

## **Gender Quotas as an Instrument for Women's Empowerment in Legislatures**

**Mussarat Jabeen**

University of Lahore, Sargodha Campus, Sargodha

**Sajid Mahmood Awan**

Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad

Women empowerment is a multidimensional and emerging proposition that is frequently elaborated diversely. Gender parity and equality are important components for reducing the under-representation of women. Politics has always been taken as a masculine realm, excluding women's role from it. Since the ancient times, women have been marginalized in this male-occupied domain, who applied different tactics to keep them away from it. Observing these disparities, the United Nations made continuous efforts to improve the situation as it was not a political issue, but equally hurdling social and economic development. However, from 1975-1995, female representation increased only 0.7 percent, whereas a slight downward trend was observed in upper houses of the parliaments. Currently, more than 130 countries have introduced gender quotas in their national parliaments. Owing to the great expansion of gender quotas during the last fifteen years, quota policies caused huge electoral reforms in recent years. A visible shift occurred in those countries where women's representation was nominal. It seems that quotas' policies are instrument to ensure gender representation. However, the system is not free of flaws, as token women sometimes reduce its usefulness. The study is to explore the quota system in different countries, looking its effectiveness and contribution to women's empowerment and securing their position, maintaining political parity.

**Keywords:** Electoral system, gender quota, representation, disparity, politics and equality.

Elections are considered as the ladder for political empowerment of the masses in the modern state-system. They are instruments for generating awareness in the civil societies. The citizens feel satisfaction in becoming the part of the decision-making process, having the opportunity to influence the public policy. Ironically, women were never included in this process and remained under-representation despite making half of the population of the world. The decision-making remained male-dominated. Women had to make huge efforts to get access to political institutions as vote right and representation were conceived exclusively a masculine field. Men justified their position, claiming inferiority of women in physical and mental capabilities, which led them to oust this 'weaker gender' from politics (Pateman, 1988).

The history reveals that men perceived the politics as a legitimate area for their activity, having a greater knowledge of it and showing much interest and ambition for it. Other reason was their access and control of economic resources. In virtually, women were eligible to serve, but they were denied to enter in politics. They were rated as the second-class citizens with fewer rights. Above it, the ideological thinking and social norms aimed to demote the social status of women were also pursued and promoted in political thought and theory. This injustice and ignorance led women to launch the movements to get a share in politics.

French Revolution of 1789 brought a change in society, promoting the 'ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity' but women were not included in those segments, which reap the benefit of liberty as these values had nothing to do with women. Those women who equally worked for liberation and launched movements, protested against this injustice and demanded equal rights and share in politics without gender discrimination. During all this process, women campaigned for organization of political clusters. They made petitions and lobbied the authority for getting parity in politics (Scott, 1996).

The denunciation of women's role in politics and denying them participation in decision-making was against the spirit of democracy. Such practices generated resentment among women in developed countries due to higher levels of education and political awareness. In reaction, mass movements were launched with demand of political equality through the ballot. First time female suffrage was introduced in 1890. The legendary role of Olympe de Gouges contributed a lot to women's political rights. She even sacrificed her life for this purpose. She was a radical revolutionist and worked for the cause of liberty during French Revolutionary years. Her pamphlet titled *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen* (1761) was a testimony regarding equal citizenship and political representation for women. Her thinking was influenced by the theorists of the social contract who offered different suggestions and programmes for women's role. She was also inspired by the philosophers of natural justice. These thinkers wrote for women's legal existence in the sovereign states and their writings contributed in recognition of equal rights for women, particularly vote-right, attributing it a mechanism for inclusion of women in legislatures. The demands of Olympe deGouges were not accepted by the elites of the Enlightenment who refused to grant citizenship right for women and even denied any role in politics. In 1793, she was executed on "charges of hysteria and wanting to be a statesman. Instead of discouraging, her death motivated women to move to the cause of gender equality and engaged more women in this task (Jabeen, 2014). Ultimately, after one century, women succeeded and legal reforms were introduced for political representation of women. Olympe de Gouges became a symbol and women launched her mission all over the world. Incoming two hundred years, her declaration served as a model for designing the charters and conventions based on gender parity. In fact, it was an acknowledgment of women's hard and long struggle.

#### **Struggle for Equal Gender Rights**

Women's under-representation led the gender activists and women leaders to challenge the status quo, looking for those strategies, which were relevant to gain access to the political bodies. Their focus was democracy, which directed equal share while composing the elected institutions. Since half of the world's population, their inclusion was equally crucial for conferring legitimacy to the decision-making process. Women's limited knowledge or inaptness had been just a pretext to keep them away. They struggled a lot for strengthening their political positions. They worked for transnational unity to expand their message, sharing their experiences with other organizations and institutions, active in the other side of the globe. In 1878, this collaboration paved the path for conducting the first transnational congress of women in Paris, however, only eleven countries participated in it (Moses, 1984, p. 207). A visible change occurred in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and women succeeded in getting a little share in North America and Europe. In the United Kingdom, suffrage movements were launched vigorously along with civil disobedience movements for granting the vote-right for women.

