraged to do more for their country”. When asked about her experience of delivering sessions, she disclosed that she was “very shy at first but quickly overcame my fear”.

On election day Umbreen observed that many women and young people who she had interacted with during the CVE sessions had come to cast their vote.

Figure 1: Number of male and female youth volunteers engaged in CVE activities



“My vision is not only to mobilize the youth... but to awaken half of the adult population [females]”



Youth volunteers in action, Dadu, Sindh province

Photo credits: UN Women/NRDP



Mock training being delivered to CVE Educators from Sargodha, Bahawalpur and Rahim Yar Khan, Punjab province

Photo credits: UN Women/AGAHE

10. Including Women as Electoral Administrators

The Challenge

In integrating the gender dimension into democracy, governance and Pakistan's elections, for the first time in the country's electoral history, gender is one area where the ECP has pursued 'internal' reform as part of its Five-Year Strategic Plan.

With 1.5% of women employees in the ECP in Grade 1-16 and only 8 women employees in Grade 17 and above, the ECP has been working with UN Women and key stakeholders to:

- i) **Increase and implement the 10% employment quota** of women employees
- ii) **Increase women's representation** in the 500,000 quota of polling staff to be recruited and trained for the 2013 elections

The Strategy

UN Women in supporting UNDP in building capacity of both women and men as electoral administrators, and integrating the gender perspective within strategic electoral management

frameworks and documents, supported ECP, UNDP and partners in:

- ⇒ Sensitization of electoral administrators on the importance of women's empowerment
- ⇒ Identification of entry points for gender mainstreaming in the electoral process
- ⇒ Apprising stakeholders on strategies to promote women's political participation

The Results

In increasing the number of women represented in the ECP and participating as polling officials, UN Women through technical expertise and guidance has supported the ECP on gendering a number of key strategic frameworks and documents, which include:

A Training Manual for Electoral Administrators including Polling Staff

An ECP staff training manual now has gender mainstreamed within all aspects of the training

architecture. Dissemination and training sessions has guided over 700,000 Presiding Officers, Assistant Presiding Officers and Polling Officers engaged in election duty on 11 May 2013 throughout the country.

This manual trains staff on several new initiatives undertaken by the ECP to increase transparency and build public confidence in the elections process including use of final electoral rolls with photographs of registered voters and the new counting forms (Forms XIV, XVI and XVII) for recording sex disaggregated voter turnout. Mock polling sessions held with local electoral personnel as part of the CVE programme demonstrated these initiatives.

Codes of Conduct for Observers, Polling Staff and Security Personnel

The Code of Conduct for Polling Staff, stipulates:

- ⇒ (1) Presiding Officer **shall not follow any instructions except those given by the District Returning Officer and/or Returning Officer**
- ⇒ (3) Polling personnel shall focus on **punctuality, accuracy and proper communication** with superiors
- ⇒ (5) All the polling personnel shall perform their duties **in a neutral manner and treat all the voters, representatives of political parties and candidates,**

media and observers without any bias

- ⇒ (6) Personnel **shall not involve themselves in any political activity** nor shall they express any political preference during performance of their duty at the polling stations
- ⇒ (8) Polling personnel **shall pay special attention on protection of voters' rights and secrecy of vote**
- ⇒ (9) Presiding Officers **shall endeavor to resolve any problem at the polling station** in order to ensure an uninterrupted conduct of voting
- ⇒ (10) Polling personnel should **show proper courtesy to all voters and attendants at the polling place and shall accommodate illiterate and disabled voters and facilitate their voting**, while protecting their right to secrecy

A Gender Mainstreaming Strategy

A Gender Mainstreaming Strategy is being developed to encourage gender mainstreaming within the ECP and will guide the ECP and all other stakeholders in not only developing action plans but also into taking responsibility for ensuring and enhancing women's participation in political processes.



Electoral administrators receive training under the CVE Programme in Lahore, Punjab province

Photo credits: UN Women/AGAHE



Women participants at one of many voter education sessions, Quetta, Balochistan Province

