

## Role of Civil Society in Women Empowerment during Musharraf Regime: A Case Study of Hazara Region

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### Abstract:

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) make a difference in holistic development. They provide development services and humanitarian relief, innovate in service delivery, build local capacity and advocate for the poor. CSOs in Pakistan have played its role in women's social, economic, and political empowerment. Unfortunately, despite the emergence of wide-spread network of women-related non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and governmental institutions on women's issues, a large segment of the female population is still struggling hard for equal status. However, it is pertinent to state that the notion of women empowerment is deeply linked with an overall change in society. The study aims to explain CSOs' dynamics and their role in women empowerment during the Musharraf regime. This study acknowledges the status of women in Pakistan, specifically in Hazara Division, and their empowerment through different indicators. This paper is mainly explanatory that begins with the theoretical concepts. This study focused two NGOs working for the women empowerment and stand on a rights -based approach serving two categories; service delivery and policy making.

**Key Words:** Hazara, development, empowerment, civil society, political, human rights

### INTRODUCTION

Various ideas and perspectives exist regarding civil society. Different definitions are presented by different schools of thought about civil society. According to Georg Hegel and Karl Marx, civil society is a wide-ranging and comprehensive notion of the society. Despite its potential in development, civil society has not been studied in Pakistan. In Pakistan more than one lac Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are working. However, their exact numbers cannot be reported because most of the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are not registered. While those registered, had not maintained the registration record. CSOs include both registered and unregistered organizations that operate independently from government institutions. Like unions, community based organizations (CBOs), cultural associations, social welfare organizations, foundations and voluntary organizations operating independently. For some of the fundamental thinkers, civil society must perform

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in opposition to the institutions of state and market. Mainly, civil society plays a role in opposing economic liberalism because state, market and civil society are competitors in exercising power. While for other theorists, civil society is required to be a democratizing strength in the country.

Pakistani civil society contributed dynamically for the developmental aspects including women empowerment. Primarily civil society operated as an actor for mediation between the state and individual. Through the involvement of CSOs deliverables by government are improved. This study grouped CSOs that contribute definite features like private, non-profit, self-governing, and autonomous, apart from the state and volunteer (somehow) as NGOs.

In developmental perspective men and women work on almost equal basis as partner in the developed countries of the world. The literacy rate is considerably good; women know their legal rights and protected environment is provided by state laws. Despite many efforts and initiatives, gender discrimination against women is still alarmingly high in most of the areas of Pakistan. Women cannot exercise their rights altogether and face hurdles in getting their rights. However, women empowerment is hampered due to gender disparity in far-flung areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) specifically in Hazara region. The core reason is that, the cultural values and norms have not changed according to the society and women's requirements. Consequently, participation of women in economic, political, and social aspects has been dramatically curtailed. The unsatisfactory placement of women was acknowledged in a report, as indicated by Sharma (2003):

In year 1997, the inquiry report of the commission for women referred that discriminatory practices and laws increased the gaps in role of men and women in almost all spheres of life. That report also indicated that the various types of violence against women had maximized. Further, in specific areas the handicaps increased for women in the legal status.

Overall there is considerable acknowledgment that gender equity is the primary means for the improved lives of women. Gender equity is a prerequisite for effective, long life and sustainable development in the society. Moreover, it leads to prosperity all over in the society. In this regard, civil society specifically, NGOs concentrated on strategic programmes for better and improved social wellbeing schemes to uplift the status of women. Moreover, they performed the vital and significant functions for the notable empowerment of women. NGOs worked for women empowerment in Pakistan to their best. A lot of criticism has been raised against those NGOs that based on western concept; these NGOs were liberating women to distract them from their cultural traits. In the Hazara region, few NGOs well performed for the development while others faced lack of projects and finances. NGOs educated women for their rights and provided them social change in the society.

