



CPDI Hosts Seminar "Breaking Barriers: Inspiring Stories of Women" in Celebration of International Women's Day

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The Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI) commemorated International Women's Day 2024 with a one-day seminar titled "Breaking Barriers: Inspiring Stories of Women." Under the theme of 'Investing in women: Accelerate progress,' the event shed light on the indispensable roles of decent work and gender equality.

The seminar commenced with opening remarks by Mr. Mukhtar Ahmad Ali, Executive Director of CPDI, who emphasized the importance of creating an inclusive society for all genders. He highlighted the progress towards women's inclusion in various fields but stressed the need for further efforts to ensure gender parity, particularly in decision-making processes and mitigating violence against women.

The first panel discussion, "Paving the Way: Women Leaders Shaping Political Landscapes," featured distinguished speakers who shared their experiences and insights. Former MPA Samar Haroon Bilal advocated for encouraging women's participation in politics on general seats rather than reserved seats, highlighting the challenges she faced, including online harassment and patriarchal pressure.

Dr. Shahida Rehmani, MNA of PPP, emphasized the need to increase women's participation in decision-making roles, citing the positive performance of female elected parliamentarians. Dr. Savera Parkash, a politician from PPP, underscored the importance of prioritizing girl child education and combating toxic masculinity to promote female participation. Ms. Tahira Aurangzeb, Member of the National Assembly (MNA) from the Pakistan Muslim League (N) (PML-N), emphasizing women's empowerment in politics through breaking barriers and actively participate in decision-making processes. I encourage all women to step forward, claim their rightful place, and contribute to building a more inclusive and equitable society. Dr. Saveera Parkash, the first Hindu woman nominated for provincial elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, eloquently expressed her views that as women, we hold immense potential to shape our nation's future. Our voices matter, and it is crucial that we break down barriers hindering our participation in decision-making processes. Let us actively claim our rightful place and contribute to building a more inclusive and equitable society.

The second panel, "Investing in Her: The Power of Women's Economic Empowerment," addressed the significance of women's economic empowerment. Panelists discussed various challenges and opportunities for women in different sectors, emphasizing the need for creating a safer and inclusive environment. Panellist from various background including Ms. Beenish Fatima, SP CIA Rawalpindi, Tanzeela Mazhar, a know Journalist, Ms. Amna Masood, Data Analysts and CEO of Maven Logix, Ms. Abia Akram, Disability Right Activist, Ms. Manmeet Kaur and others shared their inspiring stories.

Additionally, Ms. Gulmina Bilal, Chairperson of the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTEC), announced the launch of an exclusive capacity-building program for women called "I Can Fix" (Theek Kr Dungi), aimed at empowering women in technical fields.

Ms. Nosheen Khurram concluded the seminar by presenting a Charter of Demands for Women's Political Empowerment advocates for universal access to national identity cards within two years, a void poll if women's turnout falls below 20%, publication of gender-disaggregated voter turnout data, and an annual Gender Action Plan by the Election Commission. It calls for constitutional amendments guaranteeing 33% women representation in legislatures and local governments, 20% of general seat tickets to women, and 33% women in all forums/committees. Legislative rules should mandate 33% women chairpersons of standing committees, strengthened local government provisions emphasizing 33% women representation, and inclusive administrative systems. Additionally, political education and leadership programs for women are proposed.

The seminar concluded with a renewed commitment to advancing gender equality and empowering women across all sectors of society.

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