

Project Completion Report

Program for Strengthening Democratic Local Governance in Sialkot-Pakistan
(May- 2019 to April -2020)



BAIDARIE

House No. 13/7-B, Model Town Uggoki, Tehsil & District Sialkot
Tel: 0092-52-3514246-48

✉ arshidmirza2010@gmail.com ✉ hina.baidarie@gmail.com

🌐 www.baidarie.org.pk 🌐 facebook.com/baidarie



Index

Sr	Topic	Page No,
1	Executive Summary	1
2	Chapter-I: Project Objectives	2
3	Chapter-II: Project Interventions	3
4	Development, Printing & Dissemination of IEC material	3-3
5	Project Launching Ceremony	3-6
6	Interventions to empower “Left-Behind Social Segments”	6-8
7	Development of Project specific Face Book page	9-9
8	Publication of Motivational Messages	9-9
9	Street Theatre Performances	9-9
10	Facilitation in Issuance of CNICs to women and their registration as voters	10-10
11	Community Awareness Raising	10-12
12	Motivational training sessions with “Left- behind Social Segments”	12-17
13	Women Voters' Education Session	17- 17
14	Provision of information to women, non-Muslims, youth, peasants and workers about salient features of Local Bodies Act 2019	18- 18
15	Conduct of Tehsil Level Seminars	19- 37
16	Discussions on F.M. Radio among panel of Experts	38- 43
17	Chapter-III: Impact of Spread of COVID-19 and Organizational Response	44- 44
18	Chapter-XIV: From the Press Gallery	45-45

The initiative titled “Programme for strengthening democratic local governance in Sialkot (Punjab) Pakistan” has been designed to contribute to all-inclusive participation of women, Non-Muslims, male & female youth, peasants and workers in electoral politics in the boarder context of overall democratization of the governmental and societal formations and functions.

The project has been designed in cognizance of the fact that effective functioning of the “Local Governance Entities” toeing the line of the universally adopted democratic principles, values and norms tangibly contributes to the fostering of culture of respect for basic human rights in country' socioeconomic, legal and administrative deliverables and the societal conducts and behaviors. Unfortunately, over several preceding decades the local government system in Pakistan has not experienced consistence in its structural built up and in performance of its legally required functions. Instead of empowering the people and their representatives and strengthening of the institutions, the system has continuously been subjected to different kinds of experiments. It resulted in instability and inconsistency of the functions of local governance entities to pace up the process of local development, delivery of services and efficient functioning of grievance addressing mechanisms at gross root levels. The only standalone feature which has been consistently prevalent in Pakistan's local governance system is that women in the elections to local governance entities have always been under represented as voters, candidates and election administrators. Severally, the participation of elected women representatives in the functioning of the local bodies is managed through male proxies.

Civic and political leaders in the non-Muslim community have always been complaining of the reduced ability of minorities to obtain meaningful representation in the functioning of the local government system. Nomination of youth (Always meant to be the male youth), peasants and workers for the reserved seats and providing them with the space to efficiently and effectively perform their legally ordained roles and responsibilities has habitually been the extra-legal prerogative of the ruling political elite. This pattern of practices virtually denies opportunities of representation and effective participation to the “Left-Behind social segments” in local governance entities. They simply cannot pursue their own independent priorities and preferences and of course cannot act to protect and promote the rights of the communities they represent. In perfect realization of the ground realities stated above, Baidarie planned to make pragmatic interventions for empowering the “Left-Behind Social Segments” by capitalizing the opportunity of the elections to “local governance entities” expected be held in Punjab during mid of 2020. In specific terms the organization planned to act at the proposed scale of eight thousand (8,000) households at forty (40) locations in twelve (12) union councils in all the four (4) tehsils of Sialkot district (Punjab).

The project plan of action aimed at **(a)** Softening barriers restricting participation of “Left -Behind Social Segments” in mainstream political phenomenon and **(b)** Capacity development of the newly elected representatives for effective and efficient performance of their legally prescribed roles and **(c)** Promoting trends of accountability of the elected representatives /public office holders against their performance to meet their legally required roles and responsibilities.

At the impact level, all of the proposed interventions have been designed to positively influence the capacity of not only the direct beneficiaries of the project to vigorously challenge the efforts aiming at squeezing the access & limiting the spaces for the “Left-Behind social segments” to political inclusion and decision-making in social and political spheres but will also set precedence of all-inclusive political empowerment in a district of 3.89 million people. It was anticipated that successful implementation of the project in a time span of twelve (12) months will evolve a measurable, describable and replicable model of “Democratic governance at local levels in Sialkot (Punjab) Pakistan” to display that meticulously designed and effectively made interventions can make positive difference for promoting democratic norms, values & traditions.

The project completion report represents a detailed overview of the objectives, activities carried out, output/outcome level results and futuristic dimensions for the similar interventions.

Project Objectives:

The project has been designed to contribute to fostering such culture of democratic local governance in twelve Union Councils (40 Locations) located in all the four (4) Tehsils of District Sialkot (Punjab) Pakistan as will (a) be inclusive of “left Behind Social Segments and (b) contribute to inculcating and reinforcing transparent, efficient and accountable governance practices at the level of local governance entities. It will also aim at promoting trends and practices of holding elected representatives and public office holders accountable for their performance in terms of their legally ordained roles and responsibilities.

Specific Objective(s): The designed project aimed to achieve the following specific objectives in a time span of twelve (12) months (May 1, 2019 to April 30, 2020).

- ✦ To contribute to (a) mobilize forty (40) communities in Sialkot district for providing adequate spaces and enabling environment to the “Left Behind Social Segments” to be active partners of mainstream political electoral process (b) sensitize the voters to take well thought out decisions while exercising their right to vote and (c) increase women voters' turnover in respective forty (40) communities by 28 % during the next local bodies elections expected to be held during 2020.
- ✦ To build the capacity of sixty (60) elected representatives (Women, Non-Muslims, male & female youth, peasants and workers @ five (5) Per Union Council to be vigilant, active and effective components of local government entities.
- ✦ To equip the direct beneficiaries and relevant communities with the knowledge and skills to hold elected representatives and public office holders accountable for their performance.

Operational Area of the Project

The operational jurisdiction for making the proposed interventions comprises of those forty (40) communities (each having approximately 200 households) in all the four tehsils in Sialkot District where Baidarie with the support provided by NED has already been making interventions for women's political empowerment.

Project Interventions

1. Training for Project Implementation Team

Four (4) days training session for the project team was organized at Baidarie head office. **Ms. Hina Noureen V. President Baidarie and Mr. Arshid Mehmood Mirza** Executive Director provided detailed orientation to the operational team on the Project backdrop & rationality, objectives, expected qualitative and quantitative output results and the project implementation methodology, the roles and responsibilities of the project implementation team and the time frame for conduct of each activity.

Mr. Muhammad Rashid General Manager apprised the team of the Admin, Procurement and Finance policies and procedures. The training sessions comprised of information delivery, discussions, Group work, presentations, role model demonstrations, brainstorming and question answer sessions. After the initial orientation cum training sessions, the process of the capacity building of the team through provision of professional advice on the best approaches for tackling the encountering challenges, risk mitigation strategies, building on strengths, capitalizing the relations with communities and linkages development with relevant stakeholders continued during the entire reporting period.

2. Development, Printing & Dissemination of IEC material

One thousand (1000) Brochures, 7000 Posters, 10,000 Pamphlets were developed and published providing brief introduction of Project, background, objectives of the project and the awareness raising matter and information related to the Project objectives. This material was distributed among the communities and the other stakeholders during the project related activities.