## **PAKISTAN'S INTERNATIONAL AND LEGAL COMMITMENTS TOWARDS WOMEN EMPOWERMENT**

The 1973 Constitution legally provided equality, justice, equity and positive actions to women. Pakistan certified many international conventions like Convention on the Rights of Child, International Labour Organization and Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women. Therefore, the government is legally bound to execute and implement conventions and ensure legislative measures for women's protection as their primary objective. The Beijing Declaration identifies the rights of women and strongly affirms to enforce all basic rights of women. The declaration aims to suggest practical solutions to eliminate barriers in women's active participation. It also ensures equal participation of women in decision making process at political, cultural, social, and economic level. National Plan for Action (NPA) formulated by Government of Pakistan in 1998 was prepared through national participatory process, with the involvement of federal and provincial governments, CSOs and individual experts. NPA focused on the improved health services, poverty reduction and certainty for provision of women rights. Through this plan, a commission was formed on the women's status at national level. Specifically, efforts were made towards a reproductive health policy in 2000 (Gender Reform Action Plan, 2000).

Extensive and continuous efforts were made from executing to reporting all the problems of women to be treated equally.

Following institutions of Pakistan worked as per its constitution for the worth and dignity of any human especially, women.

- 1) Ministry of Women Development (MoWD)
- 2) Ministry of Human Rights
- 3) Gender Crime Cell
- 4) Shelter Homes and Centers for women
- 5) Gender and Women Studies Departments

## **STATE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN PAKISTAN**

The concept of civil society has roots in Pakistan and this concept is related to citizen's participation in cultural, social, and religious affairs. It has a long deep rooted-history that traced back to the civilization of Indus Valley. The institutions and organizations working before the British rule, became subordinate to the state. In Pakistan the society inherited a strong tradition of citizen organizations deep-rooted in customs, practices and Islamic philanthropy.

In 1950s, governments have practiced the jumbled theme towards civil society. At that time, factions of civil society consisted of only rich and powerful people that resulted in the misery of common man. In 1980s, during Zia-ul-Haq's regime, the NGOs staged protests and demonstrated rallies in opposition of contrary laws to humanitarian phenomena. After

Zia's dictatorship, there was a bright hope around the eleven-year rule of the dictator adversely affected society and all institutions in the country.

During the 1990s, especially Pakistan People's Party (PPP) government took a few progressive steps to improve the role of CSOs. The relationship between NGOs and government improved. But the government also had suspicious and hostile attitude shown in the draft of the Non -Governmental Organization Bill in 1996.

In 2000, CSOs came up on front and played a viable role in helping people of earthquake hit areas of KP and Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK). The devastated earthquake hit poor people who suffered a lot including physical, social and psychological losses. CSOs provided support in emergency, rehabilitation and development phase holistically. In the 2005 earthquake, President Parvez Musharraf provided support to all CSOs at policy implementation level for the best interest of communities. The response of CSOs during the earthquake was encouraging. The whole country and CSOs grouped to the affected areas and did whatever they could. NGOs provided every possible support to the victims of terrorism and bombings. Due to persistent issues and hindrances, the aptitude of CSOs to mobilize people remained limited in some specific periods. In sequel, CSOs could not flourish as they should be because it remained the dismal need of people.

#### **OVERALL STANCE OF GOVERNMENT (1990-2007)**

In general, government policy towards the CSOs specifically non-profit sector lacked the consistency. In period of 1990s, government policies seemed broadly supportive towards NGOs as manifested in special funding to them and significant recognition of their role for few of the developmental programmes like, the Family Planning and Social Action Program. Besides this, senior official of CSOs was included in the federal cabinet during Musharraf regime. Moreover, the important assignments of information and broadcasting, education, local government and environment were allocated to the representatives of CSOs in the cabinet.

The government provided support at policy level but its implementation was not recognized by the ground level agencies. For government, the role of NGOs is competitive concerning funds and influence in society development. Second, government was normally supportive for the welfare and service delivery oriented organizations but openly showed resistance to those organizations involved in political and social advocacy.

The government's support was also based on the nature of CSOs. There was a greater tendency to support the NGOs involved in resource mobilization at the grassroots level. Such support arose from the recognition that the government outreach was limited in the far-flung and backward areas. Therefore, local NGOs of faraway areas fulfilled the task. Firstly, the NGOs should not have any concern regarding the national security, strategic interests and international relations. Moreover, the advocacy initiatives regarding the religious, political and social issues must also be discouraged.