In 1830, a strong movement was launched in Norway for vote-right. Consequently, Norway along with Finland granted vote-right for women, surpassing other Nordic states. The recognition of universal suffrage in 1910 gave full civil rights to women. Since 1912, Norwegian women had been eligible for all positions of the state and the same pattern was followed in Finland. Universal suffrage has been in electoral practices in the Finnish Diet since 1906, making it the first European country with women's participation in national elections (Women in Politics, n. d). The Government Act of 1918 approved the vote-right to women of 30-year old and spouses of householders, having age of 35 years. Moreover, in 1928, all women having an age of 21 years got this right. Swiss women got the vote-right in 1971, despite the practice of universal suffrage in all European states (Jabeen and Muhammad, 2013).

Despite achieving these targets, women were still far from their destination and struggle for gender balance in politics remained on the priority agenda until 1970s. Throughout the world, women's share in parliaments was low, which was not encouraging trend, forcing women and gender activists to continue their struggle to address the lower representation, which was only 10.9 percent in 1975. It raised only 19 percent after vigorous efforts of the three decades, making "pledges, prescriptions and persuasion" (Legislative Quota for Women, 2012).

The developing countries assumed that key to gender parity was a democratic system and modernization. They grasped the idea that without fulfilling these pre-requisites, political equality was difficult to

maintain. However, this perception was wrong as women of developed and democratic countries like France, the United Kingdom and the United States were facing the problem of lower presentation despite so called equality in the early twentieth century (Paxton, 2000). Women in these societies had access to education and jobs, democratic values and norms, vote and representation rights, but all this could not be translated into empowerment.

The field of politics is still characterized by disparities and deprivation as the tactics of the olden times are still in fashion. In many traditional societies, those practices are still applying, making politics a prohibited area, marginalizing women and keeping them away from the decision-making process. Exclusion of women is not because of their lack of interest, but it is deliberately engineered by male political leadership. Inauguration of the 'dawn of democracy' through the American independence (1776) and French revolutionary assertions conferred a lot to citizen apparently and claimed equality for all citizens, but the voices of racial minorities and women were ignored and suppressed. The underlying assumption was the role of women at domestic level for rearing the children and performing household. They were not taken capable of policy-making as this task would affect their domestic duties, damaging their performance as mothers. Moreover, the woman's biological composition was also taken as a weakness even in some modern democracies, who advocated this argument for precluding women's path in politics

### **The UN Role for Gender Parity**

Taking notice of this discrimination and severity of the problem, the First World Conference of the UN took place in Mexico City in 1975. It recognized gender rights and equality as critical components for removing the inequality and discrimination in politics. This conference led women, representatives of civil societies and gender activists to work for overcoming all forms of discrimination against women. Recognizing this disparity in politics, in 1990, the UN Economic and Social Council fixed 30 percent share for women in legislation, pursuing the states to fulfill this target until 1995 (Jabeen and Muhammad, 2013). This step was taken in the background of gender inequalities as political parties, trade unions and NGOs were not taking responsibility within their own circles. It was not only a democratic issue, but also a hurdle in the development of economic and social sectors. The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was introduced to ensure political rights to women (Legislative Quota for Women, 2012).

Despite passing two decades, female representation in legislatures increased only 0.7 percent (10.9 to 11.6 percent) from 1975 to 1995 (IPU, 2003). Above it, this trend was seen only in the lower or single house, whereas no visible change occurred in the position of bicameral legislatures and even a down-ward trend was visible, lowering from 10.5 to 9.4 percent (Dalerup, 2005). In the year of 1995, the UN Fourth World Conference held in Beijing (China). It recognized gender rights and equality as critical requirements for elimination of inequality in politics. It observed that gender difference is increasing in the political field despite the democratic setup and socioeconomic development. It was identified by the Beijing Platform for Action that "inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels and insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women as two areas of significant concern where action was critical for the advancement of women" (Fourth World Conference, 1995).

The UN advocated for women's inclusion in the decision-making process. Following it, electoral gender quotas became a popular tool to enhance women's share in politics and many countries followed this mechanism. The vast expansion of gender quotas and policies brought great changes. In its Millennium Development Goals of 2000, the UN declared the importance of women's role for socioeconomic development, while women's empowerment was enlisted as one of its 'measurable goals' (Equality in Politics, 2008).

