



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Government Efforts for Women's Uplift in Pakistan: Protection, Empowerment and Participation**

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**ABSTRACT**

The objective of this study is to examine the measures and steps taken by various federal and provincial governments for improving the state of women rights and empowering them. Challenges that women face arise from a combination of cultural, historical, religious, political, and economic factors. The federal and provincial governments over the years have taken some measures in order to prevent and uphold women's rights. Applying the qualitative approach, this empirical study evaluates the gender transformative politics. Different awareness campaigns and measures have been launched and at the same time specialized agencies in different regions of the country have been created. Parliamentary, Provincial and Local councils have seen a rise in women representation manifold. Governments should establish more facilities like Darul Amans. Many women are trained at vocational centers face challenges in marketing their products. Government departments should devise strategies to help these women.

**KEYWORDS** Emancipation of Women, Governmental Efforts for Women, Women Empowerment, Women Protection, Women Rights

**Introduction**

This paper reveals that Pakistani women have faced profound challenges at different stages and areas of life influenced by a range of cultural, historical, religious, political, and economic determinants. The advancements toward improvement of women rights have been particularly gradual and women continue to be marginalized in political and economic spheres. Indeed, women are still confined into a limited public space they can occupy depending on their status. Among these enduring disparities, many actors from the state and society have demanded to safeguard, emancipate, and empower women. In parallel with these attempts, numerous personalities and associations have participated, albeit to some degree, in the trends that have emerged both in the society and with government support to enforce women's rights.

Federal and provincial governments of Pakistan have taken several steps to preserving and employing women's rights. Parliaments at national and provincial levels have passed many laws that would encourage the elimination of discrimination on the basis of gender. Also, there are increased awareness campaigns, programs and formation of specialized agencies for women in varying parts of the country. The focus of this research study is to analyze critically the performance of governments in the last few decades in relation to women rights. The paper discusses multiple facets of government interventions such as for gender mainstreaming, education uplift of

women, and their economic as well as political emancipation. After this introduction, the next section presents a literature review of the relevant literature. The third subsection describes the method used in the course of the study. The fourth section provides an analysis of the role of governments in promoting women's emancipation and empowerment. The final section offers concluding observations and insights derived from the study.

### **Literature review**

While a substantial body of research exists on the subject of women's rights in Pakistan, much of it adopts a general perspective, addressing various broad aspects of the field. Relatively few studies specifically focus on the role played by Pakistani governments in advancing women's welfare and empowerment. Among the existing works, Mujahid, Noman, and Begum (2015) have explored different dimensions of women's empowerment in the country. Weiss (2012), on the other hand, has provided an in-depth analysis of the legal empowerment of Pakistani women. Her findings indicate that the history of legislation affecting women's rights and empowerment in Pakistan reflects a complex interplay of progress and setbacks. The state's attempts to define and promote women's rights have been intricately shaped by the challenge of reconciling diverse and often conflicting views on the role of women within Pakistani society.

A study conducted by Shah, Aziz, and Ahmad in the districts of Abbottabad (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province) and Attock (Punjab Province) revealed that women councilors participated actively in local government. However, their ability to influence policy changes remained limited. However, integration of women councilors to the new structure of local government enhanced awareness and coordination among women (I. A. Shah, Aziz, & Ahmad, 2015). The study also revealed that enforcing laws on women rights as exception to discrimination was very poor or almost nonexistent. Besides, the research compared how governance was under the two different political systems. From unelected rulers, women were oppressed in many ways, which included restriction on core rights as compared to democracy where women enjoyed some level of access to their rights (Rafay, Habib, Tariq, & Ali, 2016).

### **Material and Methods**

This research study relies on both primary and secondary data collection methods to ensure that the topic can be discussed extensively. Primary sources consist of legislative acts by the parliament and provincial assemblies along with official government records; these were useful to compare the actions of the federal and provincial governments and Pakistani civil society for their role on empowering women in the country. The understanding of these official documents helped to provide the idea of the current state of women's rights in the country. Books, scholarly articles, handouts, and online resources formed by secondary sources also played a great role in augmenting the research. These sources included such contents of newspapers, periodicals and the relevant academic journals. Combining the two types of data, the research provides a detailed analysis of material progress in promoting women's rights in Pakistan.

