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Participation of Women Members of the National Assembly of Pakistan in Assembly Debates and their Role in Legislating on Public Policy and Budget

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Abstract

This article examines the participation of women Members of the National Assembly of Pakistan in assembly debates and their role in legislating on public policy and budget. Therefore, the study attempts at answering the questions: 'what role have women parliamentarians been playing to legislate on public policy and budget?' and 'how have they been influencing and (re)shaping the process of budgeting and public policy formulation through assembly debates?' The questions are answered through an archival research i.e. archival data (assembly debates, official files and reports, etc.). The collected data is analyzed through qualitative content analyses. The findings suggest that the women legislators had presented their viewpoints, highlighting the significance of public policies including the issues of health, food, water, energy, inflation and price hikes and importance of well-approached and balanced budget. Their contributions had expanded the discussion on public as well as national issues. Moreover, women members of National Assembly had the significantly impacted in determining public policies and for efficient budget policy during the five years of 13th National Assembly of Pakistan. This study determines the significance of gender-inclusive governance and the favorable results that may be attained by acknowledging women's opinions and viewpoints.

Keywords: National Assembly, Legislations, Women Participation, Public Policies, Budget,

Introduction

Women's involvement in the National Assembly of Pakistan has become a significant and intriguing subject in the ever-changing political environment of the country since the inception of 21st century. However, the 13th National Assembly had the most women representation so there was a dire need to define the significance of women's active participation. The role of women in parliamentary debates and their influence on public policy and budget decisions has

been reviewed that was essential component of legislative government. As the number of female legislators grows in Assembly, their opinions and perspectives are becoming increasingly influential in shaping political discussions in Pakistan. This article explores the level of involvement of female legislators in parliamentary discussions and their ability to shape public policy and their influence on budget allocations. This article intends to explore the changing role of women in Pakistan and to investigate women's involvement in assembly debates. This study significantly overviewed abilities of women to encounter the obstacles and the impact they have on policy and budget decisions. The 13th National Assembly remained the topic of interest of several scholars. Tooba Zulfiqar, Aniqah Begum, and Irum Naz presented an overview of the politics of women by assessing their role in Assembly during 2008-2013. However, the study did not pose a specific emphasis on the active participation of women in legislative business through debates (Zulfiqar, Begum, & Naz, 2023). Mussarat Jabeen and Sher Muhammad had explored women's representation in 13th National Assembly of Pakistan by assessing their effectiveness based on importance of gender quota but they had never explored active participation of women (Jabeen & Muhammad, 2021). Hammad Bashir, Abdul Basit Khan, and Ghulam Qasim overviewed the importance of this period by analyzing the role of 13th National Assembly in political and constitutional development of the country, emphasizing on the 18th constitutional amendment and 7th NFC award but they negated the role of women in this significant legislation (Bashir, Khan, & Qasim, 2022). Iltaf Khan, Farman Ullah, and Bakhtiar Khan discussed the PPP government in terms of democratic norms and federalism in Pakistan but the study was narrow to the government instead of its representatives (Khan, Ullah, & Khan, 2021). Irshad Ullah Khan and Shahbaz Khan indicated the impact of constitutional amendments in the political system of Pakistan during 2008-2013 but never highlighted the role of legislators behind this valuable legislation and how the women participated in debates during this scenario (UllahKhan & Khan, 2023). This demands answering the questions: 'what role have women parliamentarians been playing to legislate on public policy and budget?' and 'how have they been influencing and (re)shaping the process of budgeting and public policy formulation through assembly debates?' The questions are answered through an archival research i.e. archival data (assembly debates,

official files and reports, etc.). The collected data is analysed through a qualitative content analyses.

General Elections and Results: Representation of Women in the 13th National Assembly of Pakistan (2008-2013)

The PPP contested elections 2008 under the chairmanship of Asif Ali Zardari and the party become able to formulate their government with the coalition of PML-N.¹ These elections were posed as the fairer elections after 1970's elections and Zardari, widower of Benazir, was elected as president of Pakistan on September 9, 2008 after the resignation of Pervez Musharraf August 18, 2008.² The election resulted favorable for women and they occupied 76 seats with 60 reserved seats and 16 General seats.³ Though this was only 22.22% of total member of the House but it was the highest number women ever got in the National Assembly. In 12th Assembly this percentage was at 21.3 while 14th Assembly had 20.46%.