### **Electoral Systems and Women's Representation**

Electoral system provides the ways to engage the people in the political process and influences the political system, determining the role and scope of political parties. The nature of an electoral system shapes the political character of a society, ranging from the nature of political parties and selection of candidates to procedure of elections.

The electoral system also moves the individuals to meet the legal criteria for recruitment in the legislature. Generally, political parties play a crucial role in the elections, appointing the candidates and bringing them to the public platform for contesting the elections. The importance of the electoral system leads the political scholars and gender activists to focus on women's representation. It was observed that differences in women's representation across electoral systems were prominent and they were more influential tools than culture and tradition in changing the status of women in politics, extending them representation.

In a democratic set up, electoral system determines eligibility criteria for a voter and candidate, time of elections and the structure of the ballots to translate it into real representation. In short, democracy is operationalized through electoral systems and women are its essential component. It is also explored by several transnational studies that recruitment of women candidates for assemblies is best secured through electoral systems (Paxton et al, 2007, p. 269). The formal democratic system is based on representatives that are elected by the masses and best reflect their thinking, ideals and purport to guard their interests. Thus, understanding of a given electoral system is indispensable for elimination of gender disparity. A survey conducted in 1994, indicated that women got the vote-right in 96 percent countries through changes in the electoral system (Women in political offices...2011).

### **Gender Quotas and Representation**

In the contemporary times, almost all countries are making arrangement for female suffrage and representation in one way or the other. However, gender quotas are the popular method and being applied by more than half of the countries of the world. Quotas drew legitimacy from the 'discourse of exclusion' as women's under-representation was due to those practices and policies, which were pursued to oust them from the political institutions. As far as the process of candidate recruitment is concerned, the responsibility cannot be placed on the individuals, but for those who are controlling the recruitment process, particularly the political parties (Dalerup, 2005, p. 141).

Pursuing the Beijing Conference, different countries applied the quotas as an instrument for ensuring women's representation in legislatures and more than one hundred countries either authoritarian or democratic, followed these quotas (Dahlerup, 2006). These quotas are either implemented through constitutional laws or voluntarily adopted by the political parties. Depriving women of their political rights is a violation of the democratic rules and consequently may be viewed as 'jeopardizing the legitimacy of decisions-making in the long term.' Charlotte Bunch has delivered a speech on 'women's many advances since 1985' in the Beijing Conference (1995), which identified those areas where much space was still waiting for females. For these areas, women's entrance was obligatory and without their inclusion, the legislative bodies were an unfinished agenda. There was also a realization among women that equal citizenship rights would be acquired only after getting a share on the ballot as their nominal presence was making it a male domain (Hoodfar & Tajali, 2011). Another demand, which was lobbied by female activists, was the representation in government offices. Without insertion of quotas in the electoral laws, women were not in the position to secure their share in assemblies.

India was the first country where political quotas were applied in the 1930s and other countries followed this system in coming years (Jabeen, 2014). In 1980s, Nordic countries, especially Norway and Sweden enhanced women's share at the national level. The quota was initiated in Norway in 1975 by the Socialist Left Party, which fixed 40 percent seats as the minimum target for either sex (Pande and Ford, 2011). Since 1980, the number of female party members is the highest in Norway (Karvonen, 1995). In 1977, the Netherlands Labour Party introduced a policy, fixing 25 percent seats for women candidates on all lists. Initially, the political parties were reluctant, showing their concerns, but it proved a positive policy ultimately (Outshoorn, 1991). Actually, women of this region had already one fourth representation and quotas just strengthen it. Such achievements led the gender activists to advocate the quotas in other parts of the world. In the decade of nineties approximately 50 countries introduces quotas and this number reached to 90 until 2000. A big shift occurred during the last fifteen years as 75 percent countries of the world applied quotas and the majority of these were non-western or non-industrialized states. Egypt, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Tanzania are included in those countries where quotas are being implemented. Oman and Kuwait awarded the vote-right for women in 2003 and 2005 respectively, whereas Qatar and the United Arab Emirates granted them in 2006 (El Sayed, 2004).

Bhutan awarded full female suffrage in 2008 and Saudi Arabia declared in September 2011 that women would be able to vote in municipal elections (Jabeen and Muhammad, 2013). These developments increased the number of female voters all over the world. This empirical change is occurring not only in Europe, but African and Asian countries are equal beneficiaries. For example Barbados, Chile, Ecuador, Puerto Rico, and Malta are showing an upward trend of women's representation from 16 to 37 percent from 1975 to 2004. In the United States, the female voter turnout is consistently higher than male (Pande and Ford, 2011).

