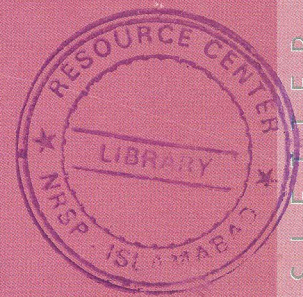


## HRD COMMUNIQUÉ

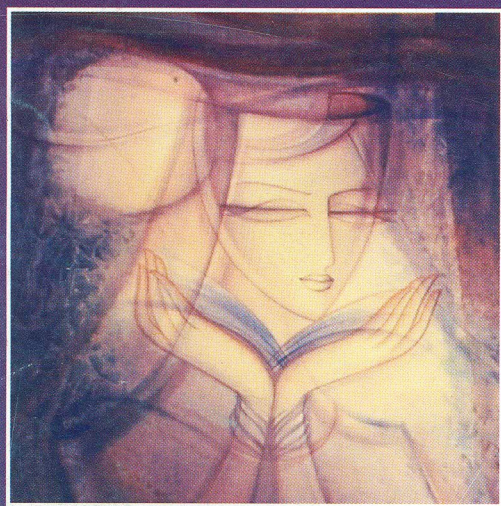


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## Women - At the Helm



"Woman" by Hajra Mansoor, Courtesy Nomad Center & Art Gallery  
"Art is being used as a tool for social change for identity development, economic empowerment and skill enhancement of women." Nageen Hyat-Director

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## Acknowledgments:

Dr. Rashid Bajwa, Agha Ali Javadi, Roomi S. Hayat

Editor: Hadia Nusrat  
Design: AsAd ilaZ AwAn

## Editor's Note

Dear Readers,

The past few years have witnessed an unprecedented rise of women in economic, political and social spheres. Amid a series of administrative, legal and political reforms undertaken since 1999, women are taking up new roles and responsibilities, proving their mettle as professionals, entrepreneurs, politicians, artists and scientists. Whether it is the first female governor of the State Bank of Pakistan or the first ever batch of women pilots to have enrolled to serve the Pakistan Air Force, Pakistani women are establishing that they are capable of taking on positions that were earlier considered the domain of men.

While increasingly women are now visible in public arena as part of public and private organisations, more than 20,000 women sit in local level elected institutions and around 500 women leaders are performing the most important legislative functions of the state as part of the parliament and the provincial assemblies thus making their mark in political echelons.

This march forward by women is significant in a society where gender continues to be one of the organising principles of society. Many women who now become the face of the country

hail from backgrounds where patriarchal values are deeply ingrained and local traditions and culture predetermine the social value of gender. According to a situation analysis published by the Asian Development Bank in 2000: "An artificial divide between production and reproduction, created by the ideology of sexual division of labour has placed women in reproductive roles as mothers and wives in the private space of the home and men in a productive role as breadwinners in the public arena. This has led to a low level of resource investment in women by the family and the State. Thus, low investment in women's human capital, compounded by the ideology of purdah (literally "veiled"), negative social biases, and cultural practices; the concept of honor linked with women's sexuality; restrictions on women's mobility; and the internalization of patriarchy by women themselves, becomes, the basis for gender discrimination and disparities in all spheres of life."

This issue of the HRD Communiqué is dedicated to the women who have sailed into un-chartered waters and are a source of inspiration for the many women awakening to the tune of empowerment. We hope that you will enjoy this issue and we welcome your comments and feedback to improve the content and style of our publication.

# Status of Women in Pakistan

Women have been subject to differential treatment since time immemorial. Socially they have been restricted to various norms, culturally they have been marked as the bearers of tradition and honor, economically societies moved from matriarchal to patriarchal structures taking away economic independence as well as security from their lives. Politically it is only now at the brink of 2007 that we see the first elected woman president in institutions like Harvard, which has been established for more than 300 years in democratic nations like the United States of America!

The most important aspect in assessing any woman's well-being is to ascertain her social well-being, which is measured in the form of tangible indicators such as health, education, fertility and mortality indicators. As far as health is concerned we find that the government sponsored Lady Health Visitors (LHVs) and Lady Health Workers (LHWs) are plying their way in increasing numbers to bridge the gap between trained health providers and women obstetric complications. This would have impact on Pakistan's abysmal maternal mortality rate, second highest in the region.

However, this massive mobilization of health care providers clings close to urban centers and largely ignores the needs of the scattered population across Pakistan.