3. Project Launching Ceremony

Project launching ceremony was organized at Jeevan Hotel Sialkot on June, 17 2019. The objective of this ceremony was to provide orientation about the project and solicit support from the relevant stakeholders for making the project a workable model of all-inclusive political empowerment of “Left-Behind Social Segments” and democratization of society. One hundred and forty nine (149) participants including govt. functionaries, elected representatives, CSOs, NADRA, Election Commission of Pakistan, local govt. officials, opinion leaders, political and social activists, media and community representatives participated in the ceremony.



Ms. Khawar Mumtaz Chairperson “National Commission on the Status of women” delivering the keynote address at the occasion said that three things are absolutely necessary for women to be vigilant and active partners of mainstream of everyday life. They must be politically empowered, economically self-reliant and immune to every sort of discrimination and harassment. After taking adequate care of these factors Pakistan will be able to move forward in an honorable and self-reliant way. **Ms. Khawar** said that till now 102 Million women in Pakistan stand unregistered as voters with Election Commission of Pakistan. Not only every possible effort should be made to register these women as voters but also they should be enabled to play very effective role in improving the formations and functions of governance in the country.





Addressing the participants of the ceremony, **Mian Muhammad Rafiq Ahsan Additional Deputy Commissioner General Sialkot** said that women constitute almost 50% of our population. There is a dire need that women should be provided with the optimum opportunities to contribute to the cause of national development. Women are aware of their problems and they themselves know the best suited solutions. He lauded the role of Baidarie Sialkot for making strenuous efforts for removing bottlenecks obstructing the process of women development and empowerment.

Mr. Irfan Mufti Chairperson Baidarie BoD and Deputy Executive Director South Asia Partnership-Pk said while addressing the participants said, "I have a firm conviction that Pakistan is changing. People are becoming more conscious and then have begun raising questions. The source of change is embedded in the improved level of vigilance of the common man.



Ms. Hina Noureen Vice President Baidarie while addressing the participants stated that Women & girls are habitually socialized to believe that politics is men's job so they should keep themselves restricted to the fulfillment of their gender defined roles as household level caregivers. It is considered inappropriate for women & girls to take part in the political campaigns run in general public. The lesser orientation and information in religious minorities, male and female youth, peasants and workers about the need, importance and utility of the role they can play for (a) safeguarding and promoting the peoples' basic human rights (b) making the pro-people decisions through the platform of democratically elected bodies, (c) advocacy and lobbying with the administrative formations for across the board implementation of the pro-people decisions and (d) fostering socially democratic culture embedded in universally acknowledged democratic principles, norms and values keeps them away from stepping forward to participate in the democratic processes.

Theater Performance. Mr. Touqeer Rizvi introduced the objective and actors of play "**Jamhor ki Awaz**" (Voices of the people). He stated that the play aims at raising awareness among people to use their right of vote discreetly without accepting any sort of pressure from the powerful people. He added that marginalized segments of society including Women, workers, farmers, transgender, disabled people and Non- Muslims should elect their true representatives in pursuance of their thoughts and freely made choices. After that the artists performed the play "**Jamhor ki Awaz**" (Voices of the people) to highlight the power of vote, and how the discreetly made decision to cast votes for electing eligible representatives can help in solving problems and improving their socioeconomic and living conditions.





Prof. Arshid Mehmood Mirza said that Baidarie Sialkot with the support provided by National Endowment for Democracy (NED) has been making efforts since May 2016 till to date to boost up the process of the women's political empowerment living at 40 selected locations in District Sialkot. This process has been satisfactorily successful in terms of (a) increase in efforts by women to make reasonably made decisions while exercising their right to vote and (b) significant increase in turn out of women voters (recorded as 62% during general elections held on 25 July 2018) against the total lot of registered women voters in operational areas of the project.

Building on the organizational strengths stated above, the proposed initiative, "Programme for strengthening democratic local governance in Sialkot (Punjab) Pakistan" has been designed for empowering the women, Non- Muslims, male & female youth, peasants and workers in political terms through (a) improving conceptual clarity of the relevant stakeholders including the direct beneficiaries of the programme on the importance of respect for the basic human rights and civil liberties, (b) softening social, cultural and procedural barriers restricting participation of "Left -Behind Social Segments" in mainstream political phenomenon and (c) filling gaps in the capacity of the "Left -Behind Social Segments" to evolve and emerge as conscious, self-motivated, energetic and effective participants of the democratic electoral processes. He added that Baidarie plans to make more efforts to develop the capacity of forty (40) volunteers (20 Male + 20 Female) by improving their knowledge, skill, operational strategies and working patterns for increasing effectiveness of their efforts for pragmatically advancing the process of political empowerment of "Left -Behind Social Segments" on sustainable basis. The trained volunteers in collaboration with the project team of Baidarie and relevant stakeholders will motivate the local opinion and decision makers in eight thousand (8,000) households at forty (40) locations in all the four tehsils of Sialkot .

Malik Tahir Akhtar Awan Ex- Member Provincial Assembly Punjab said that inconsistent experimentation in functioning of the local governance institutions leads to failure in effective service delivery to the people and inefficient and insufficient efforts for addressing the grievances of the common people. If the local bodies' institutions are let to uninterruptedly work while having necessary powers, sufficient funds and a system of above board accountability then the country will make much needed progress.



Mr. Muhammad Iqbal Ghumman – a well-known social and political activist remarked that the vigorous functioning of the class system in our social fabric does not let the poor come forward. Until and unless, this conservative and non-progressive practice is changed we cannot succeed in changing the conditions of our society. It is a common observation, that women work with maximum responsibility when some task is assigned to them. If women are enabled and encouraged to participate in the political process, then a significant improvement will be observed in the policy and decision making functions of our institutions. He emphatically requested the women to not to be shy in taking interest in political process instead they must step forward to be active components of the local governance entities.



Dr. Mariam Noman Chairperson of Women Resource Center at Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah-Father of the nation himself encouraged women to be part of the political process by enabling Ms. Fatima Jinnah and several other women to take part in the political process. She lamented that effective participation of women in local governance is touching the lowest level in the country. She added that Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry has set an example in the country by having at least 100 women in its members and now we are moving forward

Its Women Resource Center has initiated an outreach programme and has registered 52 rural women entrepreneurs as its members. In collaboration with Baidarie Sialkot, WRC has organized 10 days training session on E-Marketing and On-Line business for a batch of 16 of these women.

Interventions to empower “Left-Behind Social Segments”

4.1 Selection of Communities

For the purposes of continuity in actions and sustainability of impacts, the project team selected those forty (40) communities in district Sialkot where it has been making interventions in respect of NED supported Programme for “Women's Political Empowerment”. Each of these communities comprised of 100 to 250 households. In this way the operational area of the project comprised of approximately six thousand nine hundred and sixty (6960) households. Following table provides necessary particulars of the selected forty (40) communities:

Sr.No	Village	House Holds	Union Council	Tehsil
1	Dhabola	240	Baghwal Awan	Sialkot
2	Tibba	160		
3	DoghranKhurd	240	Ugoki	
4	Bhindar	210	Charind	
5	Enjotar	245		
6	Nawa Pind Arrian	220	Bhartanwala	
7	Shah Balaq	130		
8	Goriyan	150		
9	Saif Town	110	Moman Kalan	
10	MomanKhurd	110		
11	Dhanawali	400	Majara	Sambrial
12	Kot Dina	330	Jathikay	
13	Panu Attari	210	Randeer	
14	Malianwala	225	Sarankay	
15	Sahowala	165	Sahowala	
16	Nai Abadi	210	Sambrial	
17	Kuthiala	130	Randeer	
18	Daur Arabi	100	Saranke	
19	Dhamian	125		
20	SaranKi	200		
21	Tikkah	155	KulloWal	
22	Tambry	120		
23	Kot Banda	160	Raja Ghuman	Daska
24	Kot Jandu	150	Bambanwala	
25	Adha Maryam Town	275	Ghuwenke	
26	Chabil Poor	220	Raja Ghuman	
27	Kot Banda	120		
28	Raja Ghuman	200		

