Better the Balance, Better the World

Improving women's electoral and political participation in Pakistan

Women's electoral participation and political representation in Parliament is key to gender-balanced policymaking processes and interventions. DAI-Tabeer (CDIP) is working towards inclusive democratic spaces in terms of electoral and political participation. Through its election-specific and long-term institutional support, DAI-Tabeer aims to strengthen the role of women in democratic processes.

Key Achievements

- Registered **184,000+ women** as voters

- Reached **9.7 million citizens** through a radio campaign stressing women's electoral participation

- Ran a media campaign to inform citizens about the process required to check and update their details in the national electoral rolls. Some **1.5 million** people visited electoral roll display centres and **almost 900,000** applied for changes

- Helped set a **five-year agenda** for the Women's Parliamentary Caucus (WPC)

- Introduced parliamentary initiatives like **Prime Minister's Question Hour** and backbench members' agendas to parliamentarians through expert briefings

- Trained **30 women parliamentarians** in leadership and negotiation skills

- Launching a **'women in politics' support group** to foster a cross-political party consensus among women politicians on women's political participation

- Conducted briefing sessions for political parties on various aspects of the Elections Act, 2017, especially those related to **women, persons with disabilities, and transgender persons**

- Operationalized the **'Protection of Women from Workplace Harassment Act'** at the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP)

- Strengthened and set an agenda for the **Gender and Disability Electoral Working Group** to make it more open, inclusive, and responsive

- Integrated **gender as a cross-cutting theme** in the ECP's post-election review

- Helping the ECP develop a **gender mainstreaming framework** to make its structures and practices more gender and socially inclusive

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AS VOTERS IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

Voter registration

DAI-Tabeer collaborated with AAWAZ Aagahi Centres to register **184,000+ women in 45 districts** as voters by facilitating their computerized national identity card registration

Mock polling sessions

A collaboration with AAWAZ Aagahi Centres conducted **1,116 orientation/mock polling sessions for 31,165 women in 45 districts** in two provinces

Radio campaign

DAI-Tabeer's radio campaign stressing the importance of women's electoral participation reached about **9.7 million citizens**

Community-based activities

Our community-based voter education/mobilization activities stressed women's electoral participation through townhall meetings, awareness sessions, community theatre, and seminars, reaching **5,855 citizens**

Corporate social responsibility

Our collaboration with 45 leading brands promoted voter education and inclusive electoral participation. Over **250 million people** were reached
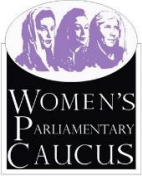
Electronic media

- DAI-Tabeer partnered with Karo Kuch, the creator of 'Quaid se Baatein', an animated television mini-series for children
- We commissioned three episodes that were aired with **messages on the importance of democracy, free and fair elections and women's electoral participation**

Electoral rolls

- We supported the ECP by running a **comprehensive media campaign** to inform citizens about 14,000 'display centres' established for electoral roll revision
- This was **significant for women voters** who are more likely to migrate or change their names after marriage—and require electoral roll revision
- Over **1.5 million people** visited the display centres and **almost 900,000** applied for changes

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN PARLIAMENT

Women's Parliamentary Caucus

- We assisted the Women's Parliamentary Caucus (WPC) in setting its first **5-year agenda** focusing on:

    - Electoral reforms to mainstream gender and social inclusion in the political space

    - Providing oversight on the implementation of the Elections Act's gender and inclusion aspects

- Parliamentary reforms required to **integrate gender and social inclusion** into democratic and political institutions

Women parliamentarians' negotiation and leadership skills

- We worked with the Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services (PIPS) to conduct an exchange for **30 women parliamentarians** to help them better perform their legislative and oversight functions

- The idea was to foster better inter-provincial connections and synergies to improve women's parliamentary space

Parliamentarians' capacity building for reforms

- The programme organised **expert briefings** for parliamentarians on keys areas of parliamentary reform. These included:

    - **Prime Minister's Question Hour**

    - Backbench members' agendas

    - Increasing time for private members and the opposition

    - Strengthening standing committees' oversight role

Knowledge sharing opportunities

- We supported Ms. Nafeesa Shah's (member of Parliament) **conference visit** to London, UK