Photo credits: UN Women/SHAD

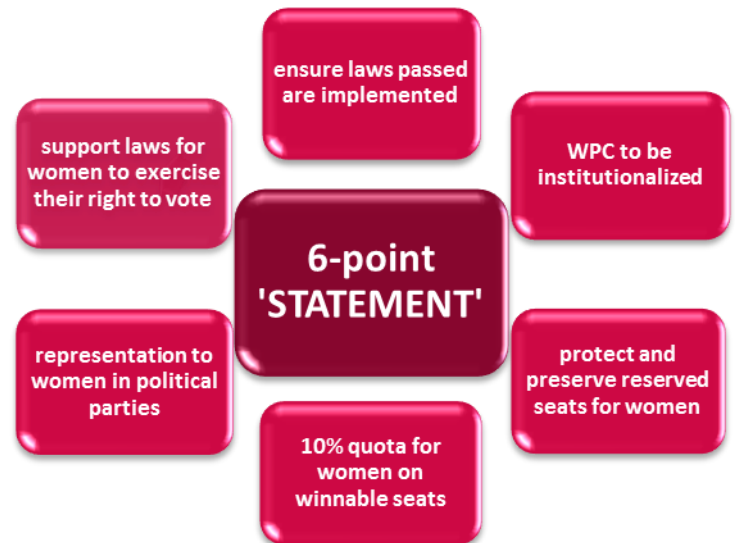
11. Promises to Deliver on: Political Party Manifestos and Women Leaders

Sensitizing Parliament to Empower Women

Taking into cognizance the crucial role of political parties in advancing and integrating gender equality in planning and development, and the positioning and empowerment of women in the realms of politics at the policy and decision making levels, UN Women with the Women's Parliamentary Caucus (WPC) brought together women parliamentarians and women representatives of mainstream political parties to position gender equality within their respective party manifestos.

In assessing whether existing manifestos and party structures were inclusive of women and women's meaningful role within these structures, a 6-Point 'Statement' was adopted by members of the Women's Caucus and senior level political leaders including Heads of the Women Wings, Secretary-Generals and representatives of the Manifesto Committee from eight leading political parties.

This dialogue platform, 'Positioning of Women's Agenda in the Policy Making of Political Parties' held in October 2012, provided an opportunity to commit to strengthening the role of political parties in raising the number of women in political positions and represent the aspirations of the Pakistani women with a collective voice.

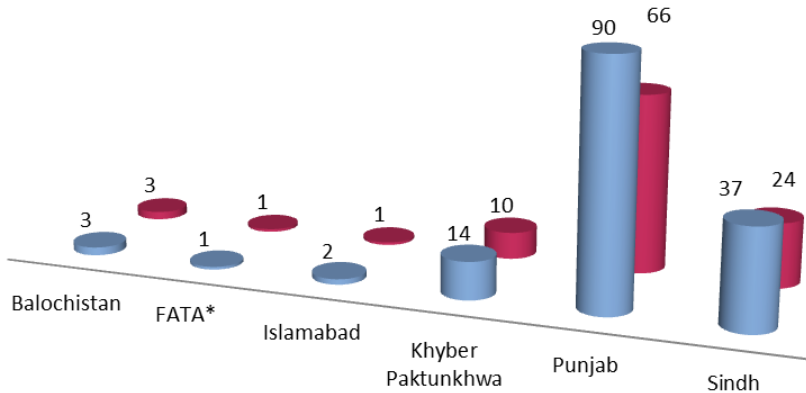


Women as Candidates: What the Statistics say....

Nationally:

- 147 women contested 105 national constituencies on general seats (figure 1)
- 21 political parties had given 60 tickets to women
- 87 women stood as Independent candidates

Figure 1: Number of Women Candidates against Number of National Assembly Constituencies

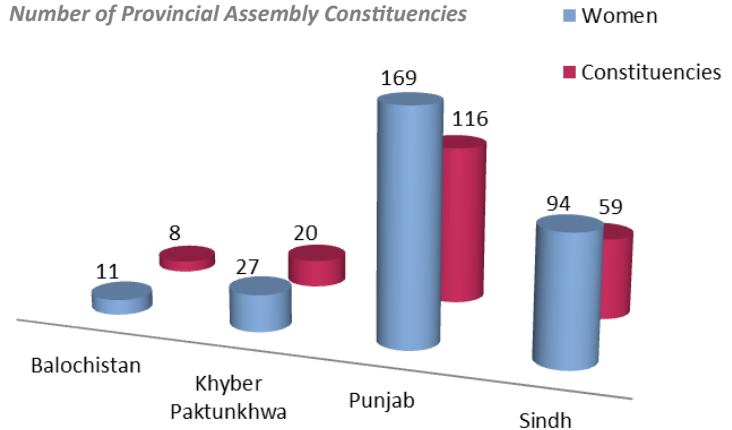


* FATA: Federally Administered Tribal Areas
(Source: The Researchers, a local organization)

Provincially:

- 301 women contested 203 provincial constituencies on general seats (figure 2)
- 31 political parties have given 111 tickets to women
- 190 women stood as Independent candidates

Figure 2: Number of Women Candidates against Number of Provincial Assembly Constituencies



Expect the Unexpected: From Bonded Laborer to Woman Leader

Veeru Kohli a 47 year old bonded laborer from Hyderabad district boldly stood against the odds as a candidate in the elections for provincial seat PS-50.