Sr.No	Village	House Holds	Union Council	Tehsil	
29	Shamsa Cheema Khurd	105	Gojra		
30	Bhular	100	Kandan Sian		
31	Phangat	150			
32	Kotli Lala	90			
33	Saray shah Fateh	200	Mali pur	Pasrur	
34	Langhay	290	Mali pur		
35	Salimeke	165			
36	Manjke	150			
37	Soyian	105			
38	Nakhy	150			
39	KoalPur	110			
40	Nawady	100			
Total		6960 Households			40 Villages

4.2 Selection of Volunteers:

Project team conducted frequent meetings with local volunteers who had already been identified during implementation of NED supported programme for “Women's Political Empowerment”. During meetings project team discussed with them about the project objectives, activities carried out during implementation of the project and the facilitation expected to be provided by them. They agreed to the rationality of the action and expressed their commitment to provide support during the project implementation process. The process concluded at finalization of the list of following forty (40) male and female volunteers who would provide facilitation during the conduct of project activities. Volunteers were generally the activists associated with the CBOs working in the project operational area.

4.3 Capacity building training for the volunteers

Training was imparted to all the 40 (15 Male, 25 Female) selected volunteers in two (02) batches. Each training session of two (2) days duration was conducted.

Date of Training	Total Volunteers Participated	Male Volunteers
June 21-22, 2019	20	03
June 24-25, 2019	20	12

Training sessions were conducted to prepare male and female volunteers for their roles during the project implementation. President, Executive Director and General Manager in accordance with a structured work plan discussed below listed topics during the training session. Project backdrop & rationality, objectives, expected quantitative and qualitative output results and the project implementation methodology.

Role of the volunteers during data collection of the girls not having CNICs, necessary facilitation during issuance of CNICs Registration of girls voters, corrections in the electoral rolls Sensitization of the communities on the need, importance and benefits of enabling “Left-Behind Social Segments” to be effective part of the local governance entities. Role of the volunteers in motivating women and girls to exercise their right to vote after evaluating the eligibility of the contestants in the election.

Role of volunteers for making it possible that each and every registered woman/girl voter reaches the polling station on the polling day.

Proceedings of the Sessions:

The workshops began with the recitation of the verses from the Holy Quran. A participant was requested to recite verses from the holy Quran and Naat-e-Rasool Maqbool (S.A.W). Miss Nazma welcomed all the participants. She provided an overview about the professional track record of Baidarie.

Ms. Hina Noureen introduced Baidarie as an organization which was founded by women & girls living in Union Council Roras Tehsil Sambrial, District Sialkot in 1993. This non-governmental organization works without any discrimination on non-profit basis. Since its foundation till to date, this organization has been working the development and empowerment of those vulnerable social segments who have limited approach towards social and economic development, especially Women to promote their participation in the process of mainstream development.



Mr. Arshid Mehmood Mirza welcomed all the training participants and shared the importance of obtaining of CNIC by women so that they may exercise their right to elect suitable persons to solve their problems and to promote women rights in society. He added that women should be empowered politically so that they may cast their votes without coming under any pressure and can also take part in the development of country. It is important that volunteers should not only facilitate women in obtaining CNICs but also work to empower those social segments who generally remain unnoticed, ignored and voiceless in society. He stated that women, farmers, workers, Non-Muslims and male & female youth have inevitably necessary role towards growth and development of society but generally their invaluable contribution is neither acknowledged nor appreciated. Their voices are neither listened nor considered during policy nor decision making processes. It is inevitably necessary that they should be empowered to be part of the electoral process, be part of the formation of the electoral bodies and enabled to play their legally ordained roles effectively. It is important that we should work for,

Provision of facilitation in obtaining CNICs to women and other left behind local entities

Registration of votes

Promoting awareness about right use of vote and its importance

Training of polling agent to help achieving above mentioned objectives



The participants were divided in to four groups and asked to deliberate on the process through which they may pace up the process of empowerment of left behind social segments.

Certification Ceremony:

Mr. Ahmed Raza Cheema-Station Director FM-101 Radio Pakistan was the chief Guest at the 1st Training Session in the Certification ceremony. He appreciated the efforts of Baidarie for increasing role of “Left-Behind Social Segments” in democratic electoral process and hoped that training of volunteers will certainly help to produce good results.

Mr. Iqbal Ghumman- Former Vice Chairman of UC Roras was the chief guest at the certification ceremony organized at the end of the 2nd training session for the volunteers. Addressing the participants he said we buy things by ourselves. We make houses for ourselves, we earn for ourselves. We do everything for us, then why we don't cast vote for our own welfare? He added that we should elect those persons as our representatives who have the eligibility to represent the common people and be effective partners of the elected bodies.

5. Development of Project specific Face Book page:

Portal (facebook.com/baidariesialkot/) & in Baidarie Website (www.baidarie.org.pk) have been developed. These webpages display all the project related activities. The face book page & Baidarie website links were/are being widely shared with the public so that maximum number of people may become informed of the project initiatives and get sensitized to increase participation of socially left behind segments in the electoral processes. Viewers of these websites highly appreciate the project interventions and several of them have requested to be part of efforts of Baidarie for strengthening local democratic local governance in Sialkot.

6. Publication of Motivational Messages:

Ten (10) motivational messages were published in different National Newspapers. These messages contained basic information regarding getting CINC's and registration as voters in the electoral roles maintained by the Election Commission of Pakistan.

7. Street Theatre Performances:

Baidarie, engaged the team of professional artists of the Gujranwala Arts Council and organized Ten (10) theatrical performances at conspicuous places in the operational areas of the project to motivate the communities to encourage and facilitate women, Non-Muslims, male and female youth, peasants and workers to be active part of the electoral process and to motivate the "Left- Behind Social Segments" to be pragmatic for taking bold and daring initiatives for active participation in the electoral politics at the level of local governance entities.. Each of the theatrical performances organized at central and easily accessible location in a cluster of four (4) adjoining villages. Play was designed on Topics; Rationality of the vibrant and vigilant participation of women, Non-Muslims, male and female youth, peasants and workers in the socioeconomic and democratic growth of the society, making electoral choices on the basis of rationality, contestants' eligibility for performance of their legally ordained roles and track record of their performance in the field of popular representation.

Theatrical performance "Voices of the People" greatly sensitized the communities to use their right of vote honestly without sustaining any pressure from the powerful people, to raise voice and nominate left behind segments of villages for Local Elections including Women, Labor, Farmers, Transgender, differently capacitated people and Non- Muslims. Performing artists highlighted gross root level issues of the people. They further highlighted that how the influential people succeed in securing political favors of the poor by alluring them to false hopes instead of offering some workable solutions to their problems. Theatrical performance convincingly made the power of vote manifest and illustrated that how the discreet use of the right to vote can help in solving the problems facing the people and changing the living conditions for the better.



The web link below present's electronic media coverage of the Theatrical Performance made at the eve of "Project Launching Ceremony" organized at Hotel Jeevan Sialkot.

