

Corruption and its Impact on Women in Pakistan

By: HINA HAFEEZULLAH ISHAQ
M.Sc. (App.Psy.); LL.B; LL.M. (London)
Advocate High Court

BACKGROUND

Corruption is not gender-specific. However, several international studies have postulated about the impact of corruption on women which is shown to be higher than that on men. It is increasingly being thought that corruption has gender-specific manifestations. The impact of corruption on women needs to be assessed on the basis of the social strata as well as how it affects women of different ages.

The aim of this paper is to address the impact of corruption on women and seeks to define ‘corruption’ in the context of international conventions, national law and what the word means to the average woman. It seeks to explain the various forms of corruption and how it manifests in the life of an average woman. Corruption is gradually being perceived as a violation of human rights by various international analysts, whether this holds true for the woman of Pakistan needs to be discussed and assessed.

Women are traditionally thought to be the ‘fairer sex’, but some suggest that this trend is changing. Women are thought to be affected by corruption more than men being vulnerable, having less access to resources, less education. Are women only victims in our society or can they be the perpetrators or beneficiaries of the fruits of corruption?

An analysis of the corruption laws currently in force in Pakistan should reveal whether the same are adequate or is there a need to revisit some or should there be new laws which can be implemented effectively. Is it possible to strengthen the existing structures to provide a shield to women to lessen their exposure to various forms of corruption or is it possible to reduce such corruption by stringent methods and transparent accountability in all spheres?

Another aspect of the paper is whether empowering of women through education and economic stability has an impact on how they perceive corruption and how they deal with it.

INTRODUCTION

Women’s Regional Network:

The Women’s Regional Network (WRN) is a new initiative, which recognizes the need of participation of women in any dialogue, whether on peace, stability, security or on economic and social development, as a means of increasing success of these efforts. Keeping this goal in mind, the WRN has initiated a plan which aims at raising awareness and promoting the efforts of women working for national and regional stability and economic, political and physical security in Afghanistan, Pakistan and India.

The political, cultural, and economic ties that have knit together-and often entangled – Afghanistan, Pakistan and India will continue into the future. Unfortunately, conditions are deteriorating in both Pakistan and Afghanistan, and tensions are escalating in all three countries. Contributing factors include the disastrous flooding in Pakistan; the influx of refugees and migration; the enhanced influence of the drug trade; increased terrorism, and the recent discovery of mineral riches, which amplifies existing corruption. As a result, this is a critical moment for the women of the region.

The reality is that migration, economic decline and war constitute a set of experiences that have a profoundly negative and potentially irreversible impact on women’s lives. Furthermore, the volatile atmosphere created by such conditions requires neutral and impartial spaces for dialogue.

By bringing together top women leaders from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India, the Women’s Regional Network hopes to assist in the formation of a collaborative regional network focusing on peace, security and accountability.

The focus of this effort is to forge enduring and productive relationships among women in South Asia; identify shared concerns and challenges; engage a network of global champions who support these women to meet their personal and organizational challenges with greater resiliency.

Defining Corruption:

The word “corruption” is derived from the Latin “*corruptus*” (spoiled) and “*corrumpere*” (to ruin; to break into pieces). There is no universally accepted comprehensive definition of corruption however it is generally defined as “the misuse of a public or private position for direct or indirect personal gain”.¹

Corruption has been classified as ‘grand corruption’ and ‘petty corruption’; Grand corruption is sometimes used synonymously with political corruption, referring to corruption involved in financing political parties and political campaigns. The latter also called administrative or bureaucratic corruption is the everyday corruption that takes place where bureaucrats meet the public directly. Petty corruption is also described as “survival” corruption (“corruption of need”): a form of corruption which is pursued by junior or mid-level agents who may be grossly underpaid and who depend on relatively small but illegal rents to feed and house their families and pay for their children’s education. Although petty corruption usually involves much smaller sums than those that change hands in acts of “grand” or political corruption, the amounts are not “petty” for the individuals adversely affected. Petty corruption disproportionately hurts the poorest members of society, who may experience requests for bribes regularly in their encounters with public administration and services like hospitals, schools, local licensing authorities, police, taxing authorities and so on.²

Corruption has been classified by type into political, corporate and institutionalized forms. Political corruption involves lawmakers (monarchs, dictators, legislators) acting in their role as creators of the rules and standards by which a polity operates. Such officials seek bribe or funds for their political and personal benefit and provide favours to their supporters at the expense of broader public benefits³.