### **Results and Discussion**

Changes have been largely incremental in nature but there have been positive changes in the status of women in Pakistan owing to actions of government for

women's empowerments. According to an analysis based on the Global Gender Gap Report 2023 published by the World Economic Forum, Pakistan has gained 5.1 percentage point on the economic participation and opportunity sub-index over the past decade and is currently at 36.2 percent parity. Additionally, the country achieved parity in the sex ratio at birth, contributing to a 1.7 percentage point increase in this sub-index since 2022. However, like many other nations, Pakistan continues to face its most significant gender gap in political empowerment, which stands at 15.2 percent. Over the last 50 years, Pakistan has had a female head of state for 4.7 years, while women account for one-tenth of the ministers and one-fifth of the parliamentarians (A. Ahmed, 2023). To advance women's rights, emancipation, and empowerment, governments have introduced a series of laws, initiatives, and reforms across various sectors. The following discussion examines these governmental efforts, focusing first on actions taken to protect and secure women, followed by measures to enhance their participation in political and economic spheres. Persistent challenges that continue to hinder progress are also analyzed.

### **Legislatures and the Judiciary**

Pakistan has embraced the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), committing to achieve all 17 objectives outlined in the agenda. SDG 5 is dedicated to empowering women and girls, but it is goal 5.5 to provide women equal chances of decision making through political processes. Also, the Government of Pakistan is a signatory to seven basic human rights instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). This treaty requires Pakistan to perform actions to ensure women's political rights ("Women's Political Participation in Upcoming Local Government Elections," 2020). Moreover, Pakistan is committed to major international conventions and recommendation including the Convention of International Labour Organization (ILO), The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). The ICCPR was adopted at the United Nations General Assembly in 1966 alongside the ICESCR, states being required to ensure all means were used with a view of protecting equality and all types of rights of all people under the law.

The Constitution of Pakistan does not restrict the women in social, economic and political activities. Article 18 empowers women to seek right of any employment that is not prohibited by the law as Article 25 sets provisions on non-discrimination and provision of affirmative action. Several other constitutional laws also ensure women's rights within the family system, Muslim Family Laws Ordinance (MFLO) of 1961, the Dissolution of Marriage Act, the Child Custody Law, and the Child Marriage Restraint Act which was amended in 2017 (Jalil, 2019). In addition, the Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act was enacted in 2010 to address workplace safety for women. In 2018, the Ministry of Human Rights introduced a bill in parliament aimed at protecting the rights of persons with disabilities, which also encompasses specific provisions for safeguarding the rights of women ("Society's Mindset Needs to Be Changed to Combat Harassment," 2018).

There is growing recognition within the judiciary of the importance of implementing measures that promote the rights, upliftment, and empowerment of women in the context of legal proceedings. In many instances, judges direct various ministries and government departments to take specific actions in support of these objectives. For example, in June 2024, the Lahore High Court instructed the immigration and passport department to complete its consultative process within three

months and amend the rules to allow women to retain their father's name on both their computerized national identity card (CNIC) and passport, regardless of their marital status ("LHC Gives Immigration Dept 3 Months: 'Amend Rules so Women Can Retain Father's Name on CNIC,'" 2024). Additionally, the director general of the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) was ordered to ensure that a woman's name is included in her husband's family tree after marriage through the registration track system. The court also emphasized that the origin of her father's family should be verified to prevent any loss of her legal rights (Iqbal, 2021). This ruling was issued in response to a petition that sought a declaration affirming that a married woman has the right to retain her father's name on her identity documents, including but not limited to the CNIC and passport, regardless of her marital status ("LHC Gives Immigration Dept 3 Months: 'Amend Rules so Women Can Retain Father's Name on CNIC,'" 2024). This decision marks a significant step toward the emotional empowerment of women. In another case, the Balochistan High Court instructed the Board of Revenue to initiate legal action against individuals who deprive women of their legal rights, potentially including the filing of a criminal case under Section 498-A of the Pakistan Penal Code (Iqbal, 2021).