- This allowed her to exchange information with contemporaries from other countries and **learn about international best (legislative) practices**

Gender audit of Senate committees

- Our gender audit led to an understanding of **women's representation in the Senate** and its standing and functional committees

- It was later shared with others in the governance space to help inform their future programming

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL PARTIES AND POLITICS

Gender and social inclusion in political parties

- The programme examined the **status** of women and other socially excluded groups in **political parties**

- We documented **factors hindering these groups' upward mobility** within parties and informed strategies to improve women's representation and decision-making powers

- Five political parties have **already agreed to incorporate our suggestions** to improve their decision-making structures

'Women in politics' support group

- We constituted a **'women in politics' support group** of women from ten political parties to foster a cross-party consensus on promoting women's rights, empowerment and gender equality, and women's political participation

- The group will:

    - Review parties' policies/practices from a **women's rights lens**

    - Document developments/incidents in politics affecting women, especially violence and discrimination

    - Develop recommendations on improving gender in political parties

    - Share **international best practices** on combating violence and discrimination against women in politics

Capacity building of women political party officials/workers

- The programme conducted **briefing sessions for political parties** on various aspects of the Elections Act, 2017, especially those related to women, persons with disabilities, and transgender persons

- It briefed them on international commitments like the SDGs

Sensitizing political parties to SDG 5

- The programme will conduct a briefing session in March 2019 on SDG 5 for representatives from ten key political parties

- It will cover the significance of providing women and girls with equal access to **education, healthcare, decent work, and representation** in political and economic decision-making processes

- The session will also develop representatives' capacity to support gender equality initiatives

MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN THE ECP'S FUNCTIONS AND PRIORITIES

Operationalising pro-women legislation at the ECP

- DAI-Tabeer operationalized the 'Protection of Women from Workplace Harassment Act' at the ECP through a two-day workshop on anti-harassment for ECP officials

- The workshop **outlined the steps required** for the ECP to operationalize the act

Strengthening the ECP's Gender and Disability Wing

- DAI-Tabeer provided technical assistance to the ECP's Gender and Disability Wing so that it can:

  - Engage with political parties, civil society, and the media

  - Leverage its position to **influence the extent of gender and social inclusion** in electoral processes and structures

  - Stress the **gender-related provisions** of the Elections Act, 2017

Strengthening the Gender and Disability Electoral Working Group

- We strengthened the ECP's Gender and Disability Electoral Working Group (GDEWG) in our capacity as its co-chair, to make it **more open, inclusive and responsive.** This included:

  - Encouraging the ECP to **increase the group's outreach** by extending its participation to district election commissioners and academia

  - Helping set a **suitable agenda and work plan** to be implemented jointly by the ECP, DAI-Tabeer, UNDP and 100 civil society organizations and academic institutions

A gender mainstreaming framework

- The programme is helping the ECP develop a **gender mainstreaming framework** that will:

  - Examine the ECP's institutional protocols from a **gender and socially inclusive perspective**

  - Improve **human resource policies and accessibility**

  - Use the post-election review and Elections Act analysis to **formulate actionable steps towards gender mainstreaming,** eventually augmenting the organization's five-year strategic plan

Integrating gender into the post-election review

- DAI-Tabeer supported the ECP in conducting its post-election review by:

  - Ensuring gender was integrated as a **cross-cutting theme**

  - Reaching out to women and socially excluded groups in select constituencies

  - **Identifying challenges** faced by voters, election and polling staff, and candidates

  - Helping the ECP **devise policy recommendations** for gender and socially inclusive electoral processes and structures

- **These findings will be presented in Parliament**

INFORMING LEGAL AND POLICY REFORM FOR INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACY

Policy recommendations for inclusive democracy

- DAI-Tabeer and the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) developed detailed policy recommendations to increase and support the political and electoral participation of women and members of other socially excluded groups

- The recommendations are based largely on our research on institutional barriers to women's computerized national identity card registration and recommendations from our **national dialogue on the gender gap in the electoral rolls** in 2018

- The programme will conduct a workshop with members of national and provincial commissions on the status of women, and gender, election, and legal experts to debate these recommendations

- The recommendations will be shared with the ECP, Parliament, and political parties

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