### Types of Quotas

The clusters of quota systems are functional in the different geographic regions. This is due to diverse political systems and variation in historical background across the globe. Defining the aim of political quota, Dalerup (2005, p. 141) wrote that "quotas for women entail that women must constitute a certain number or percentage of the members of a body, whether it is a candidate list, a parliamentary assembly, a committee or a government." Electoral quota systems of different types are aimed to endow the representation at different levels, ensuring citizens' rights vigorously. The reform system makes a political system more viable and influential, enhancing democratic representation.

Among the various types of gender quotas, three types are common in politics. First is voluntary party quota, which is adopted by the political parties. This system restricts the political parties to fix a share for women voluntarily. The parties nominate a certain proportion of female candidates in the elections and this practice is adopted by several countries (IPU, 2002, p.2).

This type is generally used in Scandinavian and developed countries, which are ahead of other nations in bringing women to parliament through political parties. To maintain gender parity in legislatures, political parties of fifty countries resumed voluntary party quota (Dahlerup, 2009, p.45). Germany, Poland, Sweden, the UK, Australia and Canada are also included in those countries, where voluntary party quotas are popular to enhance women's political representation. In the Eastern Europe, it is less suitable; however, Hungary and Czech Republic have pursued it (Pande and Ford, 2011). Despite its 'women friendly nature' the review of European Network identified that the current position of women in decision-making is deplorable, particularly among European nations (Hoodfar & Tajali, 2011). There is also a practice of applying informal quotas by the political parties and it is being used with varying degrees of success by the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa and the Labor parties in Australia and the United Kingdom (Dahlerup, 1998).

In Argentina, *Ley de Cupos* (Law of Quotas) restricts the political parties to reserve 30 percent nomination for women candidates (Halder, 2004). This share contributed a lot and Chamber of Deputies had a visible change, where female representation was increased from "5.5 percent in 1991 to 12.8 percent in 1993 and 26.4 percent in 1998" (Del and Feijoo, 1998, p. 42). The ANC in South Africa reserved 30 percent seats at the national level and 50 percent representation at the local level on a party basis. Informal quotas are pursued by political parties for those women who are parliamentary candidates. Nepal and Argentina are the examples of having a combination of the above mentioned two systems (IPU, 2002).

To judge the utility of this system for women, Caul (2001) conducted a cross-country survey in 11 European countries. In this analysis, he included 70 political parties and concluded that quota was correlated with prevailing values in leftist parties. It was pointed out that a change in public behavior and commitment to the cause of gender had motivated the political parties to increase the number of seats for women. Eritrea, Tanzania, Uganda, Belgium, Namibia and Italy have quota policies as part of their constitution. For example, in Uganda, one parliamentary seat is reserved for women in all 39 districts (Del and Feijoo, 1998).

The legislated candidate quota is the second type. It requires the political parties to reserve a certain number of candidate-positions for women. It is stipulated in constitution, electoral laws or political party's laws (Dalerup, 2005, p. 142). Often the condition of women's position is inscribed on the electoral list. For example, condition of alternative gender entry on the list automatically provides seats to women. Belgium and Nepal applied this system at national levels while France and India are pursuing this practice at local levels (IPU, 2002, p.2). Indian parliament and the state assemblies have no gender quota system, but 33 percent seats have been

reserved for women at local councils (Dalerup, 2005, p. 148). During the last fifteen years, increasing trends of quota system has led the fifty more countries to adopt legal quotas. They have inscribed the rules in their constitutions or supported them with the electoral laws (Dahlerup, 2009, p.44). Among developed or developing countries, 33 states are applying quotas, including Angola, Argentina, Belgium, Indonesia, Mexico, Nepal and Uzbekistan (Legislative Quota for Women, 2012).

Legislated candidate quotas are not successful as no guarantee is offered to achieve the required target of representation. Women's entry at the candidates' list is not surety of their success and it depends upon electoral system. European countries like Belgium, France, Greece, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain introduced it for national elections. Legislated candidate quotas keep the 'gatekeepers' away from the electoral process, controlling the 'secret garden of nominations' by the political parties (Jabeen, 2014). However, all these types of representation are facilitating women in constituencies, securing their position.

Finally, reserved seats provide a fixed number of seats to women in a legislature. These are inscribed in the constitution or regulated by the electoral laws (Dahlerup, 2005, p.142; Krook, 2009). Reserved seats are to represent women and minority groups. Ironically, women are also a 'political minority' rather than a 'numerical' minority (Lijphart, 1999, p. 280). A large number of countries take reserved seats as a more direct way of securing women's elected positions. In Uganda, 56 seats are reserved for women as each district elects one woman by a special electorate, whereas in Rwanda, 30 percent women are elected by a specific procedure. Tanzania has reserved 20 percent seats for women, which are allocated to the political parties in proportion to their number of seats in parliament. Another way to fill the reserved seats is the method of appointment as Kenya and some Arab states are using this system. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, South Korea and Taiwan have introduced reserved seats (Dalerup, 2005, p. 142; www.quotaproject.org).