Secondly, the role of NGOs was encouraged regarding the social wellbeing and developmental programmes. Therefore, the government provided incentives to NGOs and public private partnerships to enhance the role of civil society organizations. Thirdly, an appropriate legal and regulatory framework was emphasized that civil society organizations needed to operate in an accountable and transparent way. So, in 1999 the restoration of the Non-Governmental Organizations Bill highlighted motivation for NGO's visible presence. However, the Non-Governmental Organizations forum's proposed bill was negotiated with more significant consultation by the government of Musharraf. Government commissioned to Philanthropic center to conduct a study and consultations with different stakeholders to prepare an Enabling Regulatory and Fiscal Framework for Civil Society Organizations.

The philosophy of decentralization and devolution of power in the Musharraf regime enabled the local governments at gross-out level. Hence, as a result of the Devolution Plan, number of roles moved to the province, district and then down to the union council level including village council and CBOs. Through that bottom up- approach, the service delivery became better and the accountability of government line agencies increased concerning service provision.

Through that development pattern, the participatory approach emphasized in development that ultimately led to empowerment of people.

### **MUSHARRAF REGIME AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT**

Pakistan has endured unparalleled social dilemmas, challenges and the implications regarding women. As the conventional opinions regarding women's roles have changed, the considerable changes can be seen in social values, practices, and course of life in society. Inconsistent reflection about women's status and conditions creates the extensive consequences regarding economic, political and social aspects. Unfortunately, the social system remained subdued for women and their development was ignored. The earlier three decades of development assistance from 1950 to 1980 hardly considered women oriented approach including their role, status and power development processes and projects.

The Musharraf era was politically good for the women of Pakistan. Due to his moderate way, women-based NGOs were able to pressurize the government line agencies to achieve the rights of women. As a result, in the National Assembly, 60 women seats were reserved seats and in four provincial assemblies' total 128 seats were reserved for women. Furthermore, in the year 2006, a Bill regarding the protection of women was passed with the support of Shirkat Gah, Women Action Forum (WAF) and All Pakistan Women Association (APWA). These organizations demanded that all citizens must be treated equal in one system. However, the steps taken by the Musharraf government for the political empowerment of women, cannot be neglected. During his regime, 10 percent quota was

reserved for women in civil superior services (CSS) examinations and jobs in all government departments. Furthermore, many women were provided opportunities to visit other countries as ambassadors which symbolized women empowerment. The improved women participation in parliament gave them a chance for practical measures for women related issues and problems (Mahmood, 2004).

In the year 2002, government launched the development and empowerment policies for women for the first time. These are as follows;

- Pledges and concurrence of the constitution regarding the international human rights international conventions and agreements, as the revival of Islamic teachings about equality and justice.
- Acknowledgment for the valuable worth of women and their role in all aspects of life.
- Women have equal role in economic, political and social process.
- Recognition of collective rights and responsibilities based approach.

As the result of number of initiatives by government regarding women empowerment, it is significant to note that women of opposition party in the Punjab Assembly united with other colleagues and women counterparts from Treasury Benches to support the Domestic Violence Bill, 2003. In the same way, Kashmala Tariq, and Nilofar Bakhtiar of Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid-i-Azam (PML-Q), and Fozia Wahab and Sherry Rehman of PPP, provided support and facilitation regarding the Act of Protection for Women and Act of Honor Killing.