Veeru lives in a small neighborhood 15 kilometers from the city centre where she picks cotton and chilli's from the fields when she is not working as a human rights activist and fighting for the release of other imprisoned laborers. Veeru was born to a landless Hari and from birth till now, her journey has been a turbulent one. She was married at a young age to a family bonded to a feudal landlord. Veeru was lucky, along with her young daughter and some relatives she managed to escape captivity.

On the top of Veeru's election agenda was an end to bonded slavery everywhere - a cause close to her heart considering her past. When declaring her assets, Veeru listed the following items: two beds, five mattresses, a few cooking pots and life savings of 2,800 rupees in a bank account.

With no 'fortune' to her name, the odds continued to mount against Veeru - she was poor, uneducated, had no political party, was a Hindu and more so, was a woman.

However none of these 'obstacles' have stopped her - Veeru has a dream, a dream that continues to this day, to "get all the bonded peasants free".

With her only campaigning tool, a megaphone, Veeru Kohli made history on 11 May 2013 by winning 6,000 votes in the elections and as an independent candidate stood third in her constituencies vote bank.

This emergent woman leader in the political arena and human rights activist continues to work tirelessly to set free bonded laborers from the private jails of feudal lords.

"I am poor, uneducated, Hindu and a woman" - an election hopeful



Veeru Kohli, Hyderabad, Sindh province

Photo credits: UN Women/NRDP



The once 'invisible' female voters line up to be counted, Mianwali, Punjab province

Photo credits: UN Women/AGAHE

12. Counting the Invisible Voter

*"Most of the citizens want to vote for a better Pakistan" says a CVE Educator,
"so how do we count each and every one of them?"*

Counting Voter Turnout Data by Sex

2013 marks the first time in Pakistan's electoral history that the ECP in guaranteeing gender responsive governance and in ensuring neutrality and transparency have institutionalized a process that will collect and analyze sex disaggregated voter turnout data. Collection and consolidation of sex disaggregated voter data has been a consistent demand of the political parties, contesting candidates, civil society stakeholders and election observers following the 2008 Elections.

In accounting for the invisible voters (and more so women voters), the collection of sex disaggregated voter data was piloted as part of the ECP's election results management system (with support from UN Women and UNDP) during by-elections held in the districts of Sanghar (Constituency No. PS-83, on 19 June 2012) and in Multan (Constituency No. NA-151, on 19 July 2012).

Three forms of critical importance for collecting sex disaggregated data - **Form XIV** (statement of the count), **Form XVI** (consolidation result of the polling station) and **Form XVII** (result of the count) - were amended and piloted in further by-elections in Gujranwala district (Constituency No. PP-92) and Gujrat district (Constituency No. NA-107).

Use of the revised forms, now institutionalized by the ECP will further enable sex disaggregated comparison in future elections on the number of registered voters in the polling station and the number of votes cast. ECP will also be able to identify the polling stations and locations where the percentage of women's votes is less than 10% or where no votes were polled by women.

This initiative is a key link in ensuring women's political empowerment in the country through their participation and representation.

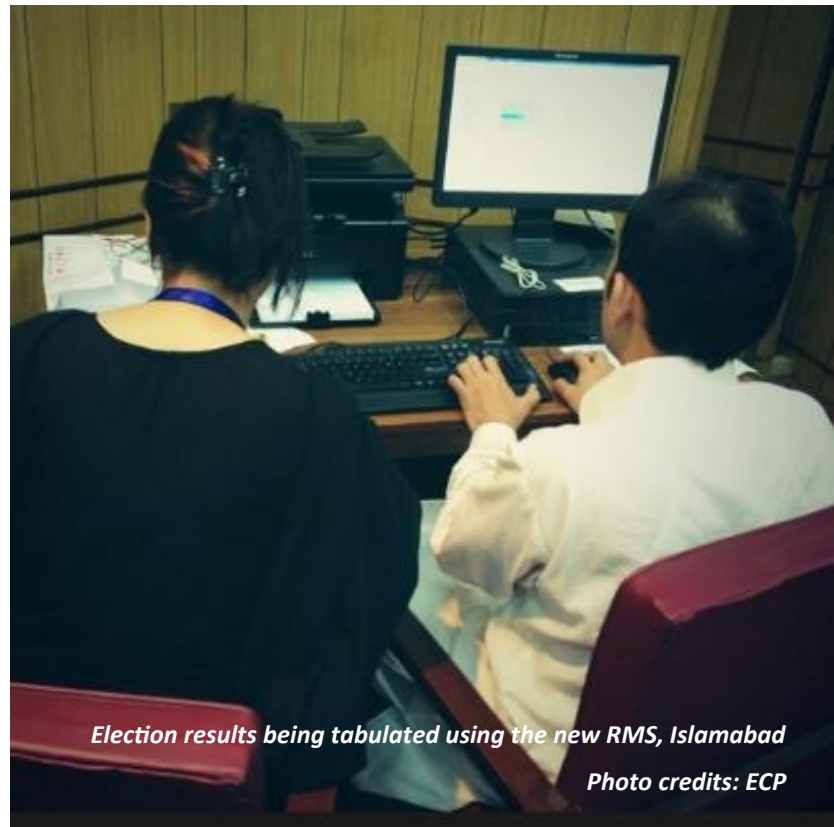
Reckoning the Results

The Results Management System (RMS), adopted by the ECP is a positive measure to improve and promote gender responsive electoral management and advance women's political empowerment.

