



From Matrons to Police Officers

Increasing Women's Participation in Police and
Improving Service Delivery for the Women

Policy Brief

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Executive Summary

Sir Robert Peel, the founder of modern policing is often quoted as saying, “Police are public, and public are police.” However, when we apply this principle to women of society and their representation in the police force in Pakistan, it seems we are missing out on a significant part of the “public” in this equation.

Despite acknowledging the unique policing needs that women may have and with the realization that such needs may only be met by the presence of women police officials, it took more than a century for women to be accepted as police officers in the police force. The situation is far from ideal for almost all police forces around the world. Countries in South and Southeast Asia hover around 10 percent when it comes to the participation of women in the police force. Developed countries fare no better. Increasing women’s participation in police forces is the top agenda of the United Nations and almost every government.

Pakistan’s standing, with 3% of women in the police, is among the lowest not just in the region but also in the world. Such a low percentage persists despite the reservation of a 10% quota for women in government jobs since 2007. The situation has shown slight improvement more recently in National Highways and Motorways and Islamabad Capital Police, but the provincial police forces, which employ the bulk of human resources, are lagging, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh. Both demand and supply-side factors are responsible for these staggeringly low numbers, but more so the demand side. On the supply side, there are indeed cultural and social barriers, but low participation in the police is more due to demand issues that discourage women from joining and staying in the police.

The lack of sufficient representation of women in the police adversely affects law and order and justice issues for women in Pakistan. When women are underrepresented in the police, it creates barriers to effectively addressing crimes such as domestic violence, sexual harassment, and other gender-based offenses. Women victims often feel more comfortable reporting these issues to female officers, and their absence can lead to underreporting and inadequate handling of such cases. This situation perpetuates a cycle of injustice and mistrust between women and law enforcement agencies.

Major barriers to women’s inclusion in the police service include inflexible and exclusionary recruitment standards, a lack of career planning, absence of gender-sensitive training, hostile and discouraging work environment, lack of transport and privacy at work, and disregard for maternity issues. Women are not just less in number but are restrained from playing an active role in policing. This lack of participation has far adverse effects on service delivery and access to justice for common women.

The solution lies in adopting a policy to fill the mandated ten percent vacancies as soon as possible through targeted campaigns and relaxing physical fitness standards. To make the change sustainable, policing sub-structures and culture have to adapt to a more gender-responsive approach. This will be possible only when most of the policing tasks are reserved for both men and women in contrast to the present situation when women are restricted to peripheral policing.

In recent years, several measures have been taken to increase the representation of women in Pakistan's police service. The introduction of a 10% quota for women in government service in 2007 marked a significant step forward. However, while this policy has increased the recruitment of women, it has not fully achieved its intended impact.

The quota policy has had more success at the federal level, with a notable increase in women joining the National Highways and Motorways Police and the Islamabad Capital Territory Police. Conversely, the provincial police forces struggle with low female representation, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh. Furthermore, despite these efforts, the overall progress remains slow, and the challenges that women face within the police force persist.

Introduction:

Sir Robert Peel, the founder of modern policing while laying the foundation of the first publicly funded Police department declared in 1829 that “Police are public, and public are police”¹. As the tradition of the time was, public meant generally men, and police meant especially the men. No one thought that women could be police officers, too. First women employed by the police were known as Police Matrons; civilians appointed to search, supervise, and escort women prisoners who very often were the wives of serving police officers². In the USA, New York City hired its first women matrons in 1845³. It took a century of efforts by women activists and the outbreak of the World War for the first women police officer to be recruited in Police. Edith Smith was the first UK female police officer sworn in 1915 with the full power of arrest under the law⁴.

Indian sub-continent followed soon but the path was far slower and more perilous. The equivalent of Police matrons were called as *Aseels* under Nizam Hyderabad to search and supervise the women prisoners⁵. First ever woman police officer of India was one Ms. Kamamma who was recruited in 1933 in the Travancore Royal Police at the age of 18. Her main duty was assisting male officers in arresting women criminals.