Pakistan is one of those countries where women's share was secured through reserved seats. All the three constitutions of 1956, 1962 and 1973 have provisions of the reserved seats. The number ranged from five to ten percent. Indirect mode of elections was adopted and the members of assemblies elected them. In 1954, only three percent seats were reserved for women. The 1973 constitution provided 10 percent seats for a specific period. In 1985, during the military regime of General Zia-ul-Haq, twenty seats were reserved for women in the *Majlis-e-Shoora* (parliament). The provision of reserved seats of the constitution of 1973 lapsed in 1988 after three general elections (1977, 1985 and 1988). In the next three elections, women's representation remained very low. In 1990, women's representation was 0.8 percent, while in next two elections of 1993 and 1997, it was 1.8 and 2.8 percent respectively (UNDP, 2005). This indicates that gender quota in Pakistan has played a vital role in securing women's representation in the parliament. It is observed that only 113 women have been members of parliament in Pakistan since 1947-97 (Mumtaz, 1998).

In 2002, the government introduced an arrangement whereby 17.5 percent seats were reserved for women in the parliament and 33 percent seats in the local governments. In the elections 2002, 205 women became members of the national parliament and the four provincial assemblies. This significantly improved Pakistan's ranking in the GEM (Gender Empowerment Measurement) and brought it to the 58<sup>th</sup> on the list of 102 countries whereas it was on 100<sup>th</sup> in 1999 on the GEM index. This position was higher in rank than the United Kingdom and the United States (UNDP, 2005).

India has reserved 33 percent seats at local level only through 74 constitutional amendments. However, political parties tried to compensate women and the Indian National Congress and Asom Gana Parishad allocated 15 and 35 percent, respectively (PILDAT, 2004). This policy of quotas is much disputed in Indian politics. Dalerup (2005, p. 148) commented that "gender quotas are thus combined with reserved seats for scheduled castes as part of a rotation system, according to which it is decided in advance which category will be allowed to contest for the seat of every ward." This system brought millions of women in local bodies and mobilized educated women candidates in politics. However, women elected through quota system have been labeled as 'proxy women' because their husbands are in the position to place them as stand-ins in local councils. They even attend the meetings in their place.

### **Implementation of Quotas**

It is observed that quota systems have been applying differently in diverse environments and many countries have applied it for final make-up of parliamentary seats while others have initiated it at the candidacy level of elections.

It is observed that one million women are beneficiary of quota system, becoming part of local councils in India and Pakistan. It is endorsed by the policy makers and analysts that the quota has brought a critical mass of women to local bodies. Despite diverse socioeconomic and religious backgrounds, the quota system has opened the elected venues for a marginalized segment of the society. According to the global ranking of IPU (2015), Rwanda is at the top with 63.8 percent of seats for women in the lower house and 51 percent in the upper house. About 80 women became its members after the elections of 2013. Sweden was at the top in gender ranking, but its percentage dropped in 2008 from 47.3 to 44.7 and further declining trend was visible in 2014 showing 43.6 percent share. During the same period, several African and Latin American countries like Andorra, Argentina, Nicaragua, Seychelles, Uganda and South Africa surpassed the European countries. In Rwanda, article 76 of the constitution secured quota for women in the legislature and "women are granted at least 30 percent of posts in decision making organs" (Hoodfar and Tajali, 2011, p. 205-06). However, the political party quota is not familiar and a parallel system of 'women's councils and women-only elections' are providing a guarantee for achieving women's mandate for all elected bodies.

### **Effectiveness of the Quota System**

No doubt, the quota system has ensured women's inclusion in the mainstream of politics in one way or the other even in the leadership capacity at different levels. Despite it, target (30 percent reserved seats) determined by the UN is not fulfilled by many countries. In the absence of its compliance, female representation is low and such examples exist in Niger and Djibouti, where women's quota is 10 percent while Jordan has fixed 5.45 percent seats for women. Burundi, Eritrea, India, Pakistan and the Philippines are showing better results with 30 percent or above representation (Pande & Ford, 2011, pp.13-14). Here the quota system cannot be attributed as the major reason, because other factors equally contributed to it. It is also observed that the female representation at leadership level cannot be translated into forceful implementation of quotas.