There were 16 women elected in 13th National Assembly having 10 women members from PPPP. In Punjab, PPPP secured six women seats while in Sindh, the party got four seats. PML and PMLN held two seats from Punjab while one independent candidate also elected on general seat. MQM's Khush Bakht Shujaat also became able to hold a general seat. The women also had quota in the Assembly so parties with their respective positions were allowed to elect women on reserved seats.

In total 60 reserved seats 57 female legislators were present until 2013 and PPPP got the highest number of seats including two seats in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, twelve in Punjab, seven in Sindh, and one in Balochistan. PMLN secured the second largest number with fifteen seats in Punjab and two seats in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. At third number, PML got seats including seven in Punjab, one in Sindh, and one in Balochistan. Other parties held nine seats as MQM got four seats, ANP secured three, PMLF won one seats, and MMAP also become able to occupy one

¹ Sobia Naseer, Political Participation of Women in Pakistan: Issues and Challenges (2002-2013), PhD Dissertation, (Lahore: Pakistan Study Centre, University of the Punjab, 2020), 304.

² Ian Talbot, Pakistan: A New History, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2012), 201.

³ Election Comion of Pakistan, Report on General Elections 2008, (Islamabad: ECP, 2008).

seat. These women had played a significant role in the 13th National Assembly that is discussed here.

Public Policy

Health

The daily Dawn on 30th June 2008 published news that 15 million pounds were transferred to the account of government of Pakistan by Britain in March 2008 for polio vaccine but Ministry used it under another head (Dawn, 2008). On 26 August 2008, Humair Hayat Khan Rokhri raised a point of discussion in the House regarding misuse of grant of Rs. 15 million given by the UK during March, 2008 for Polio Vaccine. Nisar Tanveer condemned the matter and asked to take serious note on misuse of grant. The chair asked for clarification from Parliamentary secretary for Health, Dr. Mehreen Razzaq Bhutto. She added that the government got 60 million from British government for four years to run six different projects for Lady Health Workers Program, EPI Program, HIV, Nutrition Program, Malaria and for Tuberculosis. The news was based on falsehood. The government did not get any grant for polio. In spite of this, Government had issued grants in budget 2008-2009 for eradication of polio on their behalf. Shehnaz Wazir Ali also supported the stance of Dr. Mehreen Razzaq and threw light upon the working of PPP over health issues (Pakistan N. A., 2008).

Under Rule 87 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the National Assembly, a member may with the consent of Speaker National Assembly raise a point of discussion on urgent public importance (Pakistan N. A., Rule 87, 2007). With the span of time, the Women Parliamentarians raised several important issues that were directly linked to the public. On April 14, 2009, under the Rule 87, a matter of manufacturing of spurious and sub-standard medicines and their sale in the country was presented to the House. The discussion was initiated by Shireen Arshad Khan, Tahira Aurangzeb, Begum Nuzhat Sadiq, Nighat Parveen Mir, Nisar Tanveer and Anusha Rahman Khan Advocate along with some four male members. Shireen Arshad Khan made a statement that the government should prohibit the manufacturing and sale of sub-standard medicines. Tahira Aurangzeb asked to activate drug inspectors for proper check and

balance. Nighat Perveen accused drug inspectors too that they were involved in selling of spurious and sub-standard medicines. Nisar Tanveer raised the matter of re-packing of used syringes that causes severe diseases while Dr. Donia Aziz said that the government was liable for this mismanagement and they should have to draft strict policies (Pakistan N. A., National Assembly Debates, April 14, 2009).