The legacy of having the first formal women police officers in the country dates back to the colonial period (1939), when there was a dire need for women police to curtail the farmer’s movement in the Punjab. Since the movement boasted both male and female members, the British administration deemed it necessary to induct women officers. Seven constables and a head constable were recruited back in 1939. They made history as the first female police officers in the subcontinent. In independent Pakistan, the first induction of women police officers was reported to have taken place in 1952, when 25 constables, two head constables, and one Assistant Sub Inspector (ASI) were recruited into Police⁶. Details about the identities or roles of these female police officers are incomplete though.

The swearing in of Benazir Bhutto as Prime Minister of Pakistan in 1988 and 1993 led to the establishment of the first women’s police stations in the country. A police station requires an SHO (station house officer), Moharrar (station clerk), and other staff. They were provided to the women’s police stations, but most senior police supervisors agree that the dedicated women’s police stations suffered from a lack of capacity as well as significance.

The government of Benazir Bhutto is also said to be credited with the induction of the first police officer in police services, Ms. Helena Iqbal in 1996. She had to be transferred to the Police by a special order of the government since there was no provision for women police officers in the Police Service of Pakistan (PSP) even when there have been regular, though small, induction in the junior ranks.

Two developments necessitated the recruitment of women police officers in junior ranks. One was terrorism, and the other was the arrival of independent electronic media and the internet. Security cover became a norm after the rise of terrorist incidents. Women police who were otherwise scantily exposed to police duties for women offenders, were now required for processions, markets, and offices for security checking. Independent electronic media and later mobile phones fitted with internet and cameras led to the proliferation of

citizen journalists who would be crying foul if police raided and searched houses without women police officers. The jobs were still menial but created some demand.

Major growth in the recruitment of women in police was seen post-2007 with the introduction of a 10 percent quota for women in government service. The rule applied to the civil service examination so it had to be applied to the police service of Pakistan as well. Ironically there was no bar on women for joining any other service and women had been joining civil services since 1972 but not the police service. The bar was taken as matter of fact without any deliberated policy.

The quota policy also envisaged that seats reserved for women would not be given to any other category i.e. men and were carried forward. Federal Public Service Commission suddenly woke up and reserved 10 % of the PSP quote in 2007 which turned out to be only one. Ms. Maria Mehmood joined as the second officer directly recruited as Assistant Superintendent of Police 11 years after the induction of the first female ASP. Women however didn't stop at 10 percent and now constitute 30-40 % of the batches of directly recruited ASPs. The progress at the junior ranks on the other hand is not just slow but even going in reverse, the reasons of which will be discussed later in the discussion.

A. Significance of an inclusive and gender-responsive police force

Police forces or police departments are established primarily to ensure access to speedy and impartial Justice. A department that is not represented by an equal proportion of society cannot claim to be fulfilling its purpose. More importantly, the significance of an inclusive police force has increased beyond the routine security and protection duties. The change is necessitated by a rise in crime against women. The rise itself has more to do with the realization that crimes against women already existed in society but were not reported.

Crimes like honour killings, rapes, abductions, forced marriages, harassment, and domestic violence have been there but were rarely reported to the justice system. Since women now constitute a major portion of the victims, a reciprocal proportion is required in the police force to effectively deal with the women-related issues. A recent incident of a woman being harassed by the public for her attire and her consequent rescue by a woman police officer affirms the significance of having more and more women in police⁷.

B. Overview of the current state of women's participation in Police force

Police force or uniformed police organizations are a total of nine in number in the country; four provinces, three federating units (AJK, ICT, GB), and two specialized forces (Railways & Motorways Police).

The figures of police strength, however, vary due to turnover and varied databases. Draft National Gender Responsive Policing Framework by the National Police Bureau puts the participation of women at a meager 3%. The percentage of women in each of the police Organizations is given in Table 1⁸.