¹ United Nations Handbook on Practical Anti-Corruption Measures for Prosecutors and Investigators

² Anti-Corruption Resource Centre, Glossary <http://www.u4.no/glossary/>

³ On political corruption see the comprehensive work of Heidenheimer et al., 2002 as cited in Corruption and Human Rights: Making the Connection, Transparency International

Administrative corruption includes the use of bribery and favouritism to lower taxes, escape regulations and win low-level procurement contracts⁴. Corporate corruption occurs between private businesses and suppliers or private service providers. It also involves illegal behaviour by corporate officials for private monetary gain⁵. Institutionalised corruption names the behaviour of those who exploit institutional positions to influence institutional processes and actions, such as law enforcement personnel and members of the judiciary; operational corruption, narrower, describes specific activities and goals.⁶

The United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) was adopted in 2003 and is the first legally binding international document which sets out a number of anti-corruption measures. Although the UNCAC does not define corruption per se but instead gives a comprehensive list of what are considered core “corrupt acts”.⁷

Bribery: is defined as the promise, made in the course of economic, financial or commercial activities, offering or giving, and/or solicitation or acceptance directly or indirectly, of an undue advantage to any person: (a) who directs or works, in any capacity, for a private sector entity, for the person himself or herself or for another person, in order that he or she, in breach of his or her duties, act or refrain from acting; (b) for a national public official himself or herself or another person or entity, in order that the official act or refrain from acting in the exercise of his or her official duties; and (c) for a foreign public official or an official of a public international organization, in order that the official act or refrain from acting in the exercise of his or her official duties, in order to obtain or retain business or other undue advantage in relation to the conduct of international business.

Embezzlement: by a person, in the course of economic, financial or commercial activities, who directs or works, in any capacity, in a private sector entity of any property, private funds or securities or any other thing of value entrusted to him or her by virtue of his or her position.

Trading in Influence: is the promise, offering or giving and/or solicitation or acceptance, to/by a public official or any other person, directly or indirectly, of an undue advantage in order that the public official or the person abuse his or her real or supposed influence with a view to obtaining from an administration or public authority of the State Party an undue advantage for the original instigator of the act or for any other person;

Abuse of functions or position: is the performance of or failure to perform an act, in violation of laws, by a public official in the discharge of his or her functions, for the purpose of obtaining an undue advantage for himself or herself or for another person or entity.

Illicit Enrichment: is a significant increase in the assets of a public official that he or she cannot reasonably explain in relation to his or her lawful income.

Laundering of Proceeds of Crime: the conversion or transfer of property, knowing that such property is the proceeds of crime, for the purpose of concealing or disguising the illicit origin of the property or of helping any person who is involved in the commission of the predicate offence to evade the legal consequences of his or her action and includes acquisition and possession of such property.

Womens Rights Network and Corruption:

Due to the deteriorating conditions in Pakistan and Afghanistan tensions have escalated in both countries and India. There are many contributing factors such as the geo-political interests of the global armaments which facilitate rampant militarization, escalating defence expenditures and declining socio-economic funds. The influence of the drug and illegal arms trade has expanded.

⁴ Johnston, 2005; see also note 14, p. 11 as cited in Corruption and Human Rights: Making the Connection, Transparency International

⁵ Clinard and Yeager, 2005; Almond and Syfert, 1997, pp. 389-447 as cited in Corruption and Human Rights: Making the Connection, Transparency International

⁶ Bassiouni and Vetere, 1999, p. 891 as cited in Corruption and Human Rights: Making the Connection, Transparency International

⁷ United Nations Convention against Corruption

Extremisms in all its forms and the politicization of the regions have an adverse impact on women's basic rights. The recent discovery of mineral riches results in predatory exploitation and has exacerbated the nexus between state and global interests, which amplifies existing corruption, making it a critical moment for the women of the region.

The Impact of Corruption and Its Related Practices on Women:

Corruption is gender-neutral. However, in the recent years there is a growing body of evidence which suggests that women being more vulnerable than men are more susceptible to and disproportionately affected by the effects of corruption and corrupt acts. The other side of this argument focuses on whether women are more or less corruptible than men. A recent shift in paradigm has equated corruption as akin to a violation of human rights.