On 6 October 2009, Shireen Arshad Khan raised the point that sewerage water had been flown in Rawal Dam. She asked for taking measures to prevent the mixing of polluted water in dam water that may cause severe diseases. Begum Nuzhat Sadiq asked for better awareness of public as well as installation of filtration plants (Pakistan N. A., National Assembly Debates, October 6, 2009). Similarly, the matter of increasing cases of HIV/AIDS was raised by Yasmin Rehman and Dr. Azra Fazal Pechuho explained the status of affected peoples and measures taking for elimination of disease. Dr. Donya Aziz and Dr. Mehreen Razzaq Bhutto also presented their point of views (Pakistan N. A., National Assembly Debates, October 6, 2009).

Inflation, Price Hikes and Food Commodities

Throughout the history of Pakistan, when a new government came into being, they had economically suffered due to the fiscal strategies of previous government. The PPP Government had also faced economic crisis at the start of Government that caused the price-hike in the country. The House discussed this issue in budget session on 10 June 2008. Yasmin Rehman from treasury benches pointed out that the world was suffering from food inflation and price hike so it directly affected the economy of Pakistan too. As the Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gillani in his plan narrated that the government would subsidize the food ite while it would not be the permanent solution. She stressed over the control of food inflation, development of new infrastructure for agriculture, increasing the capacity of manufacturing sector, imposing extra duty on imported luxurious items, elimination of trade imbalance and devising the price monitoring committees (Rehman, 2008).

Khalida Mansoor said this issue affected common man. Our country had two types of inflation, one that caused due to international prices of petrol and second that created artificially at local level. The government should eliminate such kind of inflation and the culprits that were behind

this price hike should be punished. She further emphasized on the growth of agricultural setup and that must be improved through research. However, Bushra Rehman pointed out five reasons that included hoarding, adulterant, different prices in different cities, impassiveness and absence of religious norms. She also favored the stance of creation of monitoring committees. Similarly, Kashmala Tariq raised the point of unframed Parliamentary committees, price hike, uneven distribution of wheat to Afghanistan and other factors that may affect the budget (Pakistan N. A., National Assembly Debates, June 10, 2008).

The PPP government of majorly faced opposition over price hikes, poverty and unemployment. The slogan of *Roti, Kapra aur Makan* became an agony for government as members of opposition benches always taunted them. Farzana Mushataq also did so on 16 December 2008 when she was discussing the issue of price hike in the country. She said that due to poverty peoples were attempting suicides. Government had resources but they did not utilize that to meet the needs of public. Countering Farzana, Yasmin Rehman narrated that government took several steps to eliminate these issues as petrol prices were reduced as per international prices. She linked that reduction with betterment of other fields of life too (Pakistan N. A., National Assembly Debates, December 16, 2008). Khush Bakht Shujaat also condemned the government on several issues that were raised due to price hikes (Shujaat, 2009).

The matter of Price hike was raised several times during the government of PPP. On 21 April 2009, Farzana Mushataq Ghani proceeded that the new Parliamentary year was started and people expected that government would work on the vision of Benazir Bhutto to eliminate the inflation and poverty. Though Benazir Income Support Program helped the needy people but many people were remained unable to get assistance due to rejection of large number of application for She raised the point of unequal price of bread and basic commodities. Opposing this stance, Shakeela Khanam added that poverty ratio was decreased during previous year from 25% to 21% and a lot of projects were initiated and funds were released for poor people (Ghani & Khanam, 2009).

Yasmin Rehman related that with petrol prices. She said when government increased petrol prices then the price of basic commodities were increased and now government decreased the

price of petrol by Rs. 29/- then government ensure the reduction in prices of other things too. She said that world was facing economic recession so it impacted Pakistan too but the government must take sustainable steps. Justice (R) Fakhar-un-Nisa Khokhar narrated that urbanization affected the agriculture of Pakistan as Pakistan's major economy based on agriculture. The government must ensure the proper system and schedule of urbanization. Supporting the government, Farah Naz Ispahani added that government had taken some extra-ordinary and visionary steps. The government had raised 5 billion dollars during meeting with heads of other countries in Tokyo. The government launched schemes for FATA and construction opportunities Zones Bill would create more employment (Pakistan N. A., National Assembly Debates, April 21, 2009).

