

An Analysis of Women Participation in By-Election PP-20 (Chakwal-I)

This report is being published by Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI)¹. This report highlights different trends of women participation in the electoral process and analyzes factors hindering or encouraging women participation in electoral process during by-elections on provincial assembly seat, PP-20, in district Chakwal. The elections were held on January 9, 2017. This analysis is generated on a sample size of 45 polling stations. This sample was drawn using random sampling method with sample size of 20%.

For the by elections in the constituency of PP 20 Chakwal-I, the total number of registered voters is 279530, with 144191(51.6%) male voters and 135339 (48.4%) female voters. To accommodate these voters, an equal number of 61 polling stations for men and women have been set up in addition to 105 combined polling stations in the constituency. These polling stations consist of total 814 polling booths including 421 for men and 393 for women.

The data collected on Election Day shows that mostly same-gender staff is deployed at the polling booths. The CPDI team observed that all booths set up for female voters at combined and female polling stations had women as assistant presiding officers and polling officers.

A dominance of men as presiding officers was not only observed on male and combined polling stations but some of female polling stations also had men deployed as presiding officers. At female polling stations # 24 and # 206 the presiding officer were male. Moreover, 17 out of the 19 sampled combined polling stations had men as their presiding officer. This shows women are not often the first choice for top positions.

A lower turn out of women was observed in comparison to men. On an average 14 women voters voted in an hour on a sampled female polling booth as compared to 20 men on the male booth. This lower turn out of women was noticed despite ECP's effort to mobilize women voters and the provisions of section 12 (C) of Elections Act 2017.

The CPDI teams interviewed female voters on sampled polling stations on election day to collect more data about women participation. Women from the age group 23 to 35 years participated heavily (40%) while participation of age group 18 to 22 years was low (17%). Moreover 30% of the women voters belong to the age group of 36 to 50 years. It appears that middle age women especially married are encouraged to participate in electoral activities but younger women are discouraged and it is considered unnecessary exposure for them. This data also signifies the need to focus and pay more attention to women youth as their low participation in electoral process may also be reflecting their lack of interest in political engagement.

The interview data further sheds light on relation between marital status and occupations of women and their turn out. The data reveals that 61% of women appearing to vote were Housewife, 13% were students and 15% were doing government or private job. This data reflects that housewife were majority of the women voters in sample size.

The CPDI interviewers also asked about educational background of women voters; 36% out of them were matric, 24% were below matric but literate, 15% were illiterate and 25% were graduates or above.

¹ Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI) is an independent, non-partisan and a not-for-profit registered civil society organization working on the issues of Development and Peace in Pakistan.



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It was observed that women turnout was the highest during 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm, it appears that this is the time when women get free from their household responsibilities and feel their daily routine would not be disturbed by leaving home during this time.

During the rush hours polling staff was unable to manage and provide special assistance to older women, expecting mothers and mothers of infants. From 59% of sampled polling stations, there were no reports of preferential treatment being given to expecting mothers. In 57% polling stations CPDI observers said no preferential treatment was giving to old age women. Mothers carrying young children were further neglected in this category and observers from 68% polling stations reported that no preferential treatment was given to them either.

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