S No.	Police Organization	Total Strength	Percentage of Women
1.	National Highways & Motorway Police	13,272	6.31%
2.	Islamabad Capital Territory Police	11,634	5.04%
3.	Punjab Police	204,000	4.40%
4.	Pakistan Railways Police	7,279	3.77%
5.	Gilgit-Baltistan Police	7,363	3.36%
6.	Sindh Police	119,241	2.62%
7.	Azad Jammu & Kashmir Police	8,427	2.48%
8.	Balochistan Police	45,437	1.74%
9.	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police	129,516	1.46%
	Total		3%

C. Men vs Women Distribution in Police forces

Table – 2

	Men	Women
Total Strength	489,645	15,509
BS 20-22	100 %	0
BS 17-19	96.2 %	3.8 %
BS 11-16 (ASI-Insp)	98 %	2 %
Foreign Trainings attended	2407	262
Local Training attended	80,792	7,440
Recruited in last 4 years	84.9 %	15.1 %
	(64,640)	(11,321)

Overall, the gender ratio and women’s participation in the PSP presents a discouraging picture with the participation of women still falling far below the standards of even 10

percent. The only encouraging statistic is the last row showing recruitment of women constituting 15% within the last four years. Adding this to the total women strength of 15,000, one sees that 11,000 i.e. 77% of the women police force have been recruited in the last four years, and if the same trend continues, one can expect some quick catching up.

International comparisons however make our situation quite sobering. In England and Wales, the women's participation in the overall force in 2014 was 28% and for the posts of chief Inspectors and above, women occupied 21% of the positions⁹. The women's strength in the UK has steadily risen to 34.9% by 2022¹⁰.

Bangladesh with the induction of the first batch of female police officers in 1975 is far from ideal but one notable aspect is the rise in percentage from 2.2% in 2008 to 8.69% by April 2024¹¹. India boasts of the first women police station in Kerala and with its first woman, ASP Ms. Kiran Bedi inducted in 1972, is also steady with 11.7% women in the police force¹².

Though the notable mention would be Indian-occupied Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) having the lowest women ratio at 3.3%. If this is attributable to the insurgency or to the Muslims being in the majority is yet to be seen. Nepal is also in the same bracket with 10.9% of women in the Police force¹³. Sri Lanka would be called best in the South Asia region with approximately 15% of women police officers in its police force¹⁴.

Outside South Asia, Indonesia has a similar situation, with 6% of women in the Police force as of 2022¹⁵. Malaysia is a notable outlier with women constituting 18% of the police force¹⁶ according to a study in 2020, and 16% according to the latest statistics¹⁷.

Table 3 - Women's Participation in Police Service in South and South East Asia

S. No.	Country	Women Percentage in Police	Women Police Strength
1.	Malaysia	16 %	16,300
2.	Sri Lanka	15 %	8878
3.	India	11.7 %	240,000
4.	Nepal	10.9 %	8899
5.	Bangladesh	8.69%	16,843
6.	Indonesia	6 %	25,700
7.	Pakistan	3 %	15,509

The developed countries do show significant variation too. Countries like Italy and Portugal are still in the lower bracket while the United Kingdom has shown significant progress.

Table - 4: Women in Police – The West/Developed Countries (2019)¹⁸

S No.	Country	Women Percentage in Police
1.	Italy	7.13 %
2.	Portugal	7.47 %
3.	United States	12 %
4.	Mexico	13.56 %
5.	Singapore	18 %
6.	France	19 %
7.	United Kingdom	28 %
8.	Latvia	37.4 %

Gaps in Police Service Delivery

The absence of women from mainstream police functions creates a serious gap in public service delivery. Male-dominated policing renders the police forces as a body that is OF the MEN and for the MEN. A male-only or male-dominated police force cannot be called egalitarian that serves the public as a whole when almost half of the population is discouraged from approaching them. Some of the specific gaps that a male-dominated police service faces include:

i. Gender-Specific gaps:

a. Discrimination is the most obvious challenge. A woman approaching the justice system faces persistent discrimination as a victim, witness, and offender. The discrimination is worse in the last case. More women in the police force can mitigate if not remove this discrimination. The discrimination is not limited to women outside the police force. Women within the police also face discrimination at the hands of their male colleagues as well as the general public. The only way out of this challenge is to have women achieve the scale and bring in more women at leadership positions.