8. Facilitation in Issuance of CNICs to women and their registration as voters

8.1 Data Collection:

During the project implementation process, data in respect of those women was collected who were not having their CNICs. The data collection was done in collaboration with the volunteers from all the forty (40) locations in the operational area of the project. Tabulated data represented that there are seven hundred and sixty five (765) women at twenty two (22) locations who were not having their CNIC's. Remaining eighteen (18) locations have been facilitated for issuance CNIC's through Baidarie volunteers independently. It was found to be very encouraging that volunteers trained by Baidarie quite willingly volunteered themselves to collect data in respect of those women who were not having their CNICs.

8.2 Facilitation in issuance of CNIC's:

Local offices of National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) on the request made by Baidarie deputed Mobile Registration Vans (MRV) in the project operational area of Baidarie. The volunteers trained by Baidarie extended maximum cooperation to women in submission of their applications for issuance of CNICs. As an outcome of this effort all those seven hundred and sixty five (765) women obtained CNICs who were not having it.



Snaps reflecting process of facilitation provided to Women through NADRA Mobile registration vans Nadra Van making CNICs of women.

Registration of women voters: During August- September 2019, Baidarie team with the support provided by local volunteers provided support to Seventy Two (72) women in getting them registered as voters with election commission of Pakistan.

9. Community Awareness Raising

From August 28, 2019 to Sept 30, 2019, Baidarie organized forty (40) @ one at each of the forty (40) selected locations @ 10 per Tehsil in Tehsils Sialkot, Sambrial, Daska and Pasrur in District Sialkot. Following topics came up for discussion during each of the awareness raising sessions.

Introduction of Project “Program for Strengthening Democratic Local Governance in Sialkot-Pakistan”, Backdrop and justification for the action, objectives, implementation methodology, planned activities, expected output/outcome level results.

Disadvantages of depriving women, non-Muslims, male and female youth, peasants and workers from the spaces and options of socioeconomic and political development and their legally promised roles in the formation and functioning of local governance entities.

Benefits of making “Left- Behind social segments” informed vigilant, vibrant and effective parts of mainstream democratic electoral process in the broader context of democratic development at the national level.

The contribution the communities can provide in encouraging, enabling and facilitating “depriving women, non-Muslims, male and female youth, peasants and workers” to assume efficient and effective role in the formation and functioning of local governance entities.

Session Proceedings:

Proceedings began with expression of thanks and gratitude to the participants for sparing their valuable time to participate in the session. They were also appreciated for exercising their right to vote during general elections held on July 25, 2019 to make women's voters turn out rate Sixty Two (62%) percent.

Resource person shared following objectives of the awareness raising session with the participants.

He stated that generally following social segments are kept excluded from the mainstream of social, economic and political development.

1. Women

2. Youth

3. Peasants/Workers

4. Muslims/Minorities

They are not given enough space to efficiently and effectively take part in electoral process. Their level of participation in the formations and functions of the local governance bodies is generally cosmetic as they are not provided with the opportunities to elect their genuine representatives. Their representation to these bodies is made through nominations.

Women are generally treated like a commodity having very limited role in the process of even that sort of decision making which directly affects their personal lives. Consequently, "Despite commitments to pursue the international legal obligations and its own constitutional requirements, Pakistan stands at 121st place in Gender Inequality Index. The World Economic Forum placed Pakistan as the second worst country on gender equality in its Global Gender Gap index released during 2017. Rural women, in particular have to face a lot of problems during their lives. They are not provided with spaces, options and opportunities to have access to :

The vitally required facilities for day to day lives.

Necessary education as in the rural areas number of schools of girls is limited. These schools lack necessary facilities required for better education and are generally under staffed. For college level education, they have to travel longer distances which is sometimes not affordable for them and their parents.

Quality health services. They seriously lack adequate healthcare in matters of reproductive health care. There are scarce arrangements for ante-natal, safe child birth and post-natal care.

Awareness on the rationale and discreet exercise of the right to vote. Generally they have to exercise their right to vote after the family trends.

It was impressed upon them that if women exercise their right to vote at their free will and choice after evaluating the suitability and eligibility of the contestants, themselves contest the elections to women /general seats for the local governance entities, be efficient and effective part of the decision making and continue building pressure for gender responsive allocation and utilization of resources, they can play an instrumental role in improving the conditions of not only women but of whole of the society. He also tried to impress upon the women voters that they should exercise their right to vote in large numbers during the next local bodies elections to ensure that women voters turn out crosses the limit of 70% in the operational area of the project. He also highlighted the need and importance of the role of youth in the electoral process. He stated that optimum participation of citizens is the cornerstone of the success of the democratic societies in making pro people decisions and providing deliverables to develop and empower the people. This is truer in the countries having large number of young population as involvement of male and female youth in the democratic process becomes instrumental for creating peaceful, vibrant, and responsive political structures.

However, the mere existence of electoral political system does not ensure effective participation of youth in it. In fact, there must be put in place effectively functional arrangements to encourage, enable and facilitate youth to take part in the electoral system for formation of those elected bodies which are responsible for formulating policies and taking decisions affecting lives of the people in the country.

According to the National Human Development Report (NHDR) launched by UNDP on 03 May 2018, 64 % of Pakistan's total population is below the age of 30, and 29 % is between the ages of 15-29 years. It is also estimated that almost 46% of Pakistan's total electorate comprises of young people. Active and effective participation of young people in the democratic process is instrumental for creating peaceful, vibrant, and responsive political structures. Unfortunately Pakistan has seen a gradual disintegration of political space for vocal young people to become career politicians or to present their demands before democratically elected representatives. Youth belonging to non-elite families specifically suffer from the scarcity of spaces for effective role in democratic electoral processes opening their way for participation in policy formulation and decision making forums at federal and provincial levels. So we should encourage and provide platform to youth for playing effective and productive role for the development of our country.

Resource person added that gross root level workers and Peasants are core line of our national economy but unfortunately they are kept deprived of the facilities compulsorily needed for their survival and growth. Consequently, they are leading miserable life. Neither they have access to forums from where they may raise their voices for addressing their problems nor there someone who may raise vigorous voice for addressing their problems on sustainable basis. Their issues cannot be resolved unless and until they get meaningful representation at the policy and decision making forms. It is necessary that instead of allowing handpicking by the locally powerful political elite, the workers and peasants should themselves take a step forward to contest the elections to the local governance entities and themselves safeguard and protect their vital interests.

Resource persons said that Pakistan's 1973 constitution guarantees inclusion of the minorities in every discipline of routine life. But by and large their role is undermined despite the fact that they comprise almost 3.72% of the country's population. The possibilities for their free, unobstructed and effective participation in the social, economic and political spheres of mainstream life are consistently shrinking. Social attitudes rooted in intolerable discrimination promoted by the narrow-mindedness in the name of religion always act pervasively to keep them at an arm's length from the possibilities of effective participation in the social and political formations and functions.

It is necessary, that non-Muslims should be provided with the space to be part of the policy and decision making structures and processes to assume their roles and perform it as honorable citizens of the state of Pakistan. They should also step forward to take part in next elections to the local governance entities so that they may become vibrant partners of the decision making to protect and promote their rights promised by the constitution of Pakistan.

Participants of the awareness raising sessions raised several questions to get conceptual clarity about the rationale, objective, modus operandi and the expected output/outcome level results. All of the questions were answered to the complete satisfaction of the question makers.

10. Motivational training sessions with “Left- behind Social Segments”

During the process of project implementation Baidarie organized eight (08) Training sessions (Each of Two (02) day duration) with the participation of 204(96 Male, 108 Females) who are expected to be contestants to different seats in Local Bodies Elections expected to be held during 2020. Following topics were discussed during each of the training sessions.

Basic human rights (Social, Economic and Political) promised by the 1973 constitution of Pakistan.

Role of women, Non-Muslims, male and female youth, peasants and workers in development of the society.