### **Protection and Safety**

The federal and provincial governments have implemented various measures to protect women, including the introduction of new laws and initiatives. For instance, the Islamabad police established a gender protection unit to assist women and children who are victims of sexual harassment, rape, and bonded labor ("Police Open Gender Protection Unit," 2021). Additionally, gender crime cells have been created to monitor habitual offenders and identify areas with high rates of harassment and violence against women. These cells are equipped with dedicated phone lines to ensure a timely response to incidents ("Women Anti-Harassment Cell in City," 2021). In some regions, women's police stations have been set up, such as one in Sibi, Balochistan, to enable female complainants to report their cases to women police officers (Shahid, 2024). This initiative aims to provide a supportive environment for women to address their concerns. Acid attacks, which cause severe physical and emotional harm, are considered one of the most heinous crimes. In a landmark ruling in 2019, the Supreme Court described acid attacks as a crime bigger than murder ("Acid Attack," 2021).

The federal and provincial governments have enacted a range of laws aimed at promoting the emancipation of women. Some of these laws are designed to provide swift remedies and ensure justice (Sandhu, 2022). Under these legal provisions, violence against women can result in imprisonment for a term ranging from one to five years. Additionally, economic, psychological, and sexual pressure are explicitly classified as forms of violence against women. In 2021, the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa proposed the establishment of district-level committees, led by the relevant deputy commissioner, to offer medical aid, shelter, support, and legal assistance to women who have been affected by violence. The government also planned to set up a helpline to help prevent incidents of domestic violence ("New Law to Prevent Domestic Violence against Women: CM," 2021). The Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act was introduced to fulfill international obligations and is in line with the requirements of Article 23(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the CEDAW (Bukhari, 2022). In November 2017, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa cabinet approved legal amendments that allowed for the appointment of an ombudsperson to address cases of workplace harassment against women (Ali, 2019). In 2019, the government appointed human rights activist Rukhshanda Naz as the first anti-harassment ombudsperson for the province.

The federal and provincial governments in Pakistan have enacted a variety of laws aimed at advancing women's rights and ensuring their safety. These legal measures address violence against women by defining economic, psychological, and sexual abuse as forms of violence, with penalties ranging from one to five years of imprisonment (Sandhu, 2022). Legislation addressing domestic violence has been implemented in various regions of the country, including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Significant amendments have been made to several laws, such as the 2016 reform that addressed a critical loophole in cases of honor killings. Previously, the families of victims could "forgive" the perpetrator, who was often a close relative. Under the revised law, such crimes now carry a mandatory prison sentence, and forgiveness is limited to commuting a death sentence. In many instances, families continue to prevent women from entering into marriages of their own choosing. In response to numerous cases of couples seeking protection after contracting free-will marriages against familial consent, the Sindh High Court (SHC) directed the provincial government to establish safe houses and rescue centers. Furthermore, the court instructed district and sessions judges to conduct unannounced inspections of facilities such as Darul Amans, Darul Atfal, safe houses, and rescue centers across the province, ensuring the well-being of their residents. To comply with this directive, the provincial government resolved to establish safe houses in every district (Tanoli, 2018).

### **Political Participation**

Among Pakistan's approximately 106 million registered voters, 44 percent are women. This figure is at least six percent lower than their representation within the overall adult population. In an effort to address this disparity, the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) initiated several campaigns aimed at increasing women's national identity card issuance and voter registration. To facilitate this initiative, 258 NADRA registration centers were made operational. Additionally, 10 mega centers functioned around the clock, while 53 centers extended their hours by operating in double shifts, each lasting over eight hours, to enhance the registration process for women (Khan, 2021).

Although women are registered as voters, their turnout consistently lags behind that of men across Pakistan. In the 2018 general elections, the gender gap in voter turnout was 9.1 percent, with 11 million more men voting than women. The disparity was particularly stark in the Bannu district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where the gap reached as high as 52 percent (Javed, 2021). Notably, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) annulled the Shangla polls due to the low turnout of women and subsequently ordered a re-poll (Khan, 2018a). This suppression of women voters is shaped by several factors, one of which is the gatekeeping by male household members. A survey found that 8.3 percent of male respondents believed it was inappropriate for women to vote in a general election, resulting in an 11 percent lower turnout among women in these households compared to others (Javed, 2021). The Election Act of 2017, which mandated that the ECP nullify a constituency's results if women's turnout fell below 10 percent, brought some improvement. This legislation compelled local authorities to intervene, ensuring that women were not explicitly barred from voting as had been observed in previous elections. In the 2018 elections, the ECP took preemptive measures based on media reports and issued directives to District Returning Officers (DROs) and Deputy Commissioners (DCs) a day before polling. These instructions targeted six districts—Swat, Lower Dir, Upper Dir, Shangla, Swabi, and Battagram—to facilitate women's participation (Shah, 2018). Women's rights activists also played a vital role, organizing door-to-door campaigns to engage female voters and encourage their turnout (Shinwari, 2018).