For the elimination of poverty and unemployment, Shakeela Khanam asked from government to give stipend to all unemployed educated individual in the country. She said that creation of new opportunities, elimination of unemployment and establishing of technical institutions, small and house based industry would help the government in this regard. Justice (R) Fakhar-un-Nisa Khikhar proposed to enhance the embroidery talent of women, art industry and to industrialize the said items Begum Nuzhat Sadiq, Tahira Aurangzeb, Yasmin Rehman and Shireen Arshad Khan also presented their point of views in the said matter (Pakistan N. A., National Assembly Debates, April 21, 2009).

Yasmin Rehman talking on unemployment in country highlighted that with increase of population, unemployment was also increasing. As fifty percent of the population was youth so there was dire need employment and education. She asked to grow agriculture and industrial sector to increase jobs. Marvi Memon opined that severally this matter was raised on the floor of House but government did not take a single step to eliminate unemployment. She highlighted the speech of Finance Minister that he said "new taxes were imposed likely to meet war on terror cost" but the question was that, why they had not utilized that for creation of jobs (Pakistan N. A., National Assembly Debates, January 12, 2010).

On January 27, 2011, National Assembly of Pakistan started discussion over price hikes of basic commodities in the country. From women representatives, Khalida Mansoor opined that

whenever a person reviews good governance he would check whether the government had solved the problems of public or not. The three years of this government did not show good governance as the prices of basic commodities increased day by day that also increased the problems of lower class. Contrary to that Fouzia Wahab added that the opposition had posed a darker side of economy while the brighter side shows that companies had declared their profits up-to 75%. She threw light upon the profits of major companies as well as increase in exports and better remittances from agriculture and industries (Pakistan N. A., National Assembly Debates, January 27, 2011). Tasneem Siddiqui and Marvi Memon supported the comments of Khalida Mansoor (Pakistan N. A., National Assembly Debates, January 31, 2011).

The situation of employment was very critical so the House discussed the situation arising out of unemployment in the country. Kashmala Tariq stated that worst economic condition and power shortages increased the problems for graduates. They got degrees by using a lot of money but unable to get jobs. She referred that India was moving forward in the world in terms of services through educated people while Pakistan skilled students were unable to do that. She emphasized on job creation, increase in foreign investment, skilled education and capacity building of youth (Tariq, 2011).

Water and Energy

On 4 June 2008, the matter of increasing corruption in the District/Local Government System was raised in the House. The system was devised under the devolution plan and the Local Government Ordinance 2001 in which power was given to local authorities for development of their concerned areas (Sindh, 2023). Imrana Saeed Jameel supported her government and stated that local government worked effectively and especially in Karachi they provided clean drinking water that was unavailable earlier. Similarly, over bridges and underpasses were being constructed so the raised matter was posed as invalid. Kashmala Tariq also supported this stance and highlighted the slogan “*Muqami Maslay, Muqami Hal*” so there was a need of this setup to work smoothly at grassroots level. She further threw light upon the seven years history of local government system and sustained her arguments (Pakistan N. A., National Assembly Debates, June 4, 2008). While Kishwar Zahra stressed to abstain from spattering over others and to reform

the local setup through proper legislation (Pakistan N. A., National Assembly Debates, June 5, 2008).

In this regard, Tahira Aurangzeb narrated that the ordinance was devised in hurry by a General and he did not focus on the good and bad of the plan. Similarly, the previous government never audited the performance of this setup so the shortcomings were not countered. This system was present during the previous Government of Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and he implemented this in well-mannered way. However, the current system not only lessened the importance of MNAs and MPAs but subordinated the civil officers and servants to a Nazim. Hence, there was need of audit and it also requires improved legislation (Aurangzeb, 2008).