b. Gender-based Violence is a common phenomenon in our society. United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), while quoting the DHS 2012/2013, has found that 32 percent of women have experienced physical violence in Pakistan and 40 percent of ever-married women have suffered domestic abuse at some point in their life¹⁹. Police reporting on the latter remains low and prosecution even lower. In 2021, 26,134 cases of violence against women, 19,271 of kidnapping of women, 4,660 of rape, and 822 of domestic violence were reported only in Punjab, Sindh and Islamabad²⁰. These 50,000-plus cases are a fraction of the cases registered. B However, a more alarming figure would be that in 2021, there were not more than 3000 women in the police force to provide relief to fifty thousand plus distressed women while doing their security and public order duties.

c. Lack of Gender-sensitive Approaches in Policing - Policing in Pakistan suffers from typical *masculinity bias* as policing in Pakistan remains an overwhelmingly masculine profession²¹. A policewoman's perceived lack of physical presence, tough physique, and, above all, lack of masculinity has long been used as a rational and legitimate reason for their exclusion²². More significantly and worryingly, masculinity persists in most modern policing systems despite the increasing participation of women²³. The "ideal worker" as per Silvestri, who personifies imagery of men and masculinity permeates the organizational processes and cultural beliefs, marginalizing women and ultimately contributing to the maintenance of gender difference within organization. In the case of Police in Pakistan, the ideal worker would be male, strong, tough, dominating, and often violent. With its emphasis on physicality, the 'crime fighting' model of policing holds much in line with such characterization. It is easy to understand how women become 'outsiders' and deemed 'deficient' and 'unsuited' for the core policing work.

The lack of gender-sensitive approach is both cause and effect of lack of participation of women in police force. It is a cause because the kind of masculine work being done by police only necessitates the masculine presence of police officers. But it is also an effect as the police do not have enough women's voices to present an alternative to masculine policing. Gender-sensitive policing is thus considered *weak* policing. Women in police are

faced with dilemma; whether to indulge in strong policing as an imitator, or keep on doing the weak policing. Nowadays the erstwhile weak policing has also received a boost called *soft policing* or soft image. Women police officers inadvertently land in the soft image domain which invariably affects their professional growth.

d. Effect of Gendered Policing on Women's Participation - The myth of *strong* policing has affected the demand side of women's participation while the culture is playing an adversarial role on the supply side. Low women police participation is not just because of unwillingness on the part of women. It has more to do with the lack of reception on the part of the Police i.e. male police who consider women as a liability rather than an asset. The conventional police thinking is rooted in both *social and professional conservatism*. Neither do they want to have progressive outlook nor want to try fresh approach to police. The result is institutional misogyny. Not that the supply side is not important. For instance, a lack of women's participation in KP province's police has more to do with the cultural factors though institutional response is also rather muted.

e. Discriminatory Practices and Lack of Gender Sensitivity - The masculinity bias manifests itself in a lack of sensitivity in behavior and language. The macho culture encourages the use of foul and obscene language at work-place which is justified as a natural reaction that comes while dealing with delinquents and criminals. Women are deemed misfits in this culture and are discriminated against when assigned professional tasks like investigation and high-profile security. This in turn translates into women victims and even women offenders being discriminated against at the hands of male (and macho) police officers.

The National Commission on Status of Women has noted with concern that not a single case of domestic violence against women was registered under the Punjab Protection of Violence Against Women Act 2016. The issue now is not the absence of legislation but the institutional capacity and willingness to implement it. The obvious conclusion to be reached in this situation is the correlation between the registration of cases of violence against women and the participation of women in the police force.

Women's Participation in Police: Challenges and Barriers

Women, before and after joining the police force, face multiple challenges and barriers. These barriers have to be removed if substantial change is to be brought in policing.

i. Recruitment Bias:

Women face the first barrier when they apply for the posts dedicated to them in the Police department. The recruitment standards for Police have been centered on male standards besides being outdated. The constabulary and masculine model of policing encouraged having sturdy and strong policemen. The strength is manifested in height and chest while agility is measured with running ability. Even the male police personnel are supposed to be above the median height of the population. The same criterion is slightly lowered arbitrarily without taking into consideration the following:

- a. median difference between males and females' heights in general population.
- b. difference of average height in different regions/groups
- c. comparison between physical activities performed generally by boys and girls
- d. restraint and hesitation on part of girls to indulge in activities that are not generally attributed to girls.