Need, Importance and utility of the participation of the “Left- behind Social segments” in democratic electoral processes at the level of local governance entities,

Challenges limiting the effective participation of “Left behind Social Segments”

Measures to mitigate the challenges limiting the effective participation of “Left behind Social Segments

Strategies for effective electioneering and campaigning.

Summary of Proceedings:

Each session began with the recitation of the verses from the Holy Quran and versified tribute to Prophet Muhammad (Peace be Upon Him). Norms setting was done with the participation of the persons attending the session.

Development of an action plan to encourage, facilitate and enable women, Non-Muslims, male and female youth, workers and peasants to take effective part in formation and functioning of the local governance institutions.

Introduction of Baidarie

Ms. Hina Noreen provided an overview of the inception of the organization, track record of the services rendered by it during preceding 2.5 decades and the projects it is undertaking these days to empower women and other vulnerable social segments. She specially mentioned the details of the interventions being made through implementation of the following projects.



“Programme for Strengthening Democratic Local Governance in Sialkot (Punjab) Pakistan” supported by National Endowment for Democracy.

“Strengthening Electoral and Legislative Process (SLEP)” supported by TDEA

“Programme for Promotion of Gender Equity, Empowerment and Justice” (being implemented in six districts of Gujranwala Division) supported by Amplify Change.

Development of gender responsive entrepreneurship in District Sialkot (Punjab)” supported by AFGP-TDEA.

Distribution of Sehat Insaf Cards (Awareness raising, mobilization and enrolment of beneficiaries) in districts Sahiwal, Okara, Sialkot and Narowal.

“Enhancement of Financial Inclusions” supported by State Bank of Pakistan

“Training cum Works centers for Women” through local resource mobilization.entioned the details of the interventions being made through implementation of the following projects.

“Haji Mirza Ashiq Hussain memorial hospital and maternity home” through local resource Mobilization.

Technical Sessions:

Mr. Arshid Mehmood Mirza shared distinguishing features of aristocracy, monarchy, dictatorship, military rule, theocracy and democracy. He stated that democracy in its essence is a way of life and it takes lead over different systems of government by virtue of following characteristics.

People have the right to elect their representatives to form the government and formulate policies & laws and make decisions to safeguard, protect and promote the rights of the people and satisfactorily cater their needs.

Provision of constitutional guarantees to the citizens for having access to their basic human rights.

The powers to legislate, implement the laws and do justice are not vested in one single authority and /or a person. Executive, Legislature and Judiciary have their distinctly prescribed roles and responsibilities. They are obliged to function within in the constitutional framework.

Delivery of necessary quality services to the people and addressing of their grievances to let them live in an honorable way.

Transfer of power from one regime to another is possible in systemic and peaceful way in accordance with the constitution of the relevant country.

People may hold their elected representatives and the public office holders accountable for their performance towards their roles and responsibilities ordained by law of the land.

It promotes values of respect for difference of opinion, tolerance, coexistence and social harmony.



Basic Human Rights:

He stated that the rights are those facilities to lead life which are guaranteed by the law of the land. And if those rights are partially or completely infringed and /or violated, the offenders are liable to punishment proportionate to the extent and volume of the violation and/or infringement. The rights can be categorized as moral rights and legal rights.

Last sermon of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) comprehensively details out the basic human rights of the people. He further shared that UN Human rights charter was framed during 1948. Articles 8 to 28 of the chapter –I of 1973 constitution of Pakistan deals with all the fundamental rights promised to the citizens of Pakistan. These rights include Social Rights, Economic rights, Cultural Rights, Religious Rights and Political rights.

Mr. Arshid Mirza, while attracting the attention of the participants through regular interaction, provided detailed information on the vitality of access to all these rights of the citizens of the state on non-discriminatory basis. He said that the rights can be further categorized are Women Rights, Child Rights, Rights of religious minorities and Workers' rights.

Group Work:

Deliberations on the constitutionally promised rights were followed by the group work. Participants were divided into four groups to discuss the following topics.

- 1.Role of women in the development of society.
- 2.Role of youth in the development of society.
- 3.Role of peasants/workers in the development of society.
- 4.Role of Non-Muslims in the development of society?

After completion of deliberations, the group leaders made presentations in the full house.



Left-behind Social Segments:

The trainer stated that those social segments who are scarcely provided with any chance or opportunity to take part in the mainstream social, economic and political development generally remain ignored hence for all purposes remain left behind in the process of their individual and community development. Generally these people have no voice and scarce voices are raised in favor of their empowerment. They are subjected to the ill effects of different forms and manifestations of poverty. Women, Non-Muslims, youth, workers and peasants who live below poverty line are generally fall in the category of “left behind social segments”. The status of their recognition in social, economic and political spheres was discussed as under.

Role of Women in the Development of Society:

Mr. Arshid Mehmood Mirza stated that according to the national census -2017 report, males comprise 51%, females 48.76 % and transgenders 0.24% of country's total population. He further stated that assessments made to compile Global Gender Report (2018), Gender Inequality Index (2018) and Thomson Reuters report reflect highly depressing state of the condition of women in Pakistan. He shared that gender based discrimination, harassment and violence women & girls in the indoor and outdoor spheres of life is increasing at an alarming pace. Female participation in the labor market is 24.6 per cent compared to 82.9 per cent for men. Election Commission of Pakistan has reported that CNICs have not been issued to almost 12.5 Million women so they are not registered as voters. It is therefore necessary that exclusive efforts should be put in place for

empowerment of women in social, economic and political spheres of life. They should be given space to perform their role in policy and decision making at all tiers of governance. The process may begin by providing women with the opportunities and spaces for effective performance of their role at the local bodies.

Role of youth in the development of society

It was shared with the participants that in Pakistan the number of young people between the ages of 1-29 is 64%. 30% of the youth are within the age bracket of 15-29 years. This ratio shows that majority of population in the country comprises of youth who possesses tremendous energy, ambitions for bright future, passion to work hard and ample time for doing all that. Unfortunately there is no policy and mechanism to harness the potentials of youth towards accomplishment of constructive ends. Consequently, youth is scarcely getting prepared in adequate terms to assume its responsibilities in the future. Keeping the youth away from democratic electoral process is depriving the youth from the opportunities to sharpen its leadership faculties. It is therefore necessary that every possible step should be taken for youth development. In particular, youth should be encouraged, enabled and facilitated to participate in the electoral process at the level of local bodies so that they may provide their input for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the local bodies for expedited delivery of quality municipal services and addressing of grievances.

Role of peasants/workers in the development of society

Mr. Arshid Mirza shared with the trainees that once Punjab was considered as food pocket for whole Asia. Still they have tremendous role in providing food items to the people. For making that happen, the farmers work day and night surviving the severity of weathers. But their toils do not bring to them the prosperity. The agriculturists spend a lot of money to procure agricultural inputs i.e. seeds, tractors, tube wells, gasoline, fertilizers and pesticides. The price that he gets for the output product is far less than satisfactory. Dealers and traders get all the profits. No one tries to understand the problems facing the peasants. They remain voiceless most of the time and no one raises voice for them. It is necessary that the agriculturists be given opportunities to raise voice at all those forums where policies are made and decisions are made.

Workers

The population of Sialkot district is approximately 3.9 Million. Around 0.4 million persons render their services as workers in the formal and informal sectors of local economy. 80% of this lot earns less than legal minimum wage i.e. Rs. 17500 per month. Each of these workers supports roughly a family of 6 to 7 persons. Their struggle to survive by meeting necessities of everyday life becomes an arduous task for them. They face lots of challenges in their professional and personal lives. Since, this workforce is not organized /unionized so they remain voiceless most of the times. It is immensely necessary, that they should be provided opportunity to be effective parts of the decision making forum so that their rights and needs may be taken care of. The process may be initiated by letting the real representatives of the workers to be part of the formations and functions of the local bodies.