Dr. Attiya Inayatullah supported the system by assuming the local system as village aid system that was provided in earlier years of the country. Similarly, BD system in 1958 and local government system 2001 was the basic need of time. She highlighted the importance of this system and narrated how this setup made accountable to everyone. Pointing out some reforms, she said that elimination of corruption, constituting the small committees for public safety, increasing the jurisdiction of ombudsman and the inclusion of women in the setup would be helpful to oversight the problems of society and specially for women. Similarly, MNA Nafeesa Shah, ex-District Nazim of Khairpur Sindh praised the local government system and Benazir Bhutto who encouraged her to work in local system. She condemned the system because LGO, 2001 was come in a political vacuum as there was not any elected parliamentary government. However, she stressed over the proper legislation as per the requirement of concerned constituency. Furthermore, Nighat Parveen Mir and Fouzia Ejaz Khan, (Pakistan N. A., National Assembly Debates, June 6, 2008) Khush Bakhat Shujaat, Bushra Rehman, Mrs Sherry Rehman, Shakeela Khanam Rasheed and Parveen Masood Bhatti shared their point of view in this matter (Pakistan N. A., National Assembly Debates, June 9, 2008).

The issue of energy crisis, load shedding, and price hike of petroleum products, dengue fever and other related issues was highlighted on 3rd October 2011. Discussing the matter, Fouzia Wahab raised the point of view of a newspaper i.e. Zardari network was more dangerous than Haqqani network that was a condemnable point but no one had condemned. She supported her

government and added that in previous two days government had added 4000 megawatts in electricity system and we were continuously trying to overlap the power shortage. She quantified the steps taken by government for IPPs, circular debts, taxation reform, anti-money laundering, growth in several sectors and foreign exchange (Wahab, 2011). Farah Naz Ispahani and Jameela Gilani also supported the government while Asia Nasir and Bushra Gohar opposed the government on load shedding majority and in some other issues. Jameela Gilani, Justice (R) Fakhar-un-Nisa Khokhar, Mehreen Anwar Raja Advocate, Shakeela Khanam Rasheed, Yasmin Rehman and Nosheen Saeed further discussed the issues (Pakistan N. A., National Assembly Debates, October 5-7, 2011).

Budget

Opening the speech over budget 2008, Hina Rabbani Khar accused that state affairs during last 5 years were mismanaged in the name of “*Hassas Hukmrani*.” She credited to Prime Minister and his Cabinet particularly to Finance Minister for giving efficient budget plan in difficult time as the inflation and petrol prices were hiking. The previous caretaker government made the condition of economy more worst that was actually throw-forwarded of the previous regime. Responding to the Leader of the Opposition she said that the Government had took initiatives in society safety. As poor people were facing inflation so Government allocated Rs. 34 billion for social safety, Benazir Income Support Fund would provide health insurance and employment opportunity and Peoples Work Program would be introduced having worth about Rs.28 billion. Wages would be increased from 4600 to 6000 and government employees would get 20% increase in their wages. She condemned the previous government on educational policy, energy policy and uneven approach over construction of dam, agricultural deficit production, poor development and local government’s corruption (Khar, 2008).

Contrary to that, Dr. Donia Aziz mocked the budget plan of Government by portraying economic relief as comic relief. She quoted the stance of Hina Rabbani Khar in previous period about different things including, IMF, agricultural refor, poverty, rural condition and other things. She said that Khar posed those things when she was in opposition and now she defended those things as government representative. Dr. Donia and Marvi Memon criticized policies of government

while Yasmin Rehman supported the budget by explaining its various aspects such as, poor friendly, increase in wages and pensions, growth in agricultural system and subsidies over agricultural ite, advancement of universities and freezing of non-productive expenditure, health benefits and social justice. Dr. Azra Fazal, Samina Gharki and Shakila Kanam Rasheed also braced the stance of Yasmin Rehman (Pakistan, 2008).

The PML-N was in coalition with PPP during early period of government (Express, 2012) but later on separated its ways due to campaign to restore judiciary (Dawn, 2008). Dr. Attiya Inayatullah of PML-N firstly praised the PPP government over selecting a woman on the seat of Speaker National Assembly. Then she condemned the move of Finance Minister who was not present in the Assembly during the session. She added that the PML-N must clarify that whether the party stayed in coalition of parted its ways. The proposed budget could not be acknowledged because that did not favor the poor masses. Contrary to that, Farzana Raja posed that within short span of time government set up a poor friendly budget. Presenting the figures of GDP, she said that during previous government of PPP in 1995 and 1996 was at more than 6% and the government showed willing to bring Pakistan again at that stage. Suriyya Asghar, Nafisa shah, Khursheed Begum and Shahnaz Wazir Ali favored Farzana Raja and admired the works of PPP since its creation while Fouzia Ejaz Khan and Justice (R) Fakhar-un-Nisa raised some points of suggestions (Pakistan, National Assembly Debates, June 15, 2008, 2008).

