



## *WPC Quarterly Report*

# **Women Parliamentary Caucus**

## **Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa**

*Report for the Quarter  
July – September 2016*



**Report By**  
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### *Introduction*

This was an activity packed quarter for Women Parliamentary Caucus, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly. Meetings, knowledge sharing workshops, study tours, brainstorming sessions, WPC had not a moment to spare! WPC had come of age! With unity in its ranks and the zealous advocacy of all members, the importance of WPC and its role in strengthening the voice and Status of women in the Assembly has at last been acknowledged by the Caucus members themselves as well as the legislators and the staff of the Assembly. This has helped in building the confidence and self esteem of all the women members which they proved during their first visit to the UK Parliament where their participation was applauded and stated to be the best among all the visiting delegations. WPC, KP, is also becoming a role model to other neglected segments like the minorities whose representatives in the Assembly are seriously contemplating to start their own Caucus with the help of WPC.

During the quarter the Caucus continued its efforts to strengthen its position in the Assembly through good relationship with the Honorable Speaker and Deputy Speaker as well as the senior management. At the same time, networking outside the Assembly also continued to grow with the result that the number of visitors to the Caucus secretariat increased manifold. With support from the Honorable Speaker there is now three full time staff available with full functioning equipment which helps in



timely achievement of our deadlines. It is a matter of pride for WPC that it has been included in the main menu of the Assembly website.

A landmark achievement was also the hiring by the US Consulate, Peshawar, of two virtual interns based in Washington and London to assist the WPC in research and building international linkages. Another breakthrough is the enlisting of male members in the Caucus.

Women Parliamentary Caucus has still a long way to go as it struggles to focus and bring to attention the sad plight of women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Powerful legislation and continuous monitoring of the government functionaries is needed to ensure implementation of the laws. There has to be increased interaction with people at the grassroots level and with diverse groups with the objective of raising awareness and creating better understanding of the importance of involving women in all phases of development. Even more important is to remove the fears of women and support and guide them to assume leadership roles and work for their own development on which hinges the prosperity and welfare of the whole society. The agenda is heavy and the work difficult but the members of the Caucus are determined to leave their imprint by achieving some, if not all, of the goals agreed upon.

## 1. Meetings

### 1.1. Cabinet

WPC Cabinet Meeting on 27th Sep, 2016. The members reviewed the plans for the next quarter which includes a Workshop on Strategic Planning, and a meeting with the Inspector General, Police to review measures taken for protection of women. The new bill for Provincial Commission on the Status of Women was also reviewed and amendments were suggested and recorded.



## **1.2. General Body**

### **1.2.1 WPC 9th General Body meeting was held on July 27, 2016**

The first quarterly project report of WPC was shared with the members and also presented to the Honorable Speaker, delegation from the British Council, and MNA, Ms. Sajida Zulfiqar by the Chairperson of WPC.



- The WPC Calendar and approximate draft annual budget was shared with the members. The members were also given copies of the agreement signed by the Steering Committee with the British Council and, in consultation with them; a list of nominated members was drawn for the visit of Scotland and London Parliaments.
- WPC 10th General Body meeting was held on August 24, 2016 in which serious discussion took place and it was decided to table a resolution against the rising trend of violence against women.

The meeting also approved the WPC calendar. Finance Secretary presented WPC draft annual budget of Rupees ten million.

## **1.3. Public Sector Organizations**

Ms. Sajida Iftikhar MNA, Pakistan Tehreek Insaf, and member of the KP Women Chamber of Commerce visited the Assembly and held a long meeting with the Honorable Deputy Speaker, Chairperson and members



of WPC on Promotion of Women Entrepreneurs of the Province through the Chamber and various initiatives.

#### **1.4. Private Sector Organizations**

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed with Pak Women after several meetings. Under this agreement, Pak Women will strengthen WPC inside and outside the Assembly by organizing capacity developing programs, visits to the districts and setting up a Helpline in the Assembly



Omar Asghar Foundations: A meeting was held with Rashida Dohad, Executive Director, on implementation of Commission on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination. It was agreed that WPC would try to raise awareness about CEDAW and ensure its implementation by the various departments.

#### **1.5. International Agencies**

*US Consulate:*

*A significant development in this quarter was the appointment of two virtual interns to be based in Washington and London respectively and assist in linking the Caucus as well as updating its information on developments in the development world. The Caucus would like to thank Ms Kathryn Hoffman, Chief of Economic and political section in the US Consulate, Peshawar, for her interest in the Caucus and her quick action on one of our requests.*

#### **1.6. UN Agencies**

*UNDP Mission:* Ms. F. Ouch and Mr. Omer Awan held a meeting with the Chairperson on UNDP's Contribution to the Caucus. They were satisfied

with the physical infrastructure development as well as the multiple activities initiated to strengthen the Caucus in different ways.

*UNDP Bangkok Delegation:* Subaltern Paghosyan and Siren met the Chairperson in Islamabad to brainstorm what part the KP WPC can play in their strategy for Climate Change. Ideas generated were to be incorporated in their recommend story paper on the subject.