Role of minorities in the development of society

Approximately 4% of Pakistan's total population is comprised by religious minorities. White strip in Pakistan's national flag represents their presence in the country. They have rendered and are rendering tremendous services in every sphere of life particularly health and education. They are part of our armed forces and have sacrificed their lives for the defense of the mother land. Constitution of Pakistan entitles them with all the basic human rights on nondiscriminatory basis. Their services must be acknowledged and appreciated and the issues faced by them must be addressed by making them active partners of the decision making processes. It is necessary that during the coming local bodies' elections, non-Muslims should be provided with freedom to themselves nominate their representatives, elect them and be dynamic partners of the decision making processes.

Detailed orientation was provided to the participants on the Punjab Local Bodies Act 2019 and Punjab Village Panchayat & Neighbor Hood Councils act 2019, Election Procedure, Funding and budgeting of the Panchayat and Neighborhood Councils and Expenditure heads. Participants were also apprised of the necessary measures for winning the elections. Salient features of the discussion are as under.

Electoral Process:

Govt. of Punjab will announce the schedule for elections to the Panchayat and Neighborhood councils.

A Panchayat Council will be formed for population of 22 thousand persons.

Election to all the seats will be on nonparty basis.

If someone is convicted by court of law, he/she will not be allowed to contest the elections. However, having completed seven years period after conviction, one will be allowed to contest the elections.

Persons in the government service can not contest the elections.

Every voter will cast two votes. Non-Muslims will cast three votes (one for general seat, one for women reserved seat and one for non-Muslim seat)

The person who will obtain maximum number of casted votes in a council will become chairperson.

There will be no reserved seat for workers, peasants and youth.

Elections to the reserved seats for women and others will be conducted on the same pattern.

Every council will have its own funds which will have following resources:

Grants from govt.

Donations, assets, income from services and rents etc.

Election Preparations:

Everyone must obtain his/her CNIC before elections. It should be ensured that CNIC is not expired. If it is expired, it should be renewed immediately.

Check your name in the list of voters maintained by Election Commission of Pakistan. If the name is not there in list or if there are mistakes, the relevant person should immediately approach ECP offices and get his/her name registered ensuring accuracy of particulars.

Facilitate the people in getting their CNICs and assuring registering them as voters.

Distribution of certificate of participation

Mr. Fasih ud Din (District Election Commissioner Sialkot) was the chief guest of the Training session held on Oct 29-30, 2019. He said that local bodies are the basic administrative and representatives units in a democratic set up so every effort should be made to enable and facilitate their effective functioning in pursuance of standardized democratic principles, values, norms and practices. Election Commission of Pakistan in collaboration with NADRA and the non-governmental organizations is making well focused effort to bridge the gender gap in the electoral roll.



Mr. Ahmad Raza Cheema -Director FM 101 Radio Pakistan was the chief guest of the Certificate distribution ceremony organized training.

Mr. Rana Amjad Ali (Ex-President Sambrial Bar Association) was the chief guest of the certificate distribution ceremony. He said that your and our votes are equal. So make sure you have your full participation in the election so that a good representative comes up. Thank you all

Mr. Qaiser Sajjad Cheema- President Sambrial Tehsil Bar Association -District Sialkot was the chief guest of certification ceremony dated November 20, 2019. He appreciated Baidarie's role in pacing up the process of the political empowerment of the left behind social segments of society.

Mr. Muhammad Sharif Ghuman (Deputy District Officer Social Welfare Sialkot) said many NGOs have been/ are working with us but Baidarie stands alone in terms of its professionalism. It is the only NGO that reaches out to the core line of problems and makes efforts to address them. This organization does not believe in cosmetic lip service rather it makes all out efforts to reach out to really disadvantaged social segments and develop and empower them.



11. Women Voters' Education Sessions

Project team organized twenty (20) sessions at twenty (20) locations to impart training to women voters. Following topics came up for discussion during these sessions.

- Fair functioning of electoral process in a democratic set up
- Importance of exercising right to vote and the rationale basis for doing that
- Disadvantages of taking irrational decisions, importance of voters' increased turnover rate, and the measures required to make it happen.

Proceedings of the Sessions:

Ms. Nazima -Social Organizer accorded very warm welcome to the participants for sparing time to participate in these sessions. While extending special thanks to the volunteers for providing facilitation in organizing these sessions, she shared the objectives of the training session.

Ms. Nazima Irshad made an effort to assess the knowledge of the participants by asking from them different questions regarding formation and functioning of local governance entities. The participants came up with below listed responses. We were advised to obtain CNICs and were informed about the importance of women votes. We were told that women must register their votes. We were told that women must exercise their right to vote at the eve of the elections. No woman should remain without exercising her right to vote.

We were told that for strengthening the local governance entities and making them more useful for the people it is necessary that left-behind social segments must be made active and vibrant partners of the democratic electoral process.

Peasants (small land holders/tillers), male and female workers and Non-Muslims are those social segments as are left behind and excluded from mainstream process of development. Though these people know solutions to their problems but their voices are never heard so their problems remain unnoticed and unaddressed.

Ms. Nazima appreciated the participants of the sessions for remembering most of the information provided to them during the earlier sessions.

Mr. Afgan Ali said that we will be collaboratively working to empower peasants (small land holders/tillers), male and female workers and Non-Muslims. They are those social segments as are left behind and excluded from mainstream process of development. We will encourage, enable and facilitate them to raise their voices for addressing their problems.

Participants were made aware of the:

Need, importance and utility of exercising the right to vote after evaluating the suitability and eligibility of the candidates contesting the elections.

Importance of women's right to exercise of right to vote

Measures necessary to increase women voters' turn out.

Details of the functioning of the electoral process.

12.Provision of information to women, non-Muslims, youth, peasants and workers about salient features of Local Bodies Act 2019

Four (04) training sessions were conducted at four (04) locations. In total 216 persons (74 Men + 142 Women) attended these sessions.

Session Proceedings:

Ms. Nazima welcomed all the participants. Session began with the recitation of verses from Holy Quran. She provided an overview of the inception of Baidarie, its professional track record to empower women and other vulnerable social segments and its on-going projects.

Mr. Afgan Ali stated that Sialkot is one of those districts where women voters turn out during the elections have been low. One of the reasons for this trend is that women do not have CNICs. He added that Baidarie facilitated maximum number of women at forty (40) selected locations to get their names registered in the electoral rolls maintained by Election Commission of Pakistan. As a result of continuous awareness raising in communities, social mobilization and voter education Baidarie during General Elections 2018 succeeded in increasing the women voters' turn out rate to 62% at forty (40) selected places in Sialkot district. He added that now we are making efforts to increase women voters turn out up to 70% at the forty (40) selected locations. In addition, we are making efforts that genuine representatives of women, youth, Non-Muslims, peasants and workers get elected in the next local bodies elections. We will also be making efforts to build their working capacity so that they may perform effective role for addressing the problems facing the people and delivering quality municipal services to them. In addition, we will also be making efforts to enable the electorate to assess the performance of their elected representative against their legally ordained roles and responsibilities.

Ms. Hina Noureen provided Information regarding distinguishing features of Punjab Village Panchayat & Neighborhood Council 2019, Election Procedure, Funding and budgeting of the Panchayat and Neighborhood Councils was also shared with the participants of the sessions.

Following is the list of chief guests in Seminars.