### **INSTITUTIONAL, POLICY AND LEGAL INITIATIVES**

The Government of Pervez Musharraf took different initiatives of legal and policy aspects that support women's dignity and respectful life in society. The following table indicates the detail of institutional, legal and policy initiatives for women empowerment:

Details	Year	Legal citizenship	Socio-economic and cultural initiatives	Reproductive and sexual initiatives	Safeguarding from violence
<b>Legal Measures</b>					
To enhance women participation in politics constitutional amendments were made in article 51 to 59 Under the legal framework order.	2002	Women participation in political institutes for laws and policy formulation			
Control and revention of Human Trafficking Ordinance implementation	2002			Criminalizes violation of SRHR	Control human smuggling and to protect women



Implementation of Act of Criminal Law to Prevent Honor killings.	2004	Protects right to life Enhance Prosecution	Gender injustice and traditions changed according to law	Protection of marriage and sexual rights	Advocacy Criminalizes honor killings, penalizes perpetrators
Taking up the Protection Act of Women	2006	Protection from fake accusation	Gender injustices and traditions changed according to law	Change in laws governing rape and adultery including sexual rights	Procedure for reporting violence
<b>Policy Measures</b>					
Policies formulated for the improved status of women at National level. The formed policies consist of better health and reproductive care.	2002	Formulation of NCSW		Guided for the formulation of health and reproduction related improved policies	
Under MOWD Plan of Gender Reform Actions commenced	2005	Advocac with other Government departments Gender development sections	Advocacy within Government to promote gender responsive environment		Women Resource Centers Advocacy against discriminatory laws Instruction on laws and Policies
<b>Institutional Measures</b>					
National Commission established for the improved status of women	2000	Policy advice Research and advocacy	Policy advice Research and advocacy	Policy advice Research and advocacy	Policy advice Research and advocacy
Ministry of Women Development	2004	District Resource Centers	District Resource Centers	Shelters	Women's Centers
GCE formed in NPB under the interior Ministry	2006	Input on laws and policies		Data collection on Violence Against Women	a. Data collection on Violence Against Women b. Provided support to the victims

During Musharraf regime, total 45000 functional private, non-profit and NGOs and charitable organizations were reported (Sattar & Baig, 2001) The reported organizations were different in scope, nature and effectiveness from one another. Those organizations cover various themes, infrastructure, services, skills development, human rights, enterprise related programs and community development. Many of the projects regarding women empowerment were supported by donors and sponsors but only two NGOs were selected due to their significant work in all districts of Hazara region. The selected NGOs

contributed for women empowerment through different projects and initiatives in the titled region.

### **NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION'S AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN HAZARA REGION**

The Pakistani society faced challenges and complications regarding social, economic and political empowerment of women for numerous reasons. It is a fact that different NGOs contributed to bringing awareness for the women in Pakistan. They highlighted the issues related to economics, political and social bias and differences against women but they also took practical actions to solve problems. Few NGOs are founded for advocacy. They coordinate and pressurize government and legislatures to play their meaningful role in assuring for formulation and enforcement of pro-women laws for protection and promotion of women rights. While in some situation NGOs are the backbone of providing opportunities for participation and access to facilities in remote areas where role of government is not strong.

NGOs executed multiple strategies to attain their objectives and goals. The approaches may generally categorize as bottom-up and top-down. As bottom up approach highlights the decision making, community involvement and grassroots activities which called the service delivery organizations, top down approach is the center of lobbying and negotiating with decision making authorities through different campaigns and advocacy initiatives which is called policy influencing organizations.

In Urban areas of Hazara region, women hold comparatively better status. They have somehow better access to education facilities. Different awareness programmes and media launched campaigns through CSOs to help elevate political, social and economic status of women in urban societies. Most of the traditions and customs, which were against women's freedom of expression and were considered barrier in their developmental process, were discouraged on all forums during Musharraf era. However, all the legislative measures and policies exist at country level were not supporting women. Women could not feel free to perform their duties in such a male dominating system, leading inequality of basic rights.

NGOs are the significant development actors, who performed the substantial role in promoting social, political, and economic rights for development in Hazara communities. Few of the NGOs worked for the developmental aspects like healthcare services, good governances, employment, academic programmes, infrastructure development, empowering women etc. while on the other hand, a few of them worked in supporting the freedom of expression and thoughts, human rights like legal and civil rights, specifically, children and women rights. The empowerment of women is an essential ingredient for long term development. Empowerment facilitates the process of enabling women to address the strategic and practical needs. Many NGOs work to increase the access of women to financial prospects and opportunities, political authority structure and to enhance the self-



confidence of women.