The government has allocated reserved seats for women in legislative assemblies to ensure their representation (Table 1). Additionally, it has urged political parties to actively contribute to enhancing women's participation in the assemblies. Section 206 of the Elections Act 2017 mandates that political parties award at least five percent of general seat tickets to women in each assembly. Section 217 of the same act outlines penalties for political parties that violate any of its provisions (Junaidi, 2024). Over time, the number of women contesting general seats has steadily increased. In the 2013 general elections, 1,171 women submitted nomination papers, whereas this number rose to 1,687 in the 2018 elections. For the 2024 general elections, a total of 3,139 women—comprising over 11 percent of the 28,626 candidates—filed their nomination papers nationwide. This represents an 86 percent increase in women candidates compared to the 2018 general elections.

In the 2008 general elections, the participation of women as candidates for National Assembly seats was notably low, with only 72 contesting. Among them, 41 women were nominated by political parties, while 31 ran as independent candidates. This number increased significantly in the 2013 elections, where 135 women contested for National Assembly seats, with a higher proportion running independently—74 independent candidates compared to 61 nominated by political parties (Khan, 2018b). The upward trend continued in the 2018 general elections, with 171 women vying for National Assembly seats. Of these, 105 women received party nominations, while 66 contested as independents (Jahangir, 2018). Some constituencies witnessed multiple women competing for the same seat. For instance, four women candidates contested in NA-54 (Islamabad), as well as in NA-87 (Hafizabad) and NA-90 (Khan, 2018b). For the 2024 general elections, the participation of women has further expanded. Out of the total, 471 women entered the election by submitting nomination papers for general seats for the NA, and 802 women submitted nomination papers for the provincial assembly seats (Hasnain, 2023). Such a significant rise could be explained by the increased level of women's participation in politics all over the country.

**Table 1**  
**Reserved Seats for Women in National and Provincial Assemblies**

Assembly	Number of Reserved Seats
National	60
Punjab	66
Sindh	29
Balochistan	11
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	22

More women have joined the parliament, provincial assemblies and local councils in the recent past. Pakistan's constitution guarantees women equal rights with men when it comes to occupying any public office; women have been given special right to occupy certain number of seats in all tiers of government. These have encouraged more women to participate in political activities, come out to politics and vie for an election. Prominent people have contributed to this progression in inspiring that capacity. The woman who has been a Prime Minister of Pakistan twice in 1988 and 1993, Benazir Bhutto, became the first woman Prime Minister in the history of the Muslim world. Fehmida Mirza was elected as the first woman speaker of the National Assembly and then was elected five terms in a row from the general seat (Jahangir 2018). In the same manner Shehla Raza was the first woman to be elected the speaker of Sindh assembly. In the year 2019, women parliamentarians demanded the raising number of women as chairpersons of standing committees and in federal cabinet. Their demand sought them to be in better position in participating in legislation and

formation of the country. These developments portray the changing political position of women in Pakistani politics.

### **Economic Participation**

Different ministries and departments of Pakistan government have been encouraging women for involving in economic activities and due to such efforts good changes have been observed in different corners of this country. Women are now running various businesses such as saloon, restaurant, school, daycare and even hotels among others. Amusingly, some have ventured into areas considered male only fields like operating factories. Women are increasingly employed across governmental and private sectors and pursue education in diverse fields, including medical sciences, engineering, computer sciences, physics, chemistry, and pharmacy, subsequently entering these professions upon graduation. To further facilitate this trend, governments have established specialized technical and vocational centers, institutes, and colleges for women. These institutions offer training in areas such as architecture, textiles, drafting, and computer operations.

The growing awareness among women about economic independence and financial autonomy is evident. By 2021, 29 percent of women in Pakistan had opened bank accounts. Recognizing the importance of gender equality in fostering sustainable and inclusive economic growth, many policymakers emphasize that enhanced access to financial and professional opportunities for women is essential. Greater gender parity in these areas is seen as a crucial driver for achieving improved socioeconomic development outcomes ("Only 29pc Women Have Bank Accounts in Pakistan: SBP Chief," 2021).