The nation has also seen a constant increase in female to male ratio in medical (2710:2434) and dental (348:249)

The rigours of early childbirth and its health repercussions are now on a decline, ensuring that women are able to live a life with better health and greater control over their bodies and being.

professions. Nevertheless this hasn't translated into overcoming the missing female doctors at the many unattended

The entrenched patriarchal influences have raised the stakes for rural women, as they have no means of gaining awareness; they belong to the poorest class, they are the most insecure and vulnerable of beings and have minimal access to education.

Basic Health Units in rural areas of Pakistan. Awareness with regard to use of contraceptive methods and family planning has increased in all provinces yielding an awareness level of at least one contraceptive method to 94.1% of population in Pakistan (2003). With

SOCIAL INDICATORS		Female	Male
2004	Doctors	2710	2434
	Dentists	348	249
2003	Mean Age at Marriage (in Years)	22.3	26.4
1998	Literacy Rates (%age)		
	Urban	55.20	70
	Rural	20.10	46.40
2003 - 2004	Primary Schools	43245	73783

awareness comes implementation that has automatically lead to increased use of family planning methods. These are indicators that show that women are slowly but surely on a positive path to improvement.

The statistics of 1998 reveal higher figures for married women (urban and rural) as compared to those of men (urban and rural). Studies also show that the mean age of females at marriage has increased from an average of 16.7 to 22.3 years while that of men has increased from 23.3 to 26.4 since 1961 to 2003. This is a clear indication that the rigours of early childbirth and its health repercussions are now on a decline, ensuring that women are able to live a life with better health and greater control over their bodies and being.

rural woman (20.1%) yielding a gap of 50% [1998]. This shows that women; rural or urban are both still worse off than men. The entrenched patriarchal influences have raised the stakes for rural women, as they have no means of gaining awareness; they belong to the poorest class, they are the most insecure and vulnerable of beings and have minimal access to education. If schools for girls are provided and attendance of female teachers is ensured, these women may be able to improve their conditions. Societal pressures, norms and traditional barriers all play pivotal roles in stopping these women from improving their lives and moving towards empowerment. A lack of girl schools is a problem (43245: 73783 female: male primary schools [2003-04]) - but it is not the only hindrance.

home ensuring that they hold the fort while their husbands earn and yet they remain

**The undoing of past errors as captured by the Women's Rights Protection Bill in 2007, is a step in the positive direction.**

largely unacknowledged.

The third most important aspect of well-being is the political inclusion of women and their right of inclusion in the writ-of-law and decision making. Women in Pakistan have been increasingly active in politics over the past decade. They have increased in the National Assembly from 0.9% to 21% [1990-2003]. Similarly in the Senate there has been an increase from 2% to 18% [1992-2003]. We also see to date an increase in female politicians, ministers and political party workers.

Over the years we may have shown a positive graph for these tangible indicators but the problems at the grass roots remain the same. The overall status of women in Pakistan requires concerted policy level intervention with support from media and a more progressive culture of change. The undoing of past errors as captured by the Women's Rights Protection Bill in 2007, is a step in the positive direction and a hope that more measures will allow women to explore and employ their true human potential.

*All statistical references are incited from: Compendium on Gender Statistics 2004.*

ECONOMIC & POLITICAL INDICATORS		Female	Male
2003 - 2004	CAR (%age)	11.2	48.7
	RAR (%age)	15.9	70.6
2003	National Assembly (%age)	21	79
	Senate (%age)	18	82

When it comes to literacy rates the urban: rural divide is clearly distinguishable. The urban woman (55.2%) is more educated than the rural man (46.4%), which is a difference of roughly 9% while the urban man (70%) is much more privileged than the

Second to social well-being is economic well-being, which is a determinant of extent of empowerment and improvement in women's status. The Crude Activity (Participation) Rate (CAR) is 'the percentage of persons in the labour force to the total population' (Compendium on Gender Statistics 2004). Refined Activity (Participation) Rate (RAR) is 'the percentage of persons in labour force to the population 10 years of age and above' (Compendium on Gender Statistics 2004). In light of these definitions we find CAR to be 11.2 : 48.7 (female %: male %) to a 30.4% CAR employed Pakistan [2003-2004]. On the other hand we have 15.9 : 70.6 (female %: male %) to a 43.7% RAR employed Pakistan [2003-2004]. This clearly shows that domestic work does not qualify for formal inclusion under employment despite being a full time job; these women work at their own

**They have increased in the National Assembly from 0.9% to 21% [1990-2003]. Similarly in the Senate there has been an increase from 2% to 18% [1992-2003].**