The RMS will facilitate the Returning Officers to compile and digitalize results from Forms XIV, XVI and XVII, for 73,000 polling stations, 272 national constituencies and 577 provincial constituencies across Pakistan, with the information being directly transmitted to the ECP's Head-quarter, in Islamabad.

This system will provide ECP and stakeholders with the number of polling stations for women voters only and will keep the turnout of female voters intact by counting them separately from men.

With 86.19 million registered voters for the 2013 elections, and a voter turnout rate of 55.02%, the 2013 Elections has seen the highest recording of the number of votes cast since 1970 and 1977.



Election results being tabulated using the new RMS, Islamabad

Photo credits: ECP

Invisible for the last 66 years

In a Union Council situated about 26 km away from the nearest major city, women votes cast equaled 'zero' in previous elections. In the 2013 Elections, for the first time since the creation of Pakistan - 66 years ago - and for the first time in this Union Council's history, it was recorded that 564 females had cast their votes.

Males here have rigged tribal views about their women and believe there is no role for women in education and social participation including political participation and decision making. During CVE sessions local women showed keen interest in exercising their right to vote and participated in mock polling and vote casting sessions but feared consequences from the men if they stepped out of their homes to vote on election day.

With cultural and tribal norms hindering these local women from voting, CVE Educators and Social Mobilizers embarked on a series of actions that started with educating moderate religious leaders on the importance of voting for women. With the support of a local activist and community influential who along with other religious scholars supported voting rights for local women, a number of mobilization and sensitization sessions were held with the local men on women's voting right, benefits of women voters, the voting procedure for women, and measures undertaken by the ECP to support women to safely and in confidence cast their votes. Through these sessions, the local men finally agreed to allow their women to vote, but without showing their faces to non-household men.



A now 'visible' woman voter takes part in a mock polling sessions, Punjab province

Photo credits: UN Women/AGAHE



A first-time female polling officer gets ready for election day, Abbottabad, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province

Photo credits: UN Women/DTCE

13. E-Day and a Demographic Analysis

As released by the ECP on 21 May 2013, voter turnout for National Assembly seats in the 2013 Elections was recorded as 55.02% and voter turnout for seats on the Provincial Assemblies was recorded as 55.26% making an average of 55.14% for all five Assemblies. Against an initial voter turnout projection of 63% for the elections, 55.02% is the highest voter turnout attained at the national level since the elections of the 1980's (figure 1). Voter turnout data disaggregated by sex is currently unavailable from ECP.

With 86.19 million registered voters on the ECP's Final Electoral Rolls (48.59 million male voters and 37.60 million female voters), the **2013 General Elections saw in excess of 46.22 million people exercise their right to vote** (figure 2).

According to ECP's data:

- The **lowest voter turnout** where only 11.57% of registered voters came out to vote was recorded in South Waziristan (an agency in the Federally Administrated Tribal Areas)
- The **highest voter turnout** was recorded at 84.77% in NA-191 Bahawalnagar (a district in Punjab province)

Figure 1: Trend in Voter Turnout (in %) during Pakistan's General Elections, 1988-2013