The employment of women in government departments has shown a significant upward trend, with an increasing number of women joining the workforce. For instance, by 2021, approximately 93 percent of National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) centers employed female staff (I. A. Khan, 2021). Legislation mandates that companies provide childcare facilities if they employ more than a specified number of women. In line with this, the Punjab Women Development Department has introduced several standards regarding the design and operation of daycare centers. Additionally, a dedicated fund has been established to support the creation of onsite daycare facilities, ensuring better access to childcare for working women (Shekha, 2021).

### **Challenges**

Despite numerous initiatives by successive federal and provincial governments aimed at protecting and empowering women, significant challenges remain. A 2021 field survey revealed that 30.4 percent of men believed it was inappropriate for women to openly express their political views, and 64 percent thought it was unsuitable for women to become political party workers. Households with such views saw a seven percent lower turnout of women in the 2018 general elections (Javed, 2021). Additionally, societal norms and values continue to strongly influence attitudes toward women. In cases of sexual assault or harassment, family members of the victims often refrain from reporting these incidents, viewing them as sources of embarrassment, shame, and dishonor (Sandhu, 2022). This cultural stigma remains a significant barrier to addressing and preventing gender-based violence.

Having a limited number of women in positions of power does little to address the broader issue of gender inequality in politics unless systemic reforms are implemented (“Aurat March Presents 12-Point Charter of Demands,” 2024). One of the major challenges to women’s political participation is the denial of their right to vote. A 2018 report highlighted that in the village of Mohripur, men had prohibited women from voting around 1947, a practice that has persisted ever since (AFP, 2018). In the 2018 general elections, the female voter turnout was only 40 percent, compared to 60 percent for male voters. This meant that only 21 million out of the 46 million registered women voters exercised their right to vote.

The Elections Act of 2017 sought to address this issue by declaring the election results in any constituency null and void if the female voter turnout was less than ten percent on election day. However, this provision is limited, as it only considers the overall female turnout in a constituency and does not account for specific polling stations. For instance, if women in a particular polling station have zero percent turnout, while the overall turnout in the constituency exceeds ten percent, this provision does not apply (“Women’s Political Participation in Upcoming Local Government Elections,” 2020). An example of this discrepancy can be seen in NA-10 (Shangla), where the total number of registered voters was 374,343. Out of 212,294 male voters, 115,639 (54 percent) voted, whereas only 12,663 women out of 162,049 registered female voters cast their ballots (Khan, 2018a). Furthermore, the largest cities in Pakistan’s four provinces did not perform well in terms of gender equality in voter turnout during the 2018 general elections. In Punjab, the gender gap in Lahore was 12.5 percent, more than double the 6.3 percent gap in the rest of the province (Javed, 2021). Additionally, in several regions, candidates failed to effectively reach out to women voters, which further hindered their political engagement (Shinwari, 2018).

Pro-women laws, while legally established, often face significant challenges in terms of social legitimacy and the actual status of women, which are marked by considerable gaps. A research study conducted on pro-women laws in Sindh for a civil society organization revealed that in 2017, only one case of domestic violence was under trial under the Sindh Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act of 2013, despite domestic violence being a common occurrence in the province. This goes to show how partial the law has proven to be and this has been effective for four years. Moreover, this law does not recognize women’s rights on property as is required especially by the constitution. In Sindh and many other areas of Pakistan, woman loses their share in the family property because the traditional role of women is presented to them as obedient to their husband and brothers. Although these decisions are individual decisions that women make on their own in their lifetime, these decisions are informed by patriarchal gender norms, that deny women the capacity to genuinely consent. If women’s property rights were fully protected and they were empowered to own assets, such as agricultural land, they would likely feel more empowered to make independent decisions in their lives and take legal action against instances of domestic violence (Junejo, 2017).