The following table reviews the structural work of selected NGOs which contributes specifically to the women empowerment, for attaining the goal of fulfilling the strategic needs and the practical needs of women.

Non-Governmental Organizations	Practical Needs	Strategic Needs
<b>Sungi Development Foundation</b>	Humanitarian assistance, Income generating activities, Services delivery interventions and Infrastructure schemes.	Mobilization, Good Governance, Civil Rights, Capacity building, Advocacy related initiatives, Networking and linkages, Natural resource management and Awareness rising.
<b>Aurat Foundation</b>	Provision of grants, Capacity building of organized groups for gender equality and women empowerment, Psychological support, Support to gender studies and civil registration of women.	Gender equity initiatives, Knowledge expansions regarding women rights, Behavioral change activities, Access to justice, Advocacy and networking.

## POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Political participation is considered one of the important factors of empowerment. The political participation enables women to exercise their potencies to elect the competent leaders who perform their roles in reducing gender disparity from society. Through political participation, women's capacity can be developed for organizing and mobilizing the resources to uplift and develop society. Additionally, political participation enables women to participate in political process that allows women to influence the policies.

### *Legislation And Policy Making*

NGOs perform an essential role in policy formulation and legislation for the prosperity of women. NGOs bring the events and incidents of the individuals they serve to the process. Civil Society can contribute to awareness raising and capacity-building workshops in various factors. Good governance can be the main area for capacity building, because, without skill it is not enough just to be elected or appointed in the government service for their effective and efficient responsibilities. To manage this, following NGOs started their programmes to enhance the leadership skills, women legislative and other official struggle for women empowerment.

Aurat Foundation (AF) is one of the civil society organizations devoted to work for women empowerment. AF was established under the society Act 1860 in 1986. AF is a national, NGO devoted to working for women rights and democratic governance in Pakistan. Under the program "Legislative Watch," AF strengthened the role of women in the parliament. AF provided gender aspects to the state institutions for policy formulation and gender

mainstreaming in the governance structure (AF, 2007). AF mainly repeals and reforms the discriminatory laws against women and struggles to eliminate negative customary practices against women (Aurat Foundation, 2006). AF made efforts and got success in passing bills from the government with some amendments:

- Women's protection and the protection against harassment of women at workplace (Criminal Laws Amendment) Act, 2006
- Acid control and Acid prevention bill
- Criminal Law 1 of 2005 it is convenient further to modify the PPC 1860 Act (XLV of 1860)

AF openly opposed the biased laws and customary practices. It also contributed a lot for community development in the Hazara region specifically, in District Mansehra, Battagram, and Abbottabad.

Sungi Development Foundation (SDF) was established in 1989 as a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization (NGO) and got acclamation at global level for common interest CSO performing for poor and marginalized group in the society. Being a rights - based advocacy and development organization, SDF believes in equity and socially just society. Since the inception stage, it struggled to empower the women so that their living standards may improve.

SDF institutionalized the gender - responsive approaches, policies, and practices in its structure. Being a gender-responsive organization, it ensured the involvement of women in decision-making processes through different initiatives and approaches. SDF considerably made deliverables for women empowerment in traditionally rigid communities of the Hazara division. In targeted areas, women participation enhanced in political activities, economic affairs and decisions making power in local matters at grass root level through the developmental contributions.

SDF is a right and advocacy-based organization to ensure women participation in decision-making processes. It always advocated to bring policy level reforms for women empowerment. After a military coup 1999, the government of General Pervez Musharraf included Mr. Omer Asghar Khan (Executive Director of SDF) in his cabinet. So, Omer Asghar Khan was able to suggest policy reforms and ensure the women participation and protection.

SDF completed several public actions through many projects. For awareness raising and initiation of public debates from the community to the provincial level, SDF conducted different activities like demonstrations, experience sharing workshops, mobilization sessions, public hearings, seminars, and rallies. It delivered various orientation sessions for the parliamentarians regarding the Hudood Ordinance, repeal of biased legislations and honor killing. SDF conducted a huge gathering with partner communities and governmental departments in 2004 in district Abbottabad to achieve good governance and

empowerment. The theme of that gathering was to sensitize the strategic approach for good and gender responsive governance (SDF, 2004).