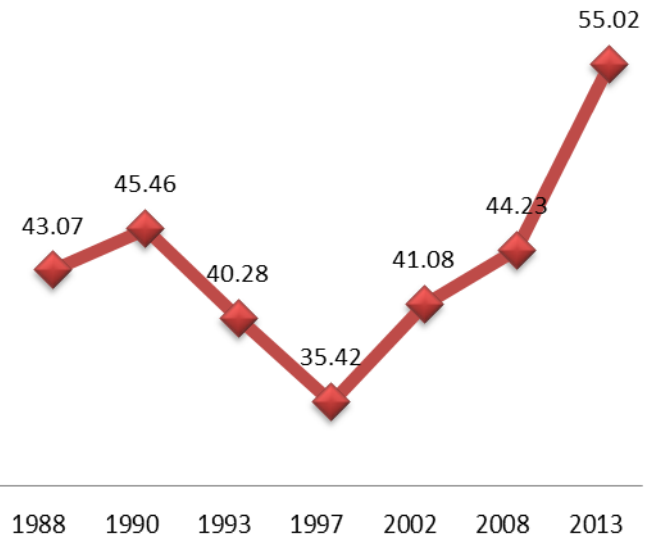
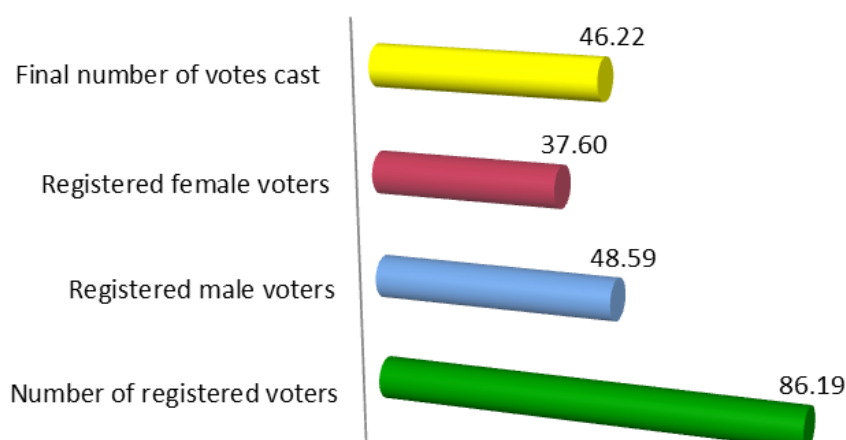


Figure 2: Voter data (in millions) during Pakistan's 2013 General Election



- **Highest regional turnout** was recorded at 62.30% in the Federal Area (Islamabad Capital Territory) where 389,976 out of the total registered 625,964 people cast their ballots (figure 3) on two national seats
- The **Province of Punjab stood second** with voter turnout at 58.39%, where total numbers of registered voters were 49,259,334 and total polled votes were 28,760,265 on 148 national seats
- The **Province of Sindh stood at third** with a turnout at 51.59%, where total number of registered voters were 18,963,375 and total polled votes were 9,782,599 while polling on 61 national seats

- **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province ranked fourth** with voter turnover at 44.64% where total number of registered voters were 12,266,157 and number of polled votes were 5,476,001 on 35 national seats
- **The Province of Balochistan has ranked fifth** with a voter turnout at 38.98% where total number of registered voters were 3,336,659 and total polled votes were 1,300,628 with polling on 14 national seats
- Voter turnout in the **Federally Administered Tribal Area ranked sixth** at 29.22% with polling on 12 national seats. The total number of registered voters were 1,738,313 while 508,013 votes were cast
- **Voter turnout during elections on all four Provincial Assembly seats** was recorded at 55.26%
58.52% in Punjab, 54.62% in Sindh, 44.74% in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 40.86% in Balochistan's Assembly

Figure 3: A Statistical Breakdown showing the Number of Registered Voters and Number of Votes Polled in the 2013 elections, compared to 2008

Region		Registered voters (in millions) (FER, as of 17 March 2013)			2013 Elections		2008 Elections	% increase from 2008 Elections
		TOTAL	Male	Female	Votes Polled (in millions)	% Voter turnout	% Voter turnout	
Provinces	Balochistan	3.34	1.92	1.42	1.30	38.98	30.90	11.6
	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	12.27	7.01	5.26	5.48	44.64	33.21	11.62
	Punjab	49.26	27.70	21.56	28.76	58.39	48.73	10.89
	Sindh	18.96	10.49	8.47	9.78	51.59	44.58	9.24
Other regions	Federally Administered Tribal Areas	1.74	1.14	0.60	0.51	29.22	30.37	5.67
	Federal Areas	0.63	0.34	0.29	0.39	62.30	49.98	11.98
National		86.19	48.59	37.60	46.22	55.02*	43.65	11.37

* DISCLAIMER by ECP: A ± variance due to errors and omission is expected in the statistics



Faces of Pakistan's future first-time voters , Quetta, Balochistan Province

Photo credits: UN Women/SHAD

14. Moving the 'Electoral Cycle' Forward

Visioning and Planning Ahead

The Global Strategic Plan of UN Women (2011-2013) identifies women's political participation and their representation as an important development goal. In working effectively towards this goal, UN Women in Pakistan through a number of partnerships with key government organizations and institutions, machineries for women (National Commission on the Status of Women, Women Parliamentary Caucus and Women Development Departments), civil society and UN agencies particularly UNDP, adopted an 'electoral cycle' approach rather than an 'election event' approach to address issues faced by women in participating and representation in political and electoral processes.

The 2013 General Elections held on 11 May 2013 in Pakistan has witnessed a number of major results and initiatives that came to fruition providing the ECP, NADRA and key partners with a medium for institutional strengthening as well as setting the 'wheels in motion' for enhancing nationwide civic and voter initiatives based on piloted behavioral change processes and in preparing for future elections.