Most modern day international conventions and agreements do not refer to human rights and corruption simultaneously in the same document despite the fact that commitments made by State parties in upholding the former and combating the latter run parallel to each other.⁸

A report published by Transparency International links corruption with specific human rights. The report holds that not acts of corruption violate human rights directly but lays out instances when such rights might be violated. It holds that corruption may violate the principles of equality and non-discrimination with regard to human rights as corrupt practices commonly produce unequal and discriminatory outcomes by affording one person privileged treatment over another as a result. Corruption has the potential of violating the rights to a fair trial and to an effective remedy, the rights of political participation, economic, social and cultural rights, the right to food, the right to adequate housing, the right to health, the right to education, the right to water and embezzlement of funds allocated to social programmes lead to a violation of human rights.⁹

The report maintains that men and women are affected by corruption differently which strengthens and promotes the existing gender based inequalities. Women are excluded from the decision making organizations and bodies because of their inaccessibility in political and economic arena, or the corridors of power. Women lack strength to challenge corruption or 'clientelism' in male dominated and administered institutions. Discriminatory laws remain in effect because of corruption in legislative and executive branches and any attempt by a woman to access justice may be affected due to lack of resources which may further be compounded by the necessity to pay bribes in order to seek redress. The representation of women through their male family members may work both ways. Women are exploited and trafficked with the active connivance of the police, border officials and members of the judiciary. It is asserted that as compared to men fewer women have access to education, acquisition of land and other productive assets. Employed women frequently receive lower salaries but mostly women have to stay at home to take care of children and the elderly. These factors lead to an over-representation of women in the poorest social strata of a society as well as under-representation in decision making bodies. Women are adversely and disproportionately affected by corruption. In the public sector resources are diverted from programs which aim at alleviating poverty and from basic services thus directly harming women and vulnerable dependants. Since women are more dependent on public services they are affected more by any form of corruption. Women when faced with offering bribes, which they can ill-afford in order to access basic services, including health, are affected disproportionately as bribes add to the cost of basic public services.¹⁰

Women in Conflict Situations and Natural Calamities :

Pakistan being the frontline State on the war against terror has a sizeable refugee population. There is a significant humanitarian crises in Pakistan because of the armed conflict and natural disasters, which

⁸ See, for example, TI policy paper No. 1/2007 as cited in Corruption and Human Rights: Making the Connection, Transparency International

⁹ Corruption and Human Rights: Making the Connection, Transparency International

¹⁰ Corruption and Human Rights: Making the Connection, Transparency International

include the massive earthquake of 2005 and disastrous floods in the recent years. The worst affected by these situations are women and girls. Sometimes the refugee women may be illegal immigrants, without proper identification, which makes seeking legal help and protection difficult.

During such enduring times mortality rates in pregnancy and sexual violence increase and basic services like reproductive health become unavailable. Access to prenatal care, assisted delivery and emergency obstetric care vanishes. HIV infection and sexual exploitation affects the vulnerable groups including women. Due to lack of family planning facilities and services unwanted pregnancies in dangerous situations exposes women to further risks. UNFPA reports that women and children account for more than 75 per cent of the refugees and displaced persons at risk from war, famine, persecution and natural disaster. Women of reproductive age comprise a quarter of the at-risk population. One in five is likely to be pregnant. Many women forced to flee were already poor or otherwise vulnerable in the first place. Away from their partners and their communities, alone with their children, their vulnerability to sexual exploitation and violence is even higher. Vulnerability to natural disasters is increasing, exacerbated by poverty and environmental destruction. At least 90 per cent of the victims of natural disasters live in developing countries¹¹

Political Sector:

Under representation of women in the parliaments impacts them in policy making. The lack of access to resources to lead an election campaign, the exclusion of women from a male-dominated arena which decides who receives a ticket, the low turnout of women during voting due to social pressures, in violation of applicable laws all negatively impact women. In a system where political representation is based on buying and selling, on trading in influence, illegal gratification, tendering of gifts and other corrupt practices women are at an immense disadvantage. Women are also affected by embezzlement of funds meant for developmental projects and economic uplift by the political players.