Table - 5: The current physical recruitment Standards for females in different police forces²⁴

S No.	Police Department	Height	Running
1.	Punjab	5'2"	1.6 Kms in 10 Mins
2.	Sindh	5'	800 meter in 14 mins (walk)
3.	KP	5'1"	1 km in 9 mins (NMD) 1 km in 8 mins (Others)
4.	Gilgit-Baltistan	5'3"	1.6 Km in 10 mins
5.	Islamabad Police	5'2"	1.5 miles in 15 mins
6.	Motorways Police	5'4"	1 mile in 14 mins (speed walk)
7.	Railways Police	5'2"	1 mile in 10 mins
8.	Balochistan	5' (constable/Traffic/Insp/DSP) 5'3" (ASI)	Constables – 1 km in 7 mins ASI/Insp/DSP- NA Sargent & Corporal – 1 mile in 11 mins & 15 sit-ups in 90 secs

The comparison of recruitment standards shows a lack of standardization and a general approach of slightly lowering the male-centered physical standards for females. The height criterion appears reasonable except for 5'3" in Gilgit Baltistan and Motorway Police. The latter would justify it because generally, traffic police have higher physical standards. The major variation is however seen in the running requirements which range from the normal walk for Sindh police (800 m in 14 mins) to speed walk for Motorway Police (1 mile or 1600 m in 14 mins) to an average of one mile run in 10 mins and 1.5 miles in 15 minutes for Islamabad Police.

Police forces would argue for higher qualifying standards for having sound fitness before the intense training. On the other hand, there can be counter-argument that a). for not reflecting the social conditions b). the nature of the police job is also changing c). physical fitness can be achieved in basic training. It may also be noted that there have been no pre-requisite standards for officers to be recruited in the Police Service of Pakistan through the Civil Service Examination except for medical fitness. Same has been continued after the female started joining the officer cadre since 2007.

ii. Accessibility and Environmental Factors:

Policing has been justified as a male-dominated occupation because of round-the-clock work requirements and the risk attached to police work. Security, the core policing area, is a 24/7-hour job. Patrolling and picketing are also night time activities. Investigation also requires long hours; to conduct raids and interrogations and to follow the leads on cases. Police establishments thus run at all hours and masculine barrack culture pervades police establishments. Force discipline is also relaxed during the wee hours with police officers literally called as the young (jawans) who are expected to be on their own. Working long hours is not just an occupational requirement but is also taken as an important trait of the 'ideal worker'. Even the men, who hesitate to indulge in full-time policing, are cast aside.

Females find such an environment disturbing and challenging in which work is long hours and facilities are inadequate. Separate lodgings for women are either not provided or remain insufficient. Women face transport issues from their homes to the workplace. Most police facilities have no separate washrooms. Advanced facilities like daycare are still a far cry. Women, to start with, are hesitant to be assigned night duties and even do not find the environment conducive²⁵.

In a peer-reviewed study conducted by researchers of Sindh University Jamshoro on the women police officers in District Dadu,²⁶ it was found that female officers face a variety of challenges, such as gender bias and discrimination, inadequate training and resources, lack of career guidance, limited facilities, difficulty obtaining trust and cooperation from the community, and difficulty balancing maternity and child care. The survey responses showed their middle to low level of satisfaction with various job aspects. The table below shows their specific responses in this regard.