"Women want to build a better country for themselves.

Women have faced a lot of issues - unemployment, poverty - women also want to change Pakistan"



A first-time woman voter shares her experience and recommendations at a consultation, post-elections

Photo credits: UN Women/Faria Salman

Women and Elections, preparing for 2018....

To increase **Women as Voters**, recommendations include but are not limited to:

- 1 Awareness raising on issuance of CNIC and voter registration should commence as early as possible
- 2 NADRA's mobile vans should be one stop operation for CNIC and voter registration with female staff to take pictures and facilitate women
- 3 Social security benefits should be attached to possession of a CNIC
- 4 Voter registration at the DEC office should be a 'one window' operation with women facilitation staff
- 5 Timelines for compiling of Final Electoral Rolls (FER) and their closure should be communicated to the public
- 6 Public awareness on ECPs SMS service publically known as '8300' should be more extensive
- 7 The '8300' service in providing voters with polling station details should include illustrations and voice information to facilitate visually impaired and illiterate voters
- 8 Where there is no mobile service especially in remote areas, public awareness should be carried out through mosques, schools and other communal locations
- 9 Political parties should mobilize their supporters and youth wings to register themselves, their families and communities as voters, and be included in the FER
- 10 Communication with media partners should be maintained keeping them informed and updated of initiatives being undertaken to ensure women's participation as voters
- 11 Female only polling booths should be ensured to avoid 'disenfranchised' women voters due to combined polling stations
- 12 Recording of sex disaggregated voter turnout of all polling stations and constituencies should be mandatory
- 13 Transport for communities should be provided for ensuring people's access to the polling stations especially in remote and inaccessible areas with limited public transport facilities
- 14 Washrooms and other facilities should be available in the polling station, especially for nursing, disabled, aged women
- 15 Security and polling personnel should be trained to facilitate women, minorities, disabled, elderly and vulnerable persons
- 16 The ECP should take action where women have been barred from voting or where male community members have signed pacts not to allow their women to vote
- 17 Results of polling stations where women's voter turnout is less than 10% should be declared null and void

To increase **Women as Electoral Administrators**, recommendations include but are not limited to:

- 1 Officers should be selected through the Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC) and implementation of the 10% quota for women should be ensured
- 2 Women should be posted to the ECP in managerial positions and attractive salary package may be announced for induction of women staff
- 3 Women should be given the choice to join mainstream career positions within ECP, and the Election Commission may also include at least one woman
- 4 More women should be employed evenly across all sections and all grades without segmenting into 'lower classed' jobs
- 5 Implementation of quota for women should be ensured for selecting women from local districts and their posting (preferably within their 'home stations')
- 6 More women should proactively be appointed as Returning Officers as well as polling staff
- 7 Gender sensitization training for ECP staff, Election Academy and Civil Servants Academies should be mandatory
- 8 ECP should also maintain a HR MIS in order to identify the list of sanctioned positions, filled (sex disaggregated) and cadre of staff as well as those trained on gender issues
- 9 Work environment should be gender sensitive - transport facilities, security facilities, work timings (avoid evening shifts), a crèche and separate washrooms for women
- 10 Water and food, sanitation and rest facilities should be arranged for the polling staff, within the polling stations
- 11 Trainings should be hands-on rather than theoretical, with completion of forms for collection and collation of sex disaggregated voter turnout included
- 12 Female security personnel should be appointed wherever possible; male security personnel should be trained and sensitized to women's concerns and issues
- 13 There must be organizational awareness and compliance with the Code of Conduct on Sexual Harassment at the Workplace (implementation of the Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy, 2010)

15. My Thoughts.... Our Future

From Women Voters....

“In rural areas it is not possible for us [women] to talk about politics especially in front of men. During election time, the decision as to whom we vote for is our husbands. But with continuous dialogue, project orientations and discussions with male community leaders, they will talk more about political and electoral processes and of women’s active participation in electoral cycle which has widely been witnessed”

“Despite the discrimination faced by women, the increasing number of women voters in this election is a good sign and it will be encouraging for other women. The high turnout rate of women voters will make political parties realize the importance of a woman’s vote in the future, which will in turn encourage more women to run in elections. This will in turn open up the way to help women express themselves”

“I feel more confident that my vote has been counted this time. I promise to enlighten other women in my community to make them aware of their rights and encourage the dormant ones to come out and vote next time”



*A session promoting the importance of women voters
Photo credits: UN Women/AGAHE*



*Women voters being educated on their role in elections
Photo credits: UN Women/AGAHE*