S-No	Date	Chief Guest	Venue
1	10 Jan 2020	Mr. Rana Amjad Khan Advocate: Ex- President Tehsil Bar Association Sambrial District Sialkot.	Al-hafa Restaurant Sambrial
2	21 Jan 2020	Mr. Abbas Cheema- Journalist and Political Activist	Aiman Marriage Hall Ugoki, Siakot
3	22 Jan 2020	Mr. Muhammad Ali- Principal- Vocational Training Institute Pasrur	Al-Riaz Hotel, Pasrur
4	23 Jan 2019	Mr. Shehzad Inayat- Political Activist	Al-Madina Hotel, Daska

All of them highly appreciated the organizational efforts to make left behind social segment effective and active partners of local bodies system. They offered to extend all the possible support during the project implementation.



13. Conduct of Tehsil Level Seminars:

Baidarie organized four (04) Seminars at Tehsil level for provision of orientation to the direct beneficiaries about newly promulgated Punjab local government act 2019 & Punjab village panchayat and neighborhood Act 2019 with special reference to the:

Tiers of the new structures/formations,

Roles, responsibilities and powers of the new structures/formations

Roles, responsibilities and powers of the elected representatives

Processes and procedures of the election for constitution of new structures/formations and

Deliverables of the functioning of the new structures/formations.

Following table represents the details of the conducted seminars in all the four (4) tehsils of district Sialkot.

Date	Venue	Participants	Male	Female
12-02-2020	Tehsil Daska	54	41	13
15-02-2020	Tehsil Pasrur	57	14	43
20-02-2020	Tehsil Sialkot	53	20	33
21-02-2020	Tehsil Sambrial	64	14	50

Summary of Proceedings in the seminars:

Proceedings of the session commenced with the recitation of holy verses from Quran. Ms. Nazima- social organizer welcomed the participants and provided brief information about the organizational efforts for social, economic and political empowerment of the people living in rural areas.

She added that to implement NED supported "Programme for strengthening of democratic local governance in Sialkot District" Baidarie is making interventions at forty (40) locations in Sialkot District. For empowering the "left-behind social segments" we are conducting voter training sessions on various topics, including the need and importance of identity cards, registration as voters and exercising right to vote after evaluating the eligibility of contestants against their legally ordained roles and responsibilities. Especially through this program, we are making efforts to encourage, enable and facilitate the left-behind social segments to have effective and active participation in the upcoming local elections. During today's seminar Ms. Hina Noureen will share some information about the distinguishing features of the newly promulgated laws on local elections.

Ms. Hina Noureen said that Baidarie's primary role is to catalyze and reinforce the process of inclusion of those in the mainstream process of social, economic and political development that have been kept excluded and marginalized so far. The organization is also making efforts to evolve social deterrence against discriminatory practices against women, girls and trans genders. Coming to my today's main area of discussion, I would like to invite your attention to the fact that in a district like Sialkot the women voters' turnout during the elections has been very low. There are 36 districts in the Punjab province and there are 5 districts in which female voter turnout have been very low. One out of the several reasons for this low turnout is that vast majority of women is not registered as voters because they have not obtained Computerized National Identity Cards (CNICs). Baidarie has been making efforts to minimize this gender deficit in voter registration. So far Baidarie has facilitated more than 50000 women in obtaining their CNICs. During implementation of NED supported programme for political empowerment of women we planned to increase women voters turn out by 60% during general elections -2018 in the operational jurisdictions of the organization. I am glad to share with you that with the maximum support provided by the communities and women in the area we managed to increase women voter's rate to 62%. For the local bodies elections expected to be held during mid-2020, we have fixed a target that we will increase women voters turn out by 70% in the communities comprising the operational area of the project. She added that unfortunately, reserved seats for representation of youth in the local elections have been eliminated despite the fact the 64% of country's populations is comprised by youth.

Similarly, reserved seats for the farmers and the laborers have also been abolished. This is quite regrettable in wake of the fact that once Punjab was considered to be the food pocket of Asia. Even as of today, the tillers and the workers constitute that major segment of the social fabric who incessantly continues to work day and night to keep the cycle of economy rotating. None else but only the farmer and the workers themselves understand their problems and can suggest workable solutions. If their representation through reserved seats is eliminated, then who can raise logical and powerful voice to get their problems addressed? It is imperatively necessary that youth, farmers and workers be given representation in the local governance entities. Previously, the grass root level units for elections to local governance entities titled as "Union Councils" have now been abolished. After promulgation of the new laws by the govt. of Punjab, the grass root level units have been named Panchayat or Neighborhood Councils. Elections to constitute these units will be held on non-party basis. All candidates will contest the seat for the councilors. And the one who will get most number of casted voted will become chairman. The second highest candidate scorers will be titled as speaker. Baidarie plans to share maximum information about these laws to people so that well informed people may participate in the election.

Punjab Village Panchayat & Neighborhood Council 2019

Introduction:

In accordance with the newly promulgated law "Punjab Village Panchayat & Neighborhood Council 2019", Village Panchayats and Neighborhood Councils have been introduced in rural areas across Punjab.

Method of election:

All members including the chairperson shall be returned by the residents of the respective village or neighborhood through an open list election on the basis of secret ballot and adult franchise.

The entire village or, as the case may be, the neighborhood shall constitute one multi-member ward for the election of the respective members including the chairperson.

Any resident who is otherwise eligible for being elected as a member in terms of section 31 of this Act may register himself as a candidate for the election.

The candidates for general seats securing highest votes in the descending order shall stand elected one by one till all seats earmarked for general members in the respective panchayat or, as the case may be, the neighborhood council under section 10 of this Act is exhausted.

Out of the candidates referred to in subsection (4), the candidate securing highest votes shall be the chairperson of the respective panchayat or, as the case may be, the neighborhood council.

Where there is only one seat reserved for women in a panchayat or a neighborhood council, the candidate for such seat securing the highest votes shall stand elected, and where there are more than one such seats, the candidates securing the highest votes in the descending order shall stand elected one by one till the number of seats reserved for women in the respective panchayat or, as the case may be, the neighborhood council under section 10 of this Act are exhausted.

The candidate for a seat reserved for minorities securing highest votes shall stand elected.

All elections under this Act shall be held on non-party basis.

Qualifications for being a candidate to election or for holding office of the chairperson or member:

A resident shall be eligible to contest an election under this Act, if:-

- ✦ He, on the last day fixed for the filing of nomination papers for that election, is not less than twenty-five years of age; and
- ✦ His name appears for the time being in the electoral roll of the village or, as the case may be, the neighborhood from where he is a candidate.
- ✦ Without any prejudice to the provisions of subsection (1), no person shall be eligible to contest an election under this Act or to hold the office of the chairperson or a member