During the sitting, on 15 June 2008, Syed Khursheed Shah told the House that PML-Q's MNA M. P. Bhandara (MP elected on Minority reserved seat) died due to severe condition caused by car accident on April 23, 2008 (Dawn, M.P. Bhandara passes away, 2008). In this regard Assembly condoled and one minute silence was observed on the order of Madam Speaker Dr. Fehmida Mirza. Other female members including Shakeela Khanam Rasheed, Yasmin Rehman, Fauzia Wahab and numerous male members condoled for the MNA M. P. Bhandara (Pakistan, National Assembly Debates, June 16, 2008, 2008).

Continuing the discussion about budget, on June 16, 2008, Dr. Zil-e-Huma admired the government on presenting people friendly budget. Fauzia Habib, Bushra Gohar, Shagufta Jamani, Palwasha Mohammad Zai Khan, Tahira Aurangzeb, Kishwer Zahra, Begum Ishrat

Ashraf and Shahad Sattar Bachani also favored budget and condemned Musharraf Government's policies. Opposing this stance, Farzana Mushtaq Ghani stated that foreign exchange and stock exchange was crashed within few months. The government even could not become able to follow the footsteps of previous government as the monetary setup was running quite smoothly. She added that government had terminated subsidies that caused the rise in prices of basic commodities. While Dr. Nahid Shahid Ali propounded that budget set by the bureaucracy tended down the economic prosperity and the presented budget was also provided by bureaucracy (Pakistan, National Assembly Debates, June 17, 2008, 2008).

On 17 June, Belum Hasnain, Jameela, Faryal Talpur, Raheela Baloch, Samina Mushtaq Paganwala, Shaheen Ishfaq, Saira Afzal Tarar, Begum Naseem Akhtar Chaudhary, Anusha Rahman Khan Advocate, Begum Nazahat Sadiq, Farah Naz Ispahani, Qudsiyya Arshad favored the budget while Bushra Rehman, Zubaida Jalal, Khush Bakht Shujaat, Imrana Saeed Jameel opposed the government on several points (Pakistan, National Assembly Debates, June 19, 2008, 2008). While on 19 June, the House started discussion on the recommendation of Senate and Dr. Azra Fazal Pechuho, Zubaida Jalal, Farzana Raja, Shahnaz Wazir Ali, Bushra Rehman, Marvi Memon and Shahad Sattar Bachani endorsed some points of Senate (Pakistan, National Assembly Debates, June 20, 2008, 2008).

The House witnessed a comprehensive discussion on the budget by women legislators that was happened for the first time in National Assembly. This discussion unveiled that women played a vital role to highlighting the valid factors in budget 2008-2009. It was observed during the presentation of cut motions, Motions for demands and grants when female MNA's filed several motions and discussed the issues comprehensively on June 20, 21 and 23.

During the second year of PPP government, the budget 2009-2010 was presented by Hina Rabbani Khar, Minister of State for Finance, Revenue, Economic Affairs and Statistics. She expressed her gratitude to Allah as it was the first time in the history of the country when a woman presented budget. A comprehensive detail of budget was shared by her and then she presented a Bill to give effect to the financial proposals of the Federal Government for the year

beginning on the first day of July, 2009 and to amend certain laws (Khar, National Assembly Debates, June 13, 2009, 2009).

The House started discussion on budget and finance bill on June 16, 2009. Several Parliamentarians including Leader of the Opposition expressed their view, opposed some matters and posed some suggestions. In response of these views and suggestions, Yasmin Rehman opined that the Honorable Members of Parliament had given valuable suggestion and government would definitely work for that. Similarly, she answered the opposed points too and highlighted the significance of presented budget (Rehman, 2009). Bushra Gohar admired Hina Rabbani Khar and she emphasized on the fulfilment of commitments that were related to FATA and IDPs. Shakeela Khanam also favored the budget while Shireen Arshad Khan criticized the government on several points (Pakistan, National Assembly Debates, June 17, 2009, 2009).