*Women participate in mock polling sessions
Photo credits: UN Women/AGAHE*

“I have voted before, I will vote again. On election day I run an intensive campaign to gather as many women as possible and accompany them to the polling station so we can vote as a group. As it is the tradition in rural areas that whenever females step outside their houses to run errands, they dress up in their best clothes. So, on polling day we also dress up, apply makeup and wear perfume. We gossip and giggle and I lead the group. Every time we vote, we are excited and we travel all the way on foot”

“This is the first time I cast a ballot, I waited in line for three hours because I wanted to vote this time. I saw women coming in wheelchairs. The excitement and the pride I have in my country overpowered my voting fears; I wasn't scared at all. We vote because we want a better country for our granddaughters and grandsons”

*“I am glad to know of the voting procedure, it will save us from a lot of headache. We can confidently go and vote for our preferred candidate.
More women will be encouraged to cast their votes now”*

*"I just realized how easy it is to voice my opinion.
One vote is all it took"*

"I was against voting, all parties are the same, everyone has their own motives and after winning seats they forget their promises - that was my irrational thinking before attending CVE sessions. I have changed, I now know my responsibilities as a citizen, as a voter and as a Pakistani. I decided to cast my vote because I want a more integrated, peaceful, educated, prosperous and developed Pakistan providing civic facilities to all its citizens"

"I went to the local theatre performance on voter education. The artists were enticing us to participate in the elections. They even prepared poems to encourage us to vote. This was a very good way of educating the masses - it amplified the need for us to vote. I learned how to fill in and fold my ballot paper. I have learned so much, now I will vote"

"I come from a potters village where women here had never voted. This was the first time we had voted. Why? Because one of the village elders after meeting with CVE mobilizers realized the importance of voting for both men and women. For us to get recognition as citizens it is important to vote; and we have to encourage our women to vote as well - so I went and voted!"

*"Despite all threats, concerns and resistance,
we voted and will vote again"*



Local women voters express their voting concerns

Photo credits: UN Women/NRDP

From Women Candidates....



Sessions on rights as voters and candidates

Photo credits: UN Women/AGAHE

"Women candidates are courageous women making history, they are lights of hope"

"In our so called set norms, women were not allowed to vote and we want to become role models for other women. No matter what the result may be, I may not win this election but I will be fighting against the false norms which hamper women's active role in the society. Many women in the constituency are now playing an active role to bring a positive change and make a prosperous and peaceful Pakistan where all citizens are living peacefully and performing their role in the society actively"

"This is the first time in my family's history that a female member is standing in the elections. This is good for my community especially females, as they have someone to better the standard of life. There is a lack of opportunities for female education, lack of awareness about women rights and lack of health facilities for us.

I believe in the slogan "Ek line badlay taqdeer", (translated: "One line will change destiny"). I could not win the elections but I am still committed with my work for betterment of females and will raise my voice for their rights and struggles"

"During my election campaign I experienced some uneven actions, behaviors, remarks, character assassination and removal of my campaign material. I had also been offered money to withdraw my campaigning, but I refused. I stood my ground, I was committed to my deprived constituency. I did not win a seat but am still hopeful, I am committed and I will stand up again"

From CVE Educators....

“Positive change in public attitude towards voting. Majority of the targeted population acknowledged that voting as an important ingredient of governance and civic responsibility”

“There were unprecedented high voter turnouts in the target constituencies, a pointer to the significance the public has placed on voting as an important governance process”

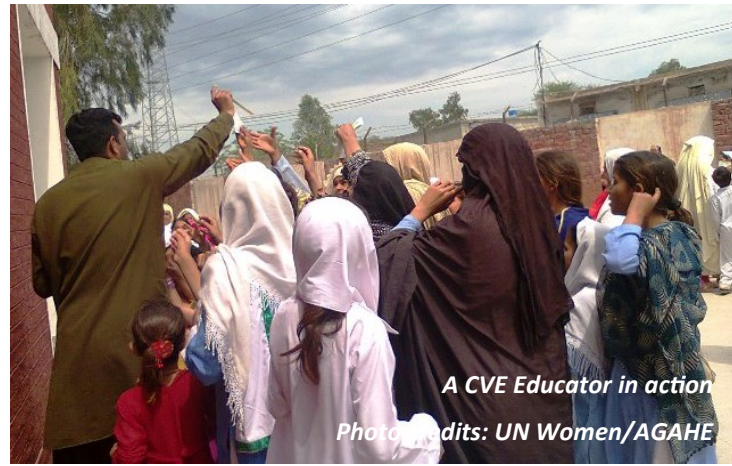
“We chose to display IEC material on train platforms, in waiting rooms, public canteens and also shared material with thousands of passengers passing through and sitting in rail cars. Our mobilization efforts were widely appreciated by passengers and staff alike. Young travelers showed greatest interest and were guided in using the 8300 SMS service”

“Voter education should be a continuous process. It should begin at least a year before elections. CVE involves a large number of activities and requires more time to be carried out effectively”