Labour laws in Pakistan are insufficient in addressing various forms of discrimination against women, including more subtle types of discrimination based on age, marital status, and reproductive roles. Women’s Action for Better Workplaces has highlighted that labour rights and entitlements are often inconsistent. For example, the minimum wage does not apply to all types of work, and there are significant discrepancies in social security provisions. Maternity laws also present challenges, as there are seven different maternity laws that fail to include provisions for adoption and offer inconsistent terms regarding complications and the duration of maternity leave



(Mojiz, 2018). Although Pakistan is a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the country has made insufficient progress in implementing procedures that are women-friendly for reporting cases of violence (M. Ahmed, 2024). Journalists have expressed concerns that their complaints regarding crimes under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) 2016 are often ignored. More troubling, however, is the misuse of the law's defamation provisions to harass women. The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) is responsible for enforcing PECA, and its cybercrime wing handles complaints, particularly those filed by women. However, with a population of 34 million internet users, the cybercrime wing only had a team of 500 members in 2020. Until 2018, there were just two women working at the cybercrime help desk. The agency lacks the resources to address the widespread issue of gendered online harassment. As a digital rights activist noted, if every woman who experienced online harassment reported the incident to the cybercrime wing, "the institution would break" (Gossman, 2020).

## **Conclusion**

Cultural, historical, religions, political, and economic factors play their role in the oppression of women in Pakistan, the challenges that women met throughout the different spheres of lives since the very beginning. Years down the line, the federal and provincial governments have introduced policies as well as other strategies in a bid to support women and enhance their rights. The parliaments and provincial legislatures have enacted many laws, while many awareness programs and projects have been developed. More so, there are specialized agencies that have been developed in different regions of the country to deal with these matters. This research study analyses the progress of these governments in recent decades in as much as efforts made in the fight for women rights, education and the overall strives towards women's economic and political enfranchisement.

While change is not progressing at a very high speed, the condition of women in Pakistan has been changing for the better, thanks in large part to government actions that have been taken toward the betterment of women. In the economic participation and opportunities sub-index of the Global Gender Gap Report 2023, Pakistan showed a rise of 5.1 percentage points and has a parity of 36.2 percent in the last decade. Pakistan has also embraced the call for implementation of the sustainable development goals and pledged to support achievement of all the seventeen goals. Gender equality is brought under the fifth goal, and the 5.5 goal aims at enhancing equal political participation of women. Moreover, the Government of Pakistan has become a party to seven major human rights covenants such as CEDAW under which the state has legal and political responsibility to guarantee women's voting rights. The Constitution of Pakistan reveals no inhibition to women engaging in any socioeconomic or political activity or participation. Through Article 18, women are given equal rights as men in practicing any lawful vocation.

To protect women, the federal and provincial governments have taken measures and provided them protection. There have been many legal reforms targeting violence and discrimination issues, laws have been created, and programs started. For example, to combat violence against women and children, recently created Gender Protection Unit in Islamabad police help victims of sexual harassment, rape, and bonded labor. Gender crime cells have also been established to address these problems. The law penalizes violence against women with imprisonment for a period not less than one year and not more than five years. Also, economic, psychological, and sexual coercion are now legal categories of violence against women. Many laws have been

changed, including the 2016 reform that eliminated the legal possibility for the relatives of an honor killed woman to forgive the murderers who are often relatives of the victim.

More women are coming out to vie for general seats and this has in great aspiration to the Election's Act 2017 that requires a political party to provide five percent tickets for women on general seats in both national and provincial Assemblies. It has created a significant impact on the development in the numerous parliamentary, provincial and local elections; whereby, the composition of women in the parliament, provincial assemblies, and local councils has relatively increased. Based on the constitution, women are allowed to take over all public offices that are available and this strengthens their participation on governance issues.

Ministries and departments have remained very active in ensuring that women engage in economic activities and a change has been realised in many parts of the country. Now women can own almost everything from hair dressing saloons, restaurants, schools, daycares, and even hotels. And some of them have even dared to engage themselves in running factories, an area that is usually owned by men. Also, female employees work in almost all the governmental ministries and sectors as well as the private job markets. There are multiple significant barriers remaining despite the attempts of successive federal and provincial governments at addressing the issues of the rights and protection of women. Furthermore, labor laws are inadequate in addressing various forms of discrimination against women, particularly more subtle forms based on age, marital status, and reproductive roles.

### **Recommendations**

Despite many positive developments, several areas still require further improvement. Discrimination is widely practiced in the implementation of laws. Young people can be sensitized to issues of women's rights and freedoms through the curriculum. Although measures have been taken for the protection and social security of victims of violence and attacks, a large number of women still need accommodation. This means that governments should establish more facilities like Darul Amans. Many women are trained at vocational centers and institutes so that they can earn a living and become financially independent. However, they face challenges when they try to sell their products in the market. Government departments should devise strategies to help these women.

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