Employment information	Yes %	No %
Job satisfaction	62 %	38 %
Satisfaction with posted area	59 %	41 %
Transport facility	14 %	86 %
Working environment satisfaction	52 %	48 %
Job security	17 %	83 %
Medical allowance	21 %	79%

The police leadership acknowledges the scale of problem, but justifies their current approach due to the status quo and on the grounds of the scale and job requirements. Scale is a managerial issue. Women are still too low in number and too scattered to be provided with dedicated facilities. And where these facilities are available, they remain idle. The police leadership cannot change the fact that police are required at odd hours and police is an outdoor job unlike hospitals which work at odd hours too but within a building. If at all, this is the demand side issue, outside the control of the Police leadership. Women are welcome to do the job as long they are ready to accept the current challenges the organization faces and the compromises the job is required to make. Such thinking represents a lack of commitment to having gender-responsive policing and is indifferent to the benefits that will come from gender conducive workplace.

iii. Limited Career Progression for Women:

Police personnel in Pakistan are generally divided into two groups; junior and senior ranks. Even in junior ranks, which start from Constable and reach Inspector, the constables constitute the majority. Assistant Sub-Inspector is the first step of executive ranks in police – those having legal and operational authority. Female Police officers are recruited at all three ranks but suffer from limited career prospects due to three reasons; they get few opportunities to perform executive and command duties like investigation and Station House Officer (SHO), the ranks are further divided at a lower level into male and female right from the start which narrows the promotion path and thirdly females get few opportunities in specialized trainings.

iv. Work-life Balance Challenges:

The challenges of work-life balance are common for women in every workforce. The challenge is more pronounced for women in police. Police officers routinely argue that there is no conscious and institutional bias towards females’ retention in police. Rather, more women are needed due to the change in policing requirements. It’s the females who prefer family and children over the job. The argument is without merit on the ground that not much effort has been seen to create a work environment conducive to women’s needs. In a

country where permanent government job is most sought after and coveted, police department is still finding it hard to retain women. This says a lot about the absence of work-life balance in police.

Best Practices from Global and Regional Contexts

Government agencies and police departments all over the world are taking extra measures to ensure equal participation of women in police forces. In the United States, a coalition of police leaders, researchers, and professional organizations have joined together to start the 30 x 30 initiative i.e. to achieve 30 percent women representation in police by the year 2030²⁷. *Police Chief*, the magazine for the International Association of Police Chiefs cites the following measures which have worked in increasing police representation under 30 x 30 initiative²⁸

- Sustained leadership support
- Women-centered approaches
- Intentional recruitment campaigns
- Streamlined & supportive application processes
- Clear pregnancy & maternity policies
- Part-time options & job sharing
- Women-specific equipment and uniforms
- Mentorships and women's networks

In a study to test the effectiveness of recruiting material in the USA, the results indicated that women-focused recruitment material significantly improves perceptions of motivation to apply, and creates positive perceptions of the material for women participants.²⁹

Conclusion:

There are important lessons to be concluded from observations and analysis on the status of women in Policing. The key lessons are;

- i. Participation of Women in Police in Pakistan is lowest not just in the region but in the world.
- ii. The lack of participation of women is due to both demand and supply side factors.
- iii. On the supply side, women face social and cultural challenges to join uniformed force that requires long hours and involves risks to life.
- iv. On the demand side:
 - a. Recruitment and training are the key areas which are still exclusionary instead of being inclusive and encouraging. Physical fitness requirement is the main reason of women's exclusion.
 - b. Work environment, long duty hours, lack of transport, and lack of privacy are major detrimental factors for women in police.
- v. Lack of women in workforce is the main reason for the denial of access to justice to women.
- vi. Police is neither willing nor ready to change the way of working to do gender-responsive policing that will have more place for women.

- vii. The major recruitment drives in the last five years have boosted women's participation in the police but sustainability of this increased participation has to be ensured.