SDF contributed in 2005 in providing relief during emergency, rehabilitation activities to restore the natural and indigenous resources and developmental interventions for holistic development in earthquake devastated areas of the Hazara region. Mainly, the target group was women; all activities from relief to development were gender-responsive (SDF, 2005)

SDF contributed to mainstream women's role in Local Government. Hence, three district-level seminars were conducted in district Abbottabad and Haripur, benefiting 181 people including 60 percent women in 2004. The elected women trained on budget preparation and decision making process to ensure their effective participation in assembly sessions.

In considering the above process of reforming and informing of basic rights for women, two organizations used top down approach. Specifically titled, they sensitized political parties, parliamentarians, and other decision making groups to confront the most critical issues and very basic rights of women. The mentioned organizations used their resources and stood for the rights of women at local, provincial, and national level.

### **Political Awareness Campaigns**

The two selected organizations made contributions to the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women even at grass root level. They completed a number of activities for increasing women access to information, decision making, and resources. AF organized citizen's campaigns to ensure and maximize women representation in local government elections 1998-99, 2000, and 2005. With the financial aid of OXFAM GB they also completed other programs like Women's effective participation and leadership in decision making process in communities of district Abbottabad and Haripur. AF launched a project for the political awareness of women titled "Legislative Watch Program" in far flung areas by the financial help of Ministry of Foreign Affairs Norway. AF launched campaigns to reserve 33 percent in legislation.

AF launched comprehensive and strategically mobilization campaigns to enhance the women participation in elections as candidates and as voters specifically, in Hazara region in 2006 -2007. Mobilization activities like meetings, seminars, and training workshops, were commenced in collaboration with different stakeholders.

In 2006, AF launched a project "Legislative Watch Program" in Pakistan including the Hazara region with the donation of Royal Norwegian Embassy. The main theme of that project was to assess the allegations of policy, law and court judgments documents for women. Apart from this, LWP project aimed to watch and assess the functions of the political parties, governmental institutions and legislatures.

SDF is one of the organizations that took gender mainstreaming in developmental discourse and performed women empowerment in remote and far flung areas. SDF collaborated with the Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) to provide the political right to the rural women of the Hazara region. Through FAFEN, women were educated about the political process, right to vote, and election system. SDF helped the targeted women to make their National Identity Cards (NICs) and facilitated them in this purpose. After the announcement of the Devolution Plan in the first instance, SDF sensitized, mobilized, and educated the people especially women from all six districts of the Hazara region regarding the electoral process, participatory, and citizens responsive based system of politics. After implementing the devolution plan during Musharraf regime, SDF facilitated technically to the elected Nazims and Councilors regarding their course of responsibility through distribution of reading material and sensitization meetings.

Under Gender Equity Program (GEP) through SDF (Women's Empowerment in Pakistan, 2011), knowledgeable sessions and training workshops were organized in District Battagram, Abbottabad and Mansehra regarding the functions of local government representatives in women empowerment, holistic development, and disaster management in the year 2006.

SDF initiated the number of actions in District Battagram to promote the active and efficient participation of women in politics and their political rights. That project "Gender and Development," was funded by the Department for International Development Fund (DIDF), United Kingdom.

In politics and policymaking of any democracy, when talents, practices, and ideas of women are discriminated, it brings downfall in prosperity and development. Apart from this, it was reported by the World Bank that higher women participation in politics will, lower the intensity of state level corruption. Role of civil society and political contribution of women in policy making are important for democracy. No state can prosper and progress if its fifty percent nation is discriminated. Hence, for any state, the development in democracy and women empowerment go side by side.

### **Socio-economic Contributions**

AF focused on women empowerment through gender responsive budgetary allocations and integration of the concerns of women into policy framework at government level. AF organized campaigns for the recognition of women's work. In the same way, SDF built up Early Childhood Care Education centers in communities of District Haripur and hired community facilitators on honorary basis. SDF executed a health related program to promote prosperous lifestyle for women of the targeted community.