These quotes show the commitment of respective countries for gender parity, giving them a role in decision-making. Five Nordic states, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark and Netherland have high women's representation without gender quotas. Their parliaments have 43.6, 41.5, 39.6, 37.4, 37.3 women's representation respectively (IPU, 2015). However, their positions at the top of the ranking table are changed and currently challenged by Rwanda, Costa Rica, Argentina, Mozambique and South Africa. These countries are now occupying high ranking in the calculations of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Taking examples of European countries, it is evident that such ideas and notions do not carry much importance and are not vividly inscribed in governmental policies, and quotas are not crucial to get a balanced representation as culture, political tradition, literacy, social norms and values equally contribute to gender parity. However, official policies and practices are curtailing women's economic and productive activities in one way or the other (Waring 1999). In case of other countries, the position is opposite and quota is an effective measures to bring change. No doubt, gender activists contributed a lot for the cause of gender equality and their efforts could not be denied for launching worldwide campaigns.

Limited access to economic resources and low share in labour market cannot necessarily translate in nominal or low representation. Several studies have not confirmed this argument, citing the examples of Iran and Republic of North Korea. In these countries, enrollment of women is high in education sector, but their representation is less than 10 percent in legislative bodies. Iranian women are economically strong as well. Contrary to it, Nepal and Pakistan have a low literacy rate among women, but female representation is high, having almost 20 percent seats in the assemblies. This indicates that economic well-being and political representation have no correlation. The same situation is in Cambodia and Gambia as both have maintained higher level of women's share in economy, which accounts from 70 to 80 percent, but less than 10 percent representation in assemblies. In many communist countries, women's representation is high despite agrarian

background. There are several complex factors that play their role towards a high ratio of women's participation in political bodies (UNRISD, 2005).

### **Worldwide Women's Representation**

The last two decades have witnessed the expansion of gender quotas causing electoral reforms in many countries by reviewing their quota policies (Krook, 2009). Quota policy has changed the previous record of women's share in assemblies. Scandinavian Countries have already high number of women in legislative bodies. In Latin American countries, a visible change occurred in the early 1990s as the several countries followed the quotas in one form or the other, but their main focus was the implementation of legislated candidate quotas types. Argentina became the first country that introduced this practice in 1991 and ten other countries followed it on this move. The driving force for implementation of quotas is the democratic system of the country, which has been making its room since 1980. Mexico and Senegal also have the highest share of female in legislatures. The emergence of women's associations and organizations also contributed to it and the other reason is the groups of civil right activist that launched campaign for women's right creating awareness among them. The reason for the popularity of legislated candidate quotas in Africa is the turbulent condition of the continent. It is observed that these types of quotas are often introduced in post-conflict situation as the international donors and aid-providing countries favorite.

The authoritarian regimes also opt for quotas as a fast-track means for enhancing women's number in political bodies and improving their government's image at domestic and global level diverting the attention from their undemocratic practices. In addition, women in African countries usually pursue non-traditional roles as happened in post-genocide Rwanda. After adoption of gender quotas, Rwanda surpassed all other nations and occupied the top most ranking in the list of women's empowerment. Dahlerup (2009, p.45) is of the opinion that electoral gender quotas are the main reason behind the historical progress of women in politics.

The African continent is also witnessing the variety of quota schemes during the past two decades. In South Africa, it was introduced by the African National Congress after the first elections, which were held in post-apartheid environment in 1994. They were considered as the forerunner of voluntary party quotas. Uganda was the next state having the scheme of reserved seats launching in 1986. After getting a successful experiment, since then quota has been replicated in other parts of the continent. Djibouti, Eritrea, Somalia, and Sudan are the beneficiary (Jabeen, 2014).

The quota is equally paving the path for gender representation in the Asian region. There served seats are predominant tool while legislated and voluntary quotas are also working at different levels. At the local government level, this region is the forerunner in quotas and its implementation. Indonesia, Bangladesh, the Philippine, India and Pakistan are pursuing this system. Reviewing an overall representation of women in South Asia, the picture is very dismal.

The case of the Arab States is different from the other regions of the world. Their distinctive culture and religious values constrain the exposure of women to the public offices. The average in lower houses is 8.2 per cent as it was four percent ten years ago. In this environment, the gender quotas have found little space and support. Despite it, development is linked to the adoption of different types of quotas in countries like Djibouti, Jordan, Iraq, Morocco and Tunisia. Oman and Qatar have one seat in each assembly while Yemen and Kuwait have no seat. Iran and Lebanon are exceptional cases as 3.1 percent seats are allocated to women. In Iran, out of 290, women have only nine seats, while in Lebanon, out of 128, only four are women. However, in Israel, the position is different and women have 24.2 percent share (29 out of 120) and voluntary party quotas are being pursued by the political parties (IPU, 2015). It is a sad aspect of Pacific Island States that women remain under-represented in legislation. The average representation in the region is lower excluding Australia and New Zealand. In Australia, both houses have 26.7 and 38.2 percent, respectively, while New Zealand has 31.4 percent share in parliament (IPU, 2015). It is also calculated that women have 20 percent representation in bicameral legislatures of the world. The following table is given to show women's representation in various parts of the world.