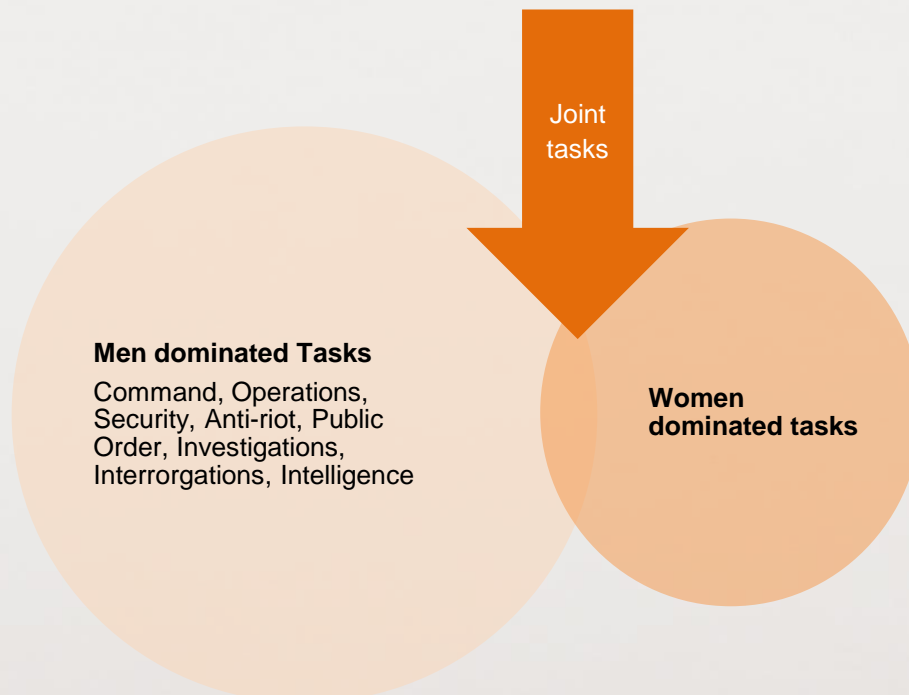
The Case for Change & Way Forward

Police in Pakistan is finding it hard to change their orientation for the sake of women. Scale has emerged as the major issue. There are few women right now who find it hard to adjust to the way and means of police. Scale is an issue due to a lack of focus on the part of government. The goal should be to have at least one-third of the police force represented by women. Relevant organizational literature highlights the importance of “critical mass” which suggests that changes to the organizational culture are most likely to be enabled when minority groups achieve a presence of around 35%. When that happens in Pakistan, the issue of scale will be settled.

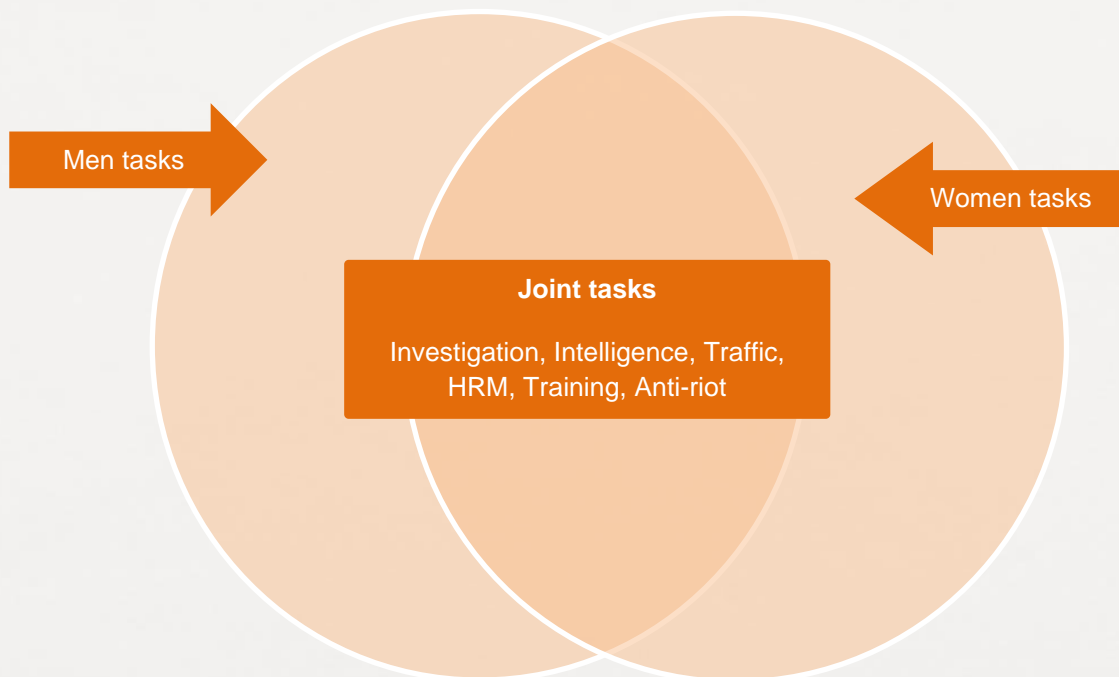
The issue of job requirements is also linked with scale. Keeping in the cultural factors, there can be women-only patrols and security pickets as has been done in many countries. There are also women doing traffic duties during the day time. With sufficient strength, they can do it at night too. As far as police culture is concerned, the change is long due. After all, Police claims to be as much a civilized institution as any other. Dealing with delinquents does not change the requirements of decency. More women in police will make the police more responsive to the needs of women in the society. This on its own will bring a sea change in the attitudes and behavior of police bringing much-needed change in police culture.