Reduction in diseases and improved health status in the communities was visualized by the health programme as contributed in the development and empowerment. Moreover, SDF launched health related projects to improve women's access to health services in different

locations of the Hazara region. It supported women as health workers and gave them honorary employment and also trained them in community health themes. SDF imparted training to eight community women, resultantly, the trained women got employment as Lady Health Worker with National Health Program in the Haripur district. The employed Lady Health Workers became the source of earning and mean to deliver health services to the people especially, women.

As per annual report 2007, SDF contributed to economic development of women particularly and the community generally, through provision of cash grants. SDF distributed total Rs.2.43 million amounts to 43 women in target area of District Abbottabad. The beneficiaries including 51 percent women Village Counsels produced an amount of Rs.0.91 million through their savings (SDF, 2007).

Through continuous mobilization, SDF sensitized the targeted beneficiaries regarding the importance of crafts for the improved livelihood. It provided support at grass root level to involve the women in IGAs at household level. It supported the targeted women population in skills development, production, and marketing. In the year 2003 and 2004, with the support of SDF, more than 1300 beneficiaries used craft as an enterprise collectively and individually. At the same time, out of 1300 beneficiaries, half of them build up market linkages for improved production and marketing.

As per annual report of SDF, Aga Khan University Karachi financed a project named, "Tawana Pakistan Project" to SDF as a development partner and this project was implemented to benefit in different communities of district Battagram. The main aim of Tawana Pakistan Project was to build understanding regarding education and increase enrollment of girls in schools. Eventually, the goal was to empower female population through participatory approach at community level. Through that project, 179 schools formed by Tawana Committees only involved female students, teachers and female members from the community (SDF, 2005). SDF arranged a workshop in 2006 on International Women Day regarding the "Women Role in Disaster." A large group of people from various walks of life participated in workshop from the targeted districts of the Hazara division. Effective participatory opportunities were provided to the beneficiaries to encourage collective practices at community level.

## **CONCLUSION**

Empowerment enables and facilitates women to meet their needs favorably. Empowerment increases the access to opportunities, resources, political power, and reinforces self-confidence among women. In the very early ages of life, communities needed cooperative human environment and peace in the society, so the idea of civil society has an ancient origin. Early philosophers link civil society with the government and its institutions. According to them, society needs to grow to build liaison among the citizens and between individuals and the state.

Pakistani women, especially in far-flung areas like districts of the Hazara division, have tolerated social cruelty and unkindness in the society. They also have faced a number of challenges in their personal and domestic lives. Women are deprived even for their basic rights and denied their true status in Pakistani society specifically, in rural areas like the Hazara region. There is a need of natural and progressive strategy for women empowerment in the Hazara region. The strategy of such capacity through which women can accomplish and fulfill the possibilities of their rights freely.

The selected nongovernmental organizations worked through both strategies; bottom-up and top-down. Therefore, they influenced policies and laws regarding the pro-women bills such as those for protection against women harassment at workplace, implementation of CEDAW and Acid prevention and control bill etc. NGOs' contributions at grass root level enhanced the understanding of individuals about various issues and their practical solutions. AF and SDF sensitized people specifically, women in different areas of the Hazara region for the resource mobilization and collective efforts for community development in an organized form. The selected organizations enabled the organized community groups for linkages and networking with other organizations and government line agencies for resource management and advocacy initiatives.

In titled time period, the significance of civil society particularly, NGOs could not be overlooked, in bringing awareness and uplifting the socio-economic and political status of women in the Hazara region. NGOs in Hazara did great work for women empowerment. NGOs' work on humanitarian basis mainly focused social rights through advocacy, campaigns, and awareness raising programmes. NGOs exerted influence on governmental institutions through different activities for integrating the international standards about women empowerment and development. Although, the NGOs did not get success in absolute results but in fact, the attitudinal and behavioral changes took place at individual level. Although, the efforts of NGOs regarding change in the society were at micro level, but the struggle behind achieving the success must not be diminished.

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