Public Sector Procurement:

“Bureaucrats are public servants and bureaucracies are meant to serve the public. But as soon as a bureaucracy is established it tends to become independent and comes to regard the public as its enemy. Unfortunately most third world governments are plagued with this menace. The more the independence that it gains the less answerable is it to the public and the more corrupt does it become.” Since public sector procurement takes place in a highly select and exclusive domain to which women have virtually no access, in addition to hurdles in obtaining licenses and permits to bid for such contracts, they are rarely contenders for such contracts.¹²

Transnational Business Transactions:

Many cases of corruption reported in emerging economies involved corporations from the first world. Transnational corruption, for example, is particularly rife in the arms trade. The ways of concealing foreign bribes are numerous. One often hears of companies effectively setting up bribery funds to buy favours from the governments of developing countries.¹³ Pakistan has an escalating terrorism and illicit arms which have contributed to victimization of women and children.

Corruption in Development Aid:

Aid rarely reaches the poor and is rarely cost-effective. Despite assertions by well-paid foreign-aid lobbyists, unconditional foreign aid has failed. ‘Entrenched corruption occurs in countries with poorly protected private property rights, over-regulated markets, and a poor rule of law. In addition, two other factors contribute to the rising tide in bribe-taking: oil and gas wealth; and Western military

¹¹ Promoting Gender Equality, Protecting Women in Emergency Situations <http://www.unfpa.org/gender/emergency.htm>

¹² Masum Momaya, Women with Disabilities: How does corruption impact women?

¹³ <http://www.iss.co.za/Pubs/Monographs/No40/CorruptionDevelopment.html>

intervention in Afghanistan, East Timor and Iraq resulting in highly corrupt regimes -and with it many angry young men and hence political instability.¹⁴

Corruption, Exploitation and Land Acquisition:

Women's unequal access to productive assets exacerbates corruption and exploitation due to their vulnerability and lack of economic and social independence. Due to unequal access to land and cash crops and denial of inheritance rights, women are placed at a disadvantage, their access to critical resources being mediated by relationships with men, which places female-headed households at an even greater disadvantage. Asset ownership and access to land also have a bearing on people's vulnerability to disasters and risk.¹⁵

Pakistan and Its Commitments:

The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan 1973:

The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan 1973 grants basic fundamental rights to every citizen of the country which are enforceable through the courts. Article 25 guarantees equality to all citizens irrespective of gender; it states that all citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law and there shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex. It empowers the State to make any special provision for the protection of women and children. Article 25-A grants every child aged 5-16 years has the right to State funded free and compulsory education. Article 16 protects all citizens against discrimination in respect of access to places of public entertainment or resort not intended for religious purposes only, on the ground only of race, religion, caste, sex, residence or place of birth. Article 27 states that every citizen who is otherwise qualified for appointment in the service of Pakistan shall not be discriminated against in respect of any such appointment on the ground only of race, religion, caste, sex, residence or place of birth. The Constitution of Pakistan, in addition to fundamental rights which safeguard the freedoms of the citizens also has Principle of Policy enshrined in it. It requires the State to promote social justice and to eradicate social evils, which include: promoting with special care, the educational and economic interests of backward classes or areas; removing illiteracy and providing free and compulsory secondary education within minimum possible period; making technical and professional education generally available and higher education equally accessible to all on the basis of merit; ensuring inexpensive and expeditious justice; provision for securing just and humane conditions of work, ensuring that children and women are not employed in vocations unsuited to their age or sex, and for maternity benefits for women in employment; Article 38 states that in order to promote the social and economic well-being of the people, the State shall, among others: secure the well-being of the people, irrespective of sex, caste, creed or race, by raising their standard of living, by preventing the concentration of wealth and means of production and distribution in the hands of a few to the detriment of general interest and by ensuring equitable adjustment of rights between employers and employees, and landlords and tenants; provide for all citizens, within the available resources of the country, facilities for work and adequate livelihood with reasonable rest and leisure; provide for all persons employed in the service of Pakistan or otherwise, social security by compulsory social insurance or other means; provide basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, housing, education and medical relief, for all such citizens, irrespective of sex, caste, creed or race, as are permanently or temporarily unable to earn their livelihood on account of infirmity, sickness or unemployment; reduce disparity in the income and earnings of individuals, including persons in the various classes of the service of Pakistan.¹⁶