**Women Representation in The World Regions**

<b>Regions</b>	<b>Single lower House</b>	<b>or or Senate</b>	<b>Upper House</b>	<b>Both combined Houses</b>
Nordics	41.1%			
Americas	28.3%		27.5%	28.1%
Europe-OSCE member countries excluding Nordic countries	26.4%		26 %	26.3%
Europe-OSCE member countries excluding Nordic countries	25%		26%	25.4%
Sub-Saharan Africa	23.8%		22.1%	23.6%
Asia	19.6%		16.3%	19.3%
Arab States	18.9%		12.6%	18%
Pacific	15%		37.1%	17.4%

Source: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm> dated 01 January, 2017.

The table shows that male domination is not eliminated by gender quotas. Despite adopting different policies and strategies, women's political representation is still low. Reforms are implemented, but not fruitful for achieving desired goals. Electoral gender quotas have increased the percentage of seats for women, but their representation is still under debate. The worldwide website of Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) is an effective source for providing information about electoral gender quotas and up-down trends, which are generating awareness. In addition to an electoral system, democratic practice, political parties, political institutions, national policy and effective candidates are equally important for representation.

All these elements directly contribute and influence the successful implementation of a quota system. The order of the names is important in the structure of a ballot as the names of candidates appearing at the top of a list have a higher chance of getting more votes as compared to those candidates, particularly women candidates who are often lower in ranking by their party. Political parties' list of nominees indicates the ranking of party members in terms of their position and powerful male elites are at the higher positions. These nominations are not necessarily on merit or according to party manifestation, but the interest of the party is priority instead of commitment (Ballington, 2004). The party politics affects women's representation as the higher positions are occupied by males with a few exceptions. Such practices obstruct women and minorities' access to powerful positions.

The UN has estimated that women would get equal representation in high offices until the year 2490 and they have to wait for it (Seager, 1997, p. 70). This prediction is made reviewing the current rate of change. From 1945 to 2002, gender representation has increased in assemblies, from three percent to 14.7 percent (IPU, 2003). Inter-Parliamentary Council adopted the Universal Declaration on Democracy in its 161st session held on September 16, 1997 at Cairo, it explains: "The achievement of democracy presupposes a genuine partnership between men and women in the conduct of the affairs of society in which they work in equality and complementary, drawing mutual enrichment from their differences."

**Conclusion**

In the present context, the quota is seen as a device for achieving a proper share in the political process. It is an instrument for ensuring women's political interests with protecting their political roles. Adoption of quota systems is a qualitative jump into the policy of exact goals of the representation. Owing to its relative significance, there is a possibility of accomplishing a dramatic increase in gender representation in a political system. A shift is visible in the recent era, changing the ranking order of the countries on the basis of their women's political representation. Various gender quotas are empowering women not only in parliaments, but they are now ensuring their positions in political parties, state committees and government offices holding a specified percentage. Women's share of 30 to 40 percent in decision-making has reduced the obstacles, and they

are making progress and overcoming prejudices that prevent them from entering into the political power. The gender quotas can be introduced at different levels, including federal, national, regional or local. For example, there are quota regimes at the local level up to the 50 percent as is the case of France, while local councils in India and Pakistan have 33 percent gender quota. However, there are still doubts about women's inclusion in decision-making. The quota system has included women in the decision-making process, opening the road to this prohibited area. Despite several success stories, women are still isolated and less powerful in the parliaments. It is partially true that quota has brought confidence and influence among women as it is revealed in several cases that gender representation is symbolic, no constituency at their disposal and no funding to spend in their respective places. It is crucial for the effectiveness of women politicians to create unity among themselves on gender issues. For this purpose, support of feminist organizations and other NGOs must be taken to strengthen and reinforce women's political foundation and boost their autonomy.