The women MNAs actively participated in discussion over budget and their raised points were validated. Dr. Azra Fazal Pachhuo, Fouzia Wahab, Khush Bakht Shujaat, Farah Naz Ispahani favored the budget and government policies while Bushra Rehman, Marvi Memon, Begum Nuzhat Sadiq opposed in several matters. Tahira Aurangzeb narrated that government was advertising since a long while that a first time in the history, a woman would present the budget under the supervision of a woman but what a woman had presented for women of the country in this budget? She admired some points but criticized more (Pakistan, National Assembly Debates, June 18, 2009, 2009).

Women MNAs including Dr. Attiya Inayatullah, Qudsiya Arshad, Imrana Saeed Jameel, Kashmala Tariq, Begum Ishrat Ashraf, Rubina Saadat Qaim Khawani, Belum Husnain, Dr. Naheed Shahid Ali, Farzana Raja, Shagufta Jamali, Saira Afzal Tarar, Fouzia Habib, Nisar Tanveer and Parveen Masood Bhatti discussed the budget on 19 June (Pakistan, National Assembly Debates, June 19, 2009, 2009). Similarly, Shehnaz Saleem, Shagufta Sadiq, Farzana Mushtaq Ghani, Mehreen Anwar Raja Advocate, Justice (R) Fakhar-un-Nisa Khokhar, Anoosha Rehman Khan Advocate, Jameela, Tasneem Siddiqui, Shaheen Ishfaq, (Pakistan, National Assembly Debates, June 20, 2009, 2009) Shahnaz Wazir Ali, Memoona Hashmi, Dr. Donya Aziz, Khursheed Begum, Fouzia Ejaz Khan, Nafeesa Shah, Farkhanda Amjad, Dr. Firdos Ashiq

Awan and Dr. Mehreen Razzaq Bhutto presented their views (Pakistan, National Assembly Debates, June 22, 2009, 2009). Several women discussed the recommendations made by Senate and presented cut motions for amendments in budget (Pakistan, National Assembly Debates, June 23, 2009, 2009).

The Budget 2010-11 was discussed by the House in June 2010 and Dr. Donia Aziz raised a point of clarification that NEPRA, OGRA, PEMRA and other regulatory authorities in Pakistan had created a havoc in the country so how government had budgetary control over them? She demanded for the presentation of earnings and expenditure of these institutions to check the credibility and working capacity (Aziz, 2010). While Marvi Memon criticized the presented budget by saying that was not an Awami (public) budget, but the IMF dictated budget. At one point government had raised taxes while on the other hand lessened the subsidies over basic needs that would increase burden over poor public. She condemned the proposed budget in lieu of increase in electricity rates, corruption in trade, supplementary grants, non-implementation of NFC Award and several development program (Memon, 2010).

Similarly, Tehmina Daultana convicted the Minister of Finance over presenting deficit budget and taking bailout package from IMF. She talked on increase in GST, burden on public, destabilization of currency, increasing expenditures and uncontrolled inflation. Dr. Attiya Inayatullah represented economic facts that how Pakistan was suffering from deficits while Shakeela Khanam Rasheed praised her government policies (Pakistan, National Assembly Debates, June 10, 2010, 2010).

The budget was presented to Senate as well and the Upper House recommended several changes. The commendations were further discussed by the National Assembly and from women MNAs Farhat Khan, Sabeen Rizvi, Marvi Memon and Anoosha Rehman Khan Advocate (Pakistan, National Assembly Debates, June 19, 2010, 2010) talked on the recommendations. Similarly, discussing the demand for grants and appropriation several other female legislators presented their stance.