“The Pakistani women's political sense has improved in recent years primarily due to increasing inflation and economic depression; women's participation in economic activities as well as their increased social exposure are inevitable”

“Voting is an important responsibility of all citizens; through voting we elect representatives who are responsible for determining the future direction of our country. No matter what the situation is we have to go out and vote. We must stress the importance of women’s participation because they are 50% of our population and will play a pivotal role in decision making through their vote”

“By engaging and educating local religious clerics on the importance of voting in the context of religion, they [the religious clerics] told their community members to go ahead and cast their vote as per their will and wishes. The village was also made aware that female voters are as important as male voters. These messages continued to be shared during Friday prayer sermons”



A CVE Educator in action
Photo credits: UN Women/AGAHE



CVE Educators choose innovative IEC distribution locations, a busy railway station
Photo credits: UN Women/AGAHE



CVE Educators engage local women to display IEC material
Photo credits: UN Women/AGAHE



CVE Educators educate school children on the elections
Photo credits: UN Women/SHAD

From Youth Volunteers....

"We have been told we were a source of encouragement and catalyst for many other young people to engage in the electoral process and vote"

"Before training, I was not aware of the electoral process. I did not know if my vote was registered and what my responsibilities as a young voter are. After receiving CVE training I organized project activities with women in the field. Women are particularly behind in political participation so I feel great that I am part of this process have shared important information to women"

"I am a youth first-time voter, and I know I have an active role to play in the upcoming elections. I registered myself as a volunteer 'change maker' under the slogan Bula Raha Hai Pakistan' (translated: 'Pakistan is Calling You')"

"I worked with remote communities to motivate women and youth as they are almost half of the population. They are unaware of the voting process and procedure. I am happy I was able to educate them, now they are registered as voters and will vote for the first time"

"I was nominated by my University department. I took part in the orientation training and learned CVE concepts, and have been supporting CVE activities, organizing seminars and consultative events. I am hopeful that my efforts will help to increase voter turnout. At first people had mixed reactions to participating in elections. They were disappointed with the performances of previous governments. We provided them with information on important initiatives taken to make the elections fair and free. People seemed to be more hopeful. I feel it is important to vote for change - political accountability begins with a vote, so it is important for us to vote, and to encourage voting"

"We have successfully targeted the rural population who are now more confident and conscious of their rights. They are aware of the secrecy of the voting process. These people who were once passive on-lookers have decided to be active participants in the elections. I believe I have played an important role in mobilizing my community and the results will speak for themselves"

"One should not give up hope, it is on hope that the world survives. You continue to do your bit and democracy will reveal itself"



*A youth volunteer engaging first-time youth voters to vote
Photo credits: UN Women/NRDP*



*Youth volunteers leading an awareness raising walk
Photo credits: UN Women/DTCE*



*Youth volunteers distributing IEC material
Photo credits: UN Women/AGAHE*

From Marginalized and Vulnerable Communities....

*“Age is no age barrier to voting;
age is no barrier to bringing in change”*

“At 86 years I am very old and have never voted in my life, but now I want to vote. I cannot walk but I will vote, I will go in a wheelchair”

“We [transgenders] are happy to know we are equal members of society and that we can vote as well. We plan on going as a group to cast our vote which is our fundamental right”

“Being disheartened from previous governments, we are still under privileged in terms of the basic needs. What is the benefit of voting? I am an old disabled man, who will take me to vote? I thought it better that I stay home, until I met someone who made me realize the importance of every vote, the responsibilities of a voter, and how good people remained unelected because other good people do not participate in elections. I promised that not only will I go and cast my vote but will mobilize others too”



*An elderly women voter encourages other women to vote
Photo credits: UN Women/NRDP*



*A Transgender dialing the 8300 SMS voter service
Photo credits: UN Women/AGAHE*

*A CVE session takes place in a local church
Photo credits: UN Women/NRDP*



“At first we [the Christian community] were hesitant to interact with CVE Educators, or allow them to conduct awareness sessions in our churches. We ourselves have displayed IEC posters and banners within the church premises and in our Fathers sermon he shares the importance of voting for all community members and how the votes can impact for the betterment of our community”

“We [the Hindu community] are also Pakistani citizens and we are equal citizens, we also have voting rights. There is lack of education in our community and standard of livelihood is also not good; none of the political parties have come here or made any effort to address our issues. People did not know how and why they need to exercise their right to vote. I believe knowledge is empowerment and after receiving voter education my community will be better able to participate in elections and make their voice count”

*“We [a minority community] will vote for our own candidate, from within our community this time.
Now we know that no-one will find out who we voted for”*



*Benefits of voting being shared with a disabled elderly voter
Photo credits: UN Women/AGAHE*

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