### References

- Ballington, J. (2004). The implementation of quotas: African experiences. *Quota Report Series*. Stockholm: IDEA.
- Caul, M. (2001). Political parties and the adoption of candidate gender quotas: A cross-national analysis. *The Journal of Politics* 63(4): 1214-1229.
- Equality in politics: a survey of women & men in parliament (2008) <http://www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/equality08-overview-e.pdf>
- Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace (1995, September 15), "Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action." Available at: <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instree/e5dplw.htm>
- Dahlerup, D. (2005). Increasing women's political representation: New trends in gender quotas. In Julie Ballington and Azza Karam (Ed.), *Women in parliament: Beyond Numbers*. Stockholm: IDEA.
- Dahlerup, D. (2006). *Women, quotas and politics*, Ed., London: Routledge Press.
- Dahlerup, D. (2009). The effects of gender quota/quota women in politics. In Aazer Ayaz and Fleschenberg Andrea (Ed.), *The gender face of Asian politics*. Karachi: Oxford University Press.
- Del, M. & Feijoo, C. (1998). Democratic participation and women in Argentina', In J. S. Jaquette and S. L. Wolchik (Eds.), *Women and democracy: Latin America and Central and Eastern Europe*. London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Halder, N. (2004, June), Female representation in parliaments: A case study of Bangladesh, *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies* 6 (1): 27-63.
- El Sayed, S., (December 2004), "Lobbying for increased participation of women in Egypt," in *Arab quota report: selected case studies of quota Report Series*; this report included findings and case studies presented in a two day workshop held in Cairo Egypt.
- Inter-Parliamentarian Union (2002). <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>
- Inter-Parliamentarian Union (2003). The implementation of quota: Asian experience. Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>
- IPU (2015, August). Women in national parliaments. <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures#notes>
- Jabeen, M. (2013). Electoral gender quotas in Pakistan: Including the excluded, empowering the powerless. *NICE Research Journal*, .6, pp.1-34
- Jabeen, M. (2014, April). Gender quotas: An instrument for political empowerment of women in legislatures. In E. Zeynep Güler (Ed.), *New opportunities and impasses: Theorising and experiencing politics*. Istanbul: DAKAM Publishing.
- Karvonen, L. & Selle, P. (1995). 'Introduction: Scandinavia: a case apart', InL. Karvonen and P. Selle (eds), *Women in Nordic Politics: Closing the Gap*, Sydney: Dartmouth.
- Krook, M. L. (2009). *Quotas for women in politics: Gender and candidate selection reform worldwide*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Legislative quota for women: A global and South Asian overview of types and numbers (2012, July). Islamabad: Aurat Foundation. [http://www.af.org.pk/pub\\_files/1358744372.pdf](http://www.af.org.pk/pub_files/1358744372.pdf)
- Lijphart, A. (1999). *Patterns of democracy: Government forms and performance in thirty-six countries*. London, Yale University Press.

- Mumtaz, K. (1998). Political participation: Women in national legislatures in Pakistan. In *Shaping women's lives— laws, practices and strategies in Pakistan*. Karachi: Shirkat Gah Women's Resource
- Outshoorn, J. (1991). Is this what we wanted? Positive action as issue perversion. In E. Meehan and S. Sevenhuijsen (Eds.), *Equality, politics and gender*, London: SAGE Publications.
- Pande, R. & Ford, D. (2011, April 7) Gender quotas and female leadership: A review background paper for the world development report on gender. <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/rpande/papers/Gender%20Quotas%20-%20April%202011.pdf>
- Paxton, P. (2000). Women's suffrage in the measurement of democracy: Problems of operationalization. *Studies in Comparative International Development* 35 (3): 92-111.
- Paxton, P., Kunovich, S., & Hughes, M. M. (2007). Gender in politics. *Annual Review of Sociology*. 33 (1): 263-84.
- PILDAT (2004), Women representation in Pakistan's parliament. <http://www.pildat.org/Publications/publication/Women/WomenRepresentationInPakistanParliament.pdf>
- Moses, Claire G. (1984) *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Scott, J. W. (1996). The uses of imagination: Olympe des Gouges in the French Revolution. In *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Seager, J. (1997). *The state of women in the world atlas*. London, PenguinBooks Limited.
- United Nations Development Program (2005), Political and legislative participation of women in Pakistan: issues and perspectives," Islamabad: UNDP. <http://www.mumkinalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/POL-legislative-OF-Women-UN-Report.pdf>
- UNRISD.(2005). *Gender Equality: Striving for Justice in an Unequal World*. Geneva, Switzerland: UNRISD Publications.
- Waring, (1999). *Counting for nothing: What men value and what women are worth*. (2nd ed). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Women in political office and gender equitable policies (2011). <http://www.researchomatic.com/essay/Women-In-Political-Office-And-Gender-Equitable-Policies-73361.aspx>
- Women's politics: The feminist movement (n. d.). In *Women in the history of Europe*. <http://www.helsinki.fi/science/xantippa/wee/weetext/wee214.html>

Received: March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016

Revisions Received: Dec 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016