On 3 June 2011, Finance Minister Abdul Hafeez Sheikh presented budget 2011-12 in the National Assembly of Pakistan. The House started discussion over budget and in women MNAs,

Fauzia Wahab opened the words and praised budget as well as Finance Minister. She criticized the behavior of opposition and unfolded the facts that exports were increased during PPP government. In other matters such as health, education, political coherence, provincial autonomy, tax evasion, electricity and subsidies in basic commodities had witnessed a positive change (Wahab, 2011). Contrary to that, Dr. Attiya Inayatullah said that economic growth as portrayed by government was not existed in real. She compared the statistics of economic growth of Asia and Pakistan. The factors including inflation, militancy, terrorism, energy sector, water crisis, tax leakage and other reasons were also present that were unaddressed in budget (Inayatullah, 2011).

Similarly, Tasneem Siddiqui, Raheela Baloch, Bushra Gohar, Ishrat Ashraf, Nafisa Shah, Farhat Khan, Naseem Akhter Chaudhary, Shaheen Ishfaq, Yasmin Rehman, Dr. Azra Afzal Pechuho, (Pakistan, National Assembly Debates, June 16, 2011, 2011) Shireen Arshad Khan, Tahira Aurangzeb and Shehnaz Sheikh (Pakistan, National Assembly Debates, June 17, 2011, 2011) discussed the amendments in budget proposed by Senate of Pakistan. Several female legislators contributed in demand of grants and cut motions on June 18, 20 and 21.

PPP government presented its last budget in June 2012 and the House started discussion over it. From female legislators, Farzana Raja opened words and acclaimed her government for presenting fifth budget. She admired the working of coalition parties too. She worded that PPP's government was based on good governance as they had used balanced approach for poor and needy people. She quantified the significant steps taken by PPP government such as Benazir Income Support Program, women empowerment, development of Balochistan, rehabilitation of displaced person due to floods, provincial autonomy, flagship program and technology based system. She posed the budget as poor friendly (Raja, 2012). Contrary to that Fiza Junejo opposed government's monetary policies and Shagufta Sadiq supported the government (Pakistan, National Assembly Debates, June 11, 2012, 2012).

Conclusion

The inclusion of females in the 13th National Assembly of Pakistan had significantly influenced public policies and budget. Female legislators of National Assembly actively participated in

discussions regarding health matters, demonstrating their devotion and determination for enhancement of underprivileged communities specifically. They drew attention to important healthcare concerns. Their active involvement also described their knowledge as well as their leadership qualities regarding and emphasis on gender inclusion in creating a fairer and healthier society.

In case of food-related matters, female members remained engaged to take strong commitment to guaranteeing food security and nutrition for the entire population from government. These women asked for awareness programs for backward communities, suggesting creative solutions to tackle food insecurity and malnutrition. These activities demonstrated the dedication of women legislators to public welfare and highlighted their crucial role in promoting a more sustainable and fair food system. Similarly, the women participants frequently debated for critical problems of clean drinking water. Several issues were highlighted and their solutions were also shared on the floor of the House. These women advocated for sustainable solutions and amplified the voices of vulnerable populations to promote the fundamental right to clean water for every individual in the country.

Unfortunately, during 2008-2013, Pakistan had faced severe energy problems in Pakistan. The distinctive viewpoints of female legislators contributed in understandings and enhancing dialogues regarding energy policy and tactics. Women asked for sustainable and fair energy solutions that cater to the varied demands of the public. Energy crisis had raised several other issues too. Women's active involvement also viewed in the National Assembly in discussing inflation. They had raised the issues and asked for countering the inflation and controlling the raising prices of basic commodities. The question on inflation and price hikes was raised during a number of discussions that highlighted their working for weak class of Pakistan.

In case of budget, women had made notable progress by their involvement during budget discussions. In the year 2008 and 2009, budget was proposed and presented by Hina Rabbani Khar, an active female legislator of PPP, which clearly shows the direct involvement of women in devising budget. These women had actively participated and represented themselves, bringing a variety of perspectives, ideas, and priorities to the discussion, which had enhanced the

decision-making process. Their involvement had resulted in the successful implementation and approval of legislation that safeguarded rights. Their existence also led to heightened attention towards healthcare, social welfare initiatives and monetary policies, which directly advantaged marginalized people and contributed to the holistic advancement of the nation. The 13th National Assembly had achieved notable progress in achieving gender equality and implementing inclusive policies but there are still tasks that remain to be accomplished.

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