

## WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

According to UNFPA, women empowerment is the process of enabling women to gain control over their lives, make strategic life choices, and access equal opportunities, resources and rights in both private and public spheres. Women empowerment revolves around providing equitable opportunities in economic, social, and cultural setup as that of men. The concept of women empowerment evolved from 19<sup>th</sup>-Century suffrage movements to a human rights struggle for equality, transforming legal, social and economic structures. In Pak, women empowerment became visible right after its independence, when women started to actively participate in politics and economic spheres. The prominent leaders like Fatima Jinnah and Begum Rana Liaquat Ali Khan made their mark in politics at that time. However, after 1956-1980s witnessed a downfall in the status of women. The Hudood ordinances restricted the women and ably entrenched the already existing concept of paradigm of private-public dichotomy. The rightist government

policies by Zia-ul-Haq regime remained aloof from the narrative of a common Pakistani woman of 80s. Despite of the coerciveness and restriction, the women's right movements, such as the Women's Action Forum (1981) came into being to defend women rights. Pakistan being - a patriarchal society and a religio-centric state - has faced numerous challenges to contain/deal/its aspersion on global platforms in terms of gender inequality, in the form of ~~more~~ ascendancy. The gender disparity in the form of unequal distribution of resources, discrimination in wages, economical dependency, social hurdles, has contributed to the ~~the~~ an already <sup>the</sup> averted image of Pakistan internationally. A country with 49% of women population and only 21% representation in parliament has already come a long way to counter its aversion as being the patriarchal hegemony. For instance, Benazir Bhutto, the first Prime Minister of a Muslim-majority state - Pakistan, proved herself against all odds. The Oxford Graduate stood firm in the face of

patriarchy. Her policies <sup>were</sup> aimed to reverse the discriminatory reforms of 1980s through structural reform. The former establishment of Ministry of Women's Development, women police stations, launching the Lady Health Workers program to develop <sup>secure</sup> women constitute states in Pakistan. The loan schemes and Benazir Income Support programmes introduced by President Asif Ali Zardari continue her legacy to this day. Currently, According to PIE report of 2024, 13.71m girls are still out of school, this constitutes for almost 62% of total out of school children in Pakistan. Women empowerment had never been an option, but nowadays it has become mandatory. The cases like ~~Dua~~ Sania Zehra, Noor Muqaddam, Eman Mazari are still act as stigma for the Pakistan. Women empowerment is needed to curtail the impacts of our shadow/parallel systems like kinship hegemony and jirga system or clientilism. ~~It~~ Because of empowering the women over 10million Pakistan's economically deprived women

are receiving aid under BISP. Approximately, 3000+ women led startups and ventures are registered all across the country which is about 94% increase from 2019-2025.

Maryam Nawaz - Current CM of Punjab - has also taken extensive initiatives for women's development in Punjab focusing on economic development. Key programmes include a 6-month IT training for 27000+ rural women, Dhee Rani projects and a new safety wing with dedicated helpline. Malala Yousuf Zai - Only female Nobel Prize Winner from Pak - had co-founded Malala Fund along with her father. This fund ~~exists~~ advocates for women 12 years of free education, child labour acts, early child marriages etc. ~~This~~ Malala Fund not only responds to the crisis in Pakistan but it is also ~~exp~~ currently operating in Nigeria, Brazil, Lebanon etc. and is currently expanding as well. Mukhtarani Mai Women's Organization - founded by Mukhtarani Mai after her ~~at~~ assault - is committed to work against all forms of violence ~~against~~ and discrimination against women through education.

necessity.

"There is no tool for development  
which is more effective than the  
empowerment of women"

- Kofi Annan

(former Secretary  
General of UN)