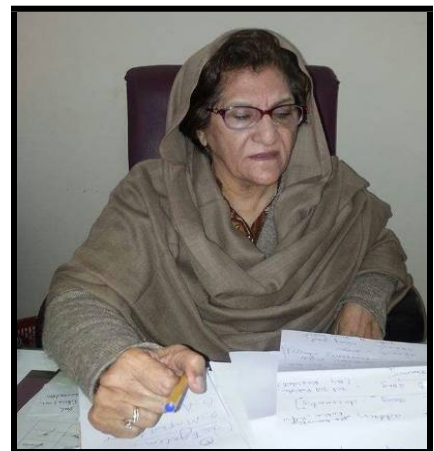
*Climate Change:* Knowledge sharing, Research, and Gender aspect

*UN Women:* A meeting was held on 1st of July 2016 with the Project Officer, Mr. Syed Wajid and Mr. Shahid Aziz to finalize the arrangements for the Inter-Parliamentary Dialogue between Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Afghanistan on Women in Displacement. Besides the Deputy Speaker and Minister for Mines and Labor, eight other members of the Caucus were invited to the Dialogue on Women's' situation in Displacement which was held on August 25, 2016. The two sides made recommendations for ensuring smooth repatriation with least hardships suffered by women and children. Participants also included representatives of public and private sectors.

## **2. Assembly Business**

### ***2.1. Bills Tabled***

Discussion among several stake holders was held to review the comments of Council of Islamic Ideology on the Domestic Violence Bill. Many of the comments were found to be on the ambiguity of the terms used such as "Emotional Violence". It was decided to redraft the bill in the light of the comments by the third week of October. MPA Rashida Riffat volunteered to do the drafting with the help of religious scholars and lawyers.



## ***2.2. Resolutions***

For the effective implementation of National Action Plan for improving the Security situation and eliminate terrorism, Uzma Khan's Resolution recommended controlling of all verbal and written material used by different groups which contributed to heightening of tensions among the religious groups.

“Meraj Hamayun Khan's Resolution condemning Honor Killing”

The rise in incidence of Honor killing was pointed out in the resolution and the Assembly and the Government was asked to take serious note and take firm action to stop this evil practice.

## ***2.3. Call Attention Notices***

Out of 14 CANs submitted by Najma Shaheen, Uzma Khan, Nighat Orakzai, Amna Sardar and Meraj Hamayun Khan 13 were admitted and 7 were put on the Assembly Agenda.

## ***2.4. Adjournment Motion***

Female MPAs especially Ms. Amna Sardar of Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) are actively involved in reforming the systems by addressing the weaknesses in the Assembly rules of business and procedures. They also propose wide ranging amendments in the bills that are tabled and confidently participate in debates on issues brought to the Assembly.

For the first time the Caucus also attempted to collect information on important issues using the Research Section of the Assembly library. Research Assistants were tasked to conduct:

1. A simple Building Audit of the offices of the Civil Secretariat to determine whether the physical environment there is conducive for attracting female candidates
2. Report on Women in Peshawar Jail, and
3. Compile a Booklet on Members of the WPC.

The Finance Secretary also submitted a rough draft of the Budget required for managing an effective Caucus. Discussion is ongoing about its incorporation into the regular Assembly budget. However, even without



any regular allocation for the Caucus, the Assembly secretariat provides all the basics needs like staff salaries, stationery, refreshments etc.

### 3. Events Organized/Attended

A two -day Training was organized by the Pakistan Institute of Parliamentary Studies on Leadership Excellence and Current Strategic Challenges for members of the Assembly

A two -day Training by UNDP on Leadership was organized for the WPC members



*PCSW/White Ribbon:* The Provincial Commission on the Status of Women in collaboration with White Ribbon organized a Dialogue on Domestic Violence Bill drafted by PCSW on which the Council of Islamic Ideology had raised some concerns. Chairperson of WPC and Deputy Speaker were among the panelists.

#### Exposure Visit to UK

*As part of the MOU signed by the Honorable Speaker with the British Council, Islamabad, two delegations comprising twelve members each visited UK to observe the parliamentary system and practices in use at Westminster, Isle of Man and the Scottish Parliament. The first delegation was a special visit organized for the Caucus while the second one included five female members of the Caucus. Funded by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, the visit was facilitated by officials of the British Council. Upon return, the delegations submitted their recommendations to the Honorable Speaker and the British Council for enhancing the effectiveness of the prevailing systems by introducing new ideas and practices.*

### *Districts News:*

MPA Rashida Riffat visited institutions run by Social Welfare Department in Peshawar and Nowshera and submitted a comprehensive report highlighting the weaknesses to the Chief Minister, Mr. Parvez Khattak and Senior Minister, Mr. Sikander Sherpao.

MPA Zareen Zia successfully brought two big schemes worth twenty one million rupees to district Lakki Marwat. Under one scheme is a high school for boys and the other one is for construction of a water channel.

## **4. Challenges**

The unconditional support from the Honorable Speaker and Deputy Speaker and the officials of the Assembly Secretariat is helping the Caucus to work efficiently, but the sustainability of the Caucus is still a big question. Until rules are amended and the Caucus is recognized as a legal body within the Assembly the fragility of the Caucus will continue in different ways.

The challenge also now is to effectively cope with the work undertaken by the Caucus. To overcome this difficulty, discussions are ongoing with the Assembly management to provide additional staff specifically legal drafting personnel and media specialist to the Caucus.

Another difficulty that interferes with performance of the Caucus is non-availability of reliable data on gender.



**” Funds have not been allocated for Women Parliamentary Caucus and all our expenses are met through the budget allocated for the provincial assembly**  
**WPC Chairperson Meraj Humayun**

## *Conclusion*

With maturing of the Caucus, the workload has doubled. Inside as well as outside the Assembly realization has set in that there is a forum for discussion on advancement of women. As a result more individuals and organizations have been requesting for time and meetings which have not been turned down even once. Similarly, the discussion among the members has also become more serious and academic and efforts are made by all to actively participate in the affairs of the Caucus.