¹⁴ Wolfgang Kasper, Make Poverty History: Tackle Corruption as cited on

<http://policynetwork.net/development/media/foreign-aid-funds-corruption-new-study-reveals>

¹⁵ <http://www.unccd.int/en/programmes/Thematic-Priorities/gender/Pages/Access-to-productive-assets.aspx>

¹⁶ The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan 1973

Pakistan Penal Code: Laws to Protect Women:

Pakistan in addition to constitutional safeguards has endeavoured to protect women by promulgating laws and to criminalize offences which exploit women through abduction, trafficking, prostitution, slavery, acid and burn attacks, honour killings, forced marriages, deprivation of inheritance rights and evil customs in which women are exchanged in order to settle criminal and civil disputes. Certain sections of the controversial Hudood Ordinance have been repealed and changes have been made to the procedural law; the offence of rape, punishable with death or life imprisonment and a minimum mandatory sentence of 10 years is back on the Pakistan Penal Code by virtue of sections 375 and 376. Section 509 of the PPC has been amended to include sexual harassment as an offence in addition to promulgation of Harassment against Women at Workplace Act 2010. The PPC also provides protection to women against forced abortion and offences arising out of marital issues.

Pakistan: Anti-Corruption Laws:

Pakistan has a number of anti-corruption laws and provisions included in the Penal Code, a few of these are re-produced below. In Pakistan the problem lies not with the lack of laws which address the menace of corruption but rather with the fair implementation of the same. Pakistan has anti-corruption agencies at both the federal and provincial levels which include the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and Anti-Corruption Establishments (ACE) yet it is one of the most corruption prone country.

Pakistan and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

Pakistan ratified the CEDAW in 1996 thus committing to undertake a series of measures to end discrimination against women in all forms, including: to incorporate the principle of equality of men and women in their legal system, abolish all discriminatory laws and adopt appropriate ones prohibiting discrimination against women; to establish tribunals and other public institutions to ensure the effective protection of women against discrimination; and to ensure elimination of all acts of discrimination against women by persons, organizations or enterprises. Pakistan is striving to honour its international commitments and has officially taken the stance of promoting equality and empowerment of women.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000)

Resolution 1325 (2000)¹⁷ on women and peace and security was adopted by the Security Council on 31 October 2000. The resolution reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. Resolution 1325 urges all actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in all United Nations peace and security efforts. It also calls on all parties to conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, in situations of armed conflict. The resolution provides a number of important operational mandates, with implications for Member States and the entities of the United Nations system.¹⁸ Pakistan has been actively involved with NATO and has aimed at improving dialogue with other members and as a result of this cooperation information-sharing of common security concerns and interests saw a dynamic increase. Delegations of Pakistan's women officers also visited NATO

¹⁷ United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) text available at http://www.un.org/events/res_1325e.pdf

¹⁸ <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/>

Headquarters in context of the UNSCR 1325 which has supported Pakistani women to play a vibrant and active role in the armed and civil forces as well as across the society.¹⁹

Mechanisms to Address Corruption Affecting Women in Pakistan

Protection and Enforcement of Fundamental Rights: The constitution of Pakistan guarantees numerous fundamental rights to its citizens, as enumerated earlier, which includes equality in all spheres to women. Education is the key to an empowered woman; through education comes the realization and enforcement of one's rights. Awareness of one's rights creates the will to protect them and to strive for a better quality of life with access to justice. By enforcement of fundamental rights come equality and a fairer system where the incidence of corruption is lower since the chances to exploit citizens due their unequal access to basic rights has been curtailed. This can only be achieved by changing the mind-set of the society, which perceives corrupt practices as a way to achieving its rights; an independent, fair and corruption-free judiciary is the cornerstone of this exercise. The rampant corruption in the lower judiciary needs to be weeded out so that speedy justice and equal rights can be guaranteed and provided at the grass root level. Protection against gender-based violence discrimination and harassment which hinder women's active participation needs to be implemented on an urgent basis.

Role in Decision Making: An enhanced vibrant and active role of women in decision making at all levels and spheres of life is another aspect of combating corruption. The inequality of genders in the society gives rise to lop-sided decisions and policies. Since women are not represented in most key issues the resulting policies do not take into account the effects on women. Though Pakistan had women parliamentarians they are under-represented and such subject to harassment and inequality themselves; greater number of women parliamentarians will ensure a balance, however since the mechanism of political parties is not above board and seats/tickets allocated to contest elections are based on personal connections and social standing, the representation of women from the poor segment of the society, which is most affected by corruption is virtually non-existent. Unless and until women from the lower segments of the society are given an active role in decision making the issues which breed corruption cannot be addressed effectively.