- ✦ He is not a resident or ceases to be a resident of the respective village or, as the case may be, the neighborhood;
 - ✦ He has been, on conviction for an offence involving moral turpitude, sentenced to imprisonment for a term exceeding six months, unless seven years have elapsed from the date of expiry of the period of that sentence;
 - ✦ He has been ordered to give security for good conduct under section 562 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898 (V of 1898), or is registered as a habitual offender or a proclaimed offender under section 45(2)(ii) of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898;
 - ✦ He has been convicted of an offence related to conduct of elections under this Act or any other law for the time being in force;
 - ✦ He has been guilty of a corrupt practice or has been held to be corrupt;
 - ✦ He has obtained a loan for an amount of ten hundred thousand rupees or more, from any bank, financial institution, cooperative society or cooperative body in his own name or in the name of his spouse or any of his dependents, which stands unpaid for more than one year from the due date, or has had such loan written off unlawfully;
 - ✦ He, his spouse or any of his dependents has not paid any tax, fee or any other charge payable to the Government, a local government, panchayat or neighborhood council or any amount exceeding ten thousand rupees due upon him, his spouse or any of his dependent for the use of any service such as telephone, electricity, gas and water for over six months;
 - ✦ He is, or becomes a lessee, tenant, contractor or shareholder in any property of the respective village or, as the case may be, the respective neighborhood or is in illegal or unauthorized possession of such property;
 - ✦ He is under contract for work to be done or goods to be supplied to the respective panchayat or, as the case may be, the neighborhood council, or has otherwise any pecuniary interest in its affairs;
 - ✦ He is in or enters into the service of Pakistan, or any statutory body or other body which is set up, or owned or controlled by the Government, or a local government in Pakistan, or in which the Government or a local government has controlling share or interest, or he is or becomes a salaried official of a public or statutory corporation;
 - ✦ He has been dismissed, discharged or compulsory retired from the service of Pakistan, or the service of a local government or a public or statutory corporation on the charge of misconduct or a corrupt practice; and
- He is or becomes disqualified for the membership of Parliament or a Provincial Assembly under any law for the time being in force.
- ✦ Where a person contesting an election under this Act claims to be a Muslim, he shall submit to the Returning Officer a declaration given in the Eighth Schedule along with his nomination papers for the election.

Local fund of villages and neighborhoods:

There shall be a fund, to be called the local fund, vested in every panchayat and neighborhood council to pay for its expenses for the purpose of this Act.

All moneys in the local fund shall be held by the respective panchayat or, as the case may be, the neighborhood council as a trust for all the residents of that village or, as the case may be, neighborhood.

Sources of local fund:

Without any prejudice to the provisions of section 38 of this Act, the following moneys shall be credited to the local fund:—

- all grants from the Government or a local government;
- all fees, fines and other moneys received by or on behalf of the panchayat or, as the case may be, the neighborhood council under this Act, or otherwise;
- rents and profits accruing from the property of the panchayat or, as the case may be, the neighborhood council;
- incomes from investments made from the local fund;
- proceeds from any other sources of income placed by the Government at the disposal of the panchayat or, as the case may be, the neighborhood council; and
- all donations from any other sources.

The Government grants to a village or a neighborhood under subsection (1) shall in no case be less than the amount which the Local Government Finance Commission may fix for that village or neighborhood in accordance with the formulae for transfer of provincial allocable resources to the local government in whose local area it is situated.

Matters in respect of which moneys from local fund may be applied:

Having due regards to the provisions of section 42 of this Act, the local fund shall not be applied to any purpose other than for the payment in whole or in part, of the charges and expenses incidental to the several matters specified in the Fourth Schedule or, as the case may be, the Fifth Schedule and also to the following matters, namely:

performance of any functions entrusted to the panchayat or, as the case may be, the neighborhood council under sections 17, 18 and 26 of this Act;

expenses required for the audit of local fund and accounts of the panchayat or, as the case may be, the neighborhood council;

cost of acquisition of any land or other property, whether movable or immovable under section 19 of this Act;

expenses in respect of such portion of the cost of provision of a public service as may be held by the

Government to be equitably debatable to the panchayat or, as the case may be, the neighborhood council in return for the services rendered to it by the agency providing that public service;

a. Grants-in-aid to the educational, public health or any other public institution within the limits of the village, or as the case may be, the neighborhood;

b. Charges and expenses incurred outside the village or neighborhood when such application of funds is, in the opinion of the panchayat or, as the case may be, the neighborhood council, for the benefit of the village or neighborhood;

c. Any other expense or charge which the Government may at any time, on the recommendation of a panchayat, or neighborhood council, or otherwise declare to be a fit and proper charge on the local fund.

Except with the previous sanction of the Government, the actual cash balance of a local fund, excluding any investments, suspend balance of grants of all kinds and receipts, shall not be permitted at any time to fall below an amount equal to ten per centum of the income of the panchayat or, as the case may be, the neighborhood council during the previous financial year.

Summary of Election Procedures in Punjab Village Panchayat and Neighborhood Councils Act 2019

1. The Union Council has been renamed as the Neighborhood Council in the urban areas and the panchayat in the rural areas.

2. According to the schedule at Neighborhood Council.

a. There will be five general councilors, two female councilors and one minority councilor in the 20,000 to 45,000 population council.

b. There will be four general councilors, one female councilor and one minority councilor elected in a council of 13,000 to 20,000 populations.

c. There will be three general councilors, one female councilor and one minority councilor elected in a council of 6,000 to 13,000 populations.

d. While there will be two general councilors, one female councilor and one minority councilor in a council with a population of less than 6,000.

1.Synthesis of panchayats in rural areas:

a. The council, which has a population of 15,000 to 25,000, will select five general councilors, two women councilors and one minority councilor.

b. Councils with a population of 8,000 to 15,000 will be elected Councilor Councilors, a female councilor and a minority councilor.

c. A council with a population of 2,000 to 8,000 will elect three general councilors, a female councilor and a minority councilor.

d. Whereas a council with a population of less than 2,000 will be elected as Regional Counselors, a Female Councilor and a Minority Councilor.

a. Immediately but within six months the new census will be categorized. which the Government will do by itself through a notification. The Election Commission has now changed the way of receiving the objections to the initial confrontation in the public and after the hearing the final grouping has been changed.

1. Neighborhood and panchayat elections will be on a non-partisan basis.

2. The general council elections will be held on secret ballot and one vote will be cast to a councilor whose number is fixed.

3. Similarly, two women who came in first will be successful.

4. Each voter will cast three votes. One for the General Counselor, one for the Councilor and one for the Minority Councilor.

5. The person who takes the most votes among the General Counselors will become the Chairman of the respective Council, headed by the Panchayat Council Neighborhood Government.

In addition, he explained what would be the responsibilities of the representatives elected. The funds that will be given to them will be donated by the Panchayat Participants for the development of village neighborhoods and streets. And officers will be appointed by the Government to monitor the members of the panchayat who will manage the system of checks and balances. These were the key points of today's seminar that you need to know about them so that if you participate in the elections you will be aware of their characteristics.

Mr. Arshid Mehmood Mirza:

The purpose of today's activity is to raise awareness about the new local government system. Actually, women have always been under represented and most of the times the elected women get representation through male proxies. Male family members do not allow women to participate in any democratic electoral activity in the outdoors. As a direct consequence of this practice, women's issues and voice has never been heard during the decision making processes that has never been gender responsive. Even the language of the newly promulgated is not–gender responsive. It represents the male gender and ignores the female gender.

Similarly, genuine representatives of our youth are always kept out of the electoral process. Moreover whenever someone talks of youth he/she means male youth. Female youth is never considered eligible for representation in elected bodies. We must make efforts to make them an integral part of the political process because the youth are our future. If we ignore youth, it means that we are ignoring 64% of that population of our country that has the potential to serve the country.

Non-Muslims are very important component of our social fabric. They have always been massively contributing towards national development. However it has often been observed that Non-Muslims are not provided with adequate options and spaces in the process of policy and decision making. Factually speaking, in a democratic country like Pakistan, all the citizens including Non-Muslims and different minorities must have equal rights. We must make efforts to let Non-Muslims and other minorities perform as active and effective partners of the democratic electoral process.

Peasants are also an important section of our country but they have always been exploited in many ways. They are not paid in proportion to the hard work they do. Prices of the agricultural inputs are increasing rapidly but they do not get appropriate price for their yield outputs. Resultantly, their income remains very low and is never enough for them to meet the cost of very humble level of living. They have countless problems and sufferings. Their problems may be addressed if they are allowed access to policy and decision making forums. Workers in the formal and informal sectors of Pakistan's economy scarcely