The numbers are important but not enough, necessary but not sufficient. Recruiting more women into the police service without changing the foundations or the ‘substructure’ within the police environment is not going to bring desired organizational change and improvements in public service delivery. Police has to alter the concept of ideal worker and realize that there are many jobs in which men can perform better and there are many tasks in which women can perform better, but there are more tasks in which both can perform equally well.

Police task distribution (present):



Police task distribution (future):



Presently there are very few tasks which men and women police officers do jointly or women do on their own. Ideally and as per best practice, most of the tasks will have to be performed jointly or by either male or female police officials without any discrimination. There will still be tasks that will be performed by men only like building security just as there will be tasks which may be performed exclusively by women like dealing with women and children-related crimes.

Road Map and Way Forward

The way forward to improve the participation of women in policing and consequently the overall public service delivery has to center around five priority areas:

- i. **Political Commitment:** Political will is the first step for prioritizing women and gender in policing. Ten percent quota is official policy but the target still appears elusive. Without the respective political governments prioritizing the ten percent target, the situation will not improve. Another option can be to link the budget allocations with the improvement in women's participation in the police.
- ii. **Gender-responsive recruitment:** The first priority should be to have gender-responsive recruitment strategies coupled with targeted outreach programs. As has been found in this study, the physical fitness requirement is too stringent and exclusionary given the social and cultural barriers. Physical fitness standards on the lines of Sindh Police, if adopted by all police forces will ease the pressure. Targeted campaigns highlighting the role of women role models and involving community support will also make a huge difference.

- iii. **Capacity building and Postings:** Providing gender-sensitive training for police officers, enhancing women's leadership development programs, and establishing support networks within the police force are essential for retaining women in police. Right now, women and men have separate and distinct training courses at the recruitment level which maybe continued but gradually a matrix can be developed to create joint courses as the participation of women increases. Women need to be mentored for the tasks that make them relevant professionally. Affirmative action is the only solution for now. Four important field positions – Station Clerk (Moharar), Station House Officer (SHO), Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO), and District Police Officer (DPO), need to have at least 15 percent quota reserved for women police officers.
- iv. **Service Delivery Improvements:** Police has been grappling with changing the police station environment through a number of initiatives like model police stations (MPS), Special Initiative Police Stations (SIPS), and Police Khidmat Markaz (PKM). Most of these initiatives have tried to create parallel structures while the police station has been left to function the conventional way. More women will lead the way in creating female-friendly police stations thus ensuring women's access to justice through specialized units and helplines, and promoting community engagement and outreach programs. Women police stations have been functioning for three decades but have failed to make an impact. There is a need to re-imagine the women's police stations and turn them into full-fledged and fully-resourced women's police centers in urban centers.
- v. **Monitoring and Accountability:** The final step in the roadmap is to establish mechanisms for monitoring progress on gender equality within the police force, and conducting regular assessments of service delivery for women and marginalized communities. Gender audits should be a routine feature to ensure that police functions and structures are aligned with the gender framework. Anti-harassment forums have to be established within the police forces as the strength of women increases.

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