Economic Independence: As pointed out, corruption and corrupt practices affect public and private resources. Pakistan has promulgated laws to protect women and their inheritance rights. Land acquisition is a basic fundamental right and strengthens the economic independence of women. The access to credit facilities with interest free loans, promotion of female entrepreneurs, provision of day-cares and elderly care to encourage women to participate effectively in the workforce, salaries at par with male employees, increased representation of women in all segments and professions, effective implementation of anti-corruption and accountability laws against perpetrators who block women's access to resources such as clean water, energy, health, education, necessary licenses and permits for business is the key to combating corruption. The World Bank has initiated various projects which aim at poverty alleviation in Pakistan. The target population for the project is poor rural and urban communities, with specific emphasis being placed on gender and empowerment of women. Benefits accrue directly to the vulnerable through income generation, improved physical and social infrastructure, and training and skill development support. Women and girls in particular have benefited, since they bear a higher share of the burden of poverty because of fewer economic opportunities and lower endowment of land and other income-generating assets.²⁰

¹⁹ http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-483ED6A8-159D9975/natolive/news_70676.htm?selectedLocale=en

²⁰ <http://www.worldbank.org.pk/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/SOUTHASIAEXT/PAKISTANEXTN/0,,print:Y~isCURL:Y~contentMDK:20170390~pagePK:1497618~piPK:217854~theSitePK:293052,00.html>

By providing women with land ownership which grants them access to credit and extension and technological services, female headed households will be placed on an equal footing with and become key players in agricultural and pastoral groups, with adequate food security including cash crops and less exposed to corruption and exploitation.

Transparency in Public Procurement: Rules and Conditions of Procurement should be based on open, competitive tendering with pre-disclosed evaluation criteria for selection and award and citizen monitoring thus providing transparency to procedures and necessary Checks and Balances which are powerful deterrents to bribery.²¹

Transnational Business Transactions: It is imperative that from the public policy perspective, measures be identified and developed to minimise the negative impacts of companies operating in conflict-prone zones; and to maximise companies' contribution to peace building. Foreign companies should be encouraged to increase investment in the local community in a way that does not reinforce tensions or otherwise contribute to conflict, and that maximises developmental and peace building goals by contributing resources to provide public services that are not supplied by the local or national government, since the company is often the only effective alternative source. Investment in the local community means increased engagement between the company and the local community, with the company improving the transparency of its operations by providing more information about local activity and consulting regularly with the community.²²

Corruption in Developmental Aid: It has been suggested that there is hope for reducing corruption by confining overseas aid to emergencies such as Asia's tsunami in 2004 and Pakistan's earthquake in 2005 and to tie all aid to stringent conditions of corruption control.²³

Women and Corruption: Some studies have cited statistical evidence which suggests that countries which have a higher number of women in politics and workforce had lower levels of corruption. Cross country data showed that women were less involved in bribery, and were less likely to condone bribe taking. This finding promotes the notion that developed countries which have liberal democracies and consequently a higher number of women in parliament and employment have lower levels of corruption when compared to developing nations where democratic process, hence involvement of women is not that high. This has led researchers to suggest or postulate that there is a possibility of women playing a crucial role in fighting corruption.²⁴ This view has been challenged in a number of studies; Anne Marie Goetz argues that women's incorruptibility is a myth which is grounded in essentialist notions of women's higher moral nature and an assumed propensity to bring this to bear on public life and particularly on the conduct of politics. She suggests that such findings are based on perceptions and the fact whether women are more or less corruptible is based on the gendered nature of access to politics and public life which shapes opportunities for corruption rather than on morality. Goetz also stresses that both genders experience corruption differently.²⁵ Findings of an experiment by Rivas suggests that since women are more relationship oriented than men, may have higher ethical standards of behaviour and may be concerned with common good, willing to sacrifice private profit, which is important for political life. The results suggested that since

²¹ <http://www.transparency.org.pk/documents/TIPakPaper.pdf>

²² Transnational Corporations in Conflict Prone Zones: public policy responses and a framework for action http://www.conflictsensitivity.org/sites/default/files/Transnational_Corporations_Conflict_Prone.pdf

²³ Wolfgang Kasper, Make Poverty History: Tackle Corruption as cited on <http://policynetwork.net/development/media/foreign-aid-funds-corruption-new-study-reveals>

²⁴ Swamy, Knack, Lee and Azfar, Gender and Corruption, World Bank 2000

²⁵ Anne Marie Goetz, Political Cleaners: Women as the New Anti-Corruption Force?

women are less corrupt than men, increasing their participation in the labour force and politics may help in reducing corruption.²⁶

Accountability and Corruption: A report published by UN Women states that a lack of accountability for action in politics, public services, markets, justice systems, and aid and security directly affects the realization of gender equality and frustrates progress towards Millennium Development Goals. The report concludes that for many women progress has been far too slow and that gender-sensitive accountability systems are required to ensure power holders match commitments with resources and action. It argues that two elements are essential if accountability systems are to work for women. Firstly, women must be full participants in public debates and power delegation processes and secondly, power holders must be required to answer for their performance in advancing women's rights.²⁷

Government of Pakistan's Proposed Strategy

The Economic Growth Framework prepared by the Planning Commission lays emphasis on productivity led growth through community and youth development. Proactive role of the private sector is recognized while the Government would be more of a facilitator to protect rights, provision of public services, such as education, health and protection against exploitative practices. It also acts as a catalyst to promote innovation, entrepreneurship and skill development for empowerment of women. Women being potential resource for development require key policy and strategy changes for their optimal involvement in the development process. As women's concerns are cross-cutting in nature following two clear policy directions have been chalked out that will integrate gender issues systematically across other sectors. Rights-based framework where women are seen as citizens who require affirmative action to ensure their equality and empowerment as effective human capital: Overall development programs should expand women's economic opportunities, ensure health accessibility and effective improvement in women specific health indicators, and assuring education, security and rights. Based on the above policy directions, main elements of the women empowerment strategy are presented as under:

- Power and decision-making within the private and public sector
- Governance and institutional mechanisms
- Women's legal rights and entitlements
- Economy, poverty and livelihoods
- Women, security and violence²⁸

Future Possible Challenges

Pakistan is the world's sixth most populous country with an estimated population of over 187 million. It suffers from a number of social, political, and economic problems not the least of which is terrorism and unwanted population growth. It is projected that by 2050 Pakistan would be the third most populated country in the world. Pakistan is burdened with endemic corruption, political turmoil and huge cycle of debt, hindering its progress.

While efforts are being made to empower women on a national level, in collaboration with international donor agencies, local and foreign organisations, civil society and the judiciary playing a vibrant role to enforce human rights and stem corruption through various landmark judgements, full realization of the goal of making Pakistan a corruption-free society is a long way off. The government

²⁶ Maria Fernanda Rivas, An Experiment on Corruption and Gender

²⁷ United Nations Women, Who Answers to Women? Gender and Accountability

²⁸ http://www.pc.gov.pk/annual%20plans/2011-12/chapter-17_women_empowerment.pdf

has made no effort to control the rampant and virtually endemic corruption and has unfortunately contributed manifold to its increase making Pakistan one of the most corrupt countries.²⁹

In a society where women face many challenges on account of their social standing, economic dependence, gender based violence, lack of freedom of movement and access to public places, limited access to education, justice, political equality and limited role in decision making, the benefits of all the laws and developmental agendas and policies cannot be realized fully. The Annual Plan 2010-2011 states that in addition to the obstacles to women's empowerment emanating from systematic economic and social marginalization, women of Pakistan, in addition, in the recent past have been subjected to the threat of extremism, militancy and obscurantism through a surge in socio-political conservatism. The major challenges for women development and empowerment are: Discriminatory laws, parallel legal system and ruling of Jirgas, Panchayats impede realization of equal citizenship to women; Neglect of human security due to state centric approach to security; Religious extremism and potential violence against women due to patriarchal understanding of religion and culture in conflict areas; Non-recognition of women work in rural areas and informal sector in GDP; Lack of access to resources, basic facilities and entitlements: economic, social and political; Ineffective representation of women's issues and concerns in policy formulation and implementation process; Exclusionary attitude of state machineries and governance mechanism; Exclusion of gender consciousness in hard sectors; Dimensions of gender gap in education; Inadequate health and reproductive outcomes for women.³⁰

Pakistan is making an effort to empower women by mainstreaming gender at all levels of governance structure through institutional, policy and political reforms, by extending micro-credit facility, by providing skill training, by working on family protection, rehabilitation and crises centres, health care, mobility support and awareness raising.

Even before Pakistan ratified various international commitments, it had constitutional safeguards in place which extend protection to women in respect of fundamental rights. The constitution also allows the State to promulgate specific laws relating to women and children. But the essence of all the laws lies in their speedy and effective implementation to limit the possibility of women being affected by corruption and corrupt practices. Given the rampant and endemic corruption in governance and lower judiciary this is indeed a challenge.

Pakistan is faced with the challenge of mainstreaming gender at all levels of governance structures. Massive reforms in institutional restructuring, policies and fiscal arenas, women employment in public sector and women's political participation is the need of the day and future.

Food and Energy crisis has grown into gigantic proportions with poor and corrupt governance which has promoted enrichment of a few to the detriment of its people. Unequal access to food and a failure to control the perpetually soaring prices of essential items and necessities of life has driven many far below the poverty line and has created social unrest and a massive increase in crime. It is estimated that 50 percent of the population was spending their 65-75 percent of income on food at the cost other social expenditures such as shelter and education and health. Food insecurity causes women, children and elderly to suffer as the available food is diverted towards the males in order to keep them healthy for employment. Though Pakistan produces enough food, inadequate storage leads to massive wastage; natural disasters have also placed a burden on Pakistan's food reserves. If better management of these essential resources is not forthcoming a serious shortage, vis a vis supply and demand, is going to impact women as a vulnerable group, exposed to corrupt practices including bribes, which

²⁹ Corruption Perception Index 2011, TPI, <http://cpi.transparency.org/cpi2011/results/>

³⁰ http://www.pc.gov.pk/annual%20plans/2011-12/chapter-17_women_empowerment.pdf

they can ill afford, in order to procure essential every day necessities for their dependants resulting in less available cash for other basic needs such as health, education and savings.

Half of Pakistan's population are women and given the security situation they are the worst affected along with children. It is imperative that women be assigned an active role in dialogue on restoring peace, stability and reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts in the conflict and disaster stricken areas. Sincere efforts to control the drug and arms trade, trafficking and transparency in governance and judicial dispensation are needed. Exploitation through gender based violence and economic and social deprivation should be remedied.

WRN's Strengths versus Opportunities

The Women's Regional Network is in a position to connect communities of women leaders in Afghanistan, Pakistan and India to learn from each other and construct common agendas across borders on the inter-linkages between security and extremisms, corruption and militarization of aid and development as they impact women's lives. By focusing its activities on strengthening of democratic values the network can ensure women's political and economic participation as non-negotiable in the struggle towards peace and justice.

Women's regional Network by playing a facilitative role in assisting communities of women to share their successes, promotes learning from each other's challenges, constructs common agendas across borders, and identifies and pursues ways to collaborate and advances common goals and values to bring peace, stability, justice and economic growth to the region.

As conditions deteriorate and tensions escalate in Pakistan, India and Afghanistan, further challenges appear on the field. Contributing factors such as disastrous flooding, the influx of refugees and migration, the enhance influence of the drug trade, increased terrorism and recent discovery of mineral riches, has amplified existing corruption which requires that the women of the region join and act together at this critical moment.

Migration, economic decline and war constitute a set of experiences that have a profound negative and potentially irreversible impact on women's lives. The volatile atmosphere created by such conditions requires neutral and impartial spaces for dialogue among women from the region and beyond. WRN plans to identify and support working partnerships of women in this region to decide the key issues they have in common; share and discuss challenges they face, learn from each other's success and determine appropriate research and supporting documents needed to design a common agenda. By collaborating with global women of influence, creating a secretariat and exploring the usefulness of a permanent structure after the Network, WRN is making an effort to help further regional partnerships and to aid them in ensuring that women's role and influence is embodied in future developments of their political and civil institutions.

International attention and support for women of the region is a long-term process. This is one more step in helping to empower and give greater voice to the women in Afghanistan, Pakistan and India in their work to improve the stability of their countries with improved quality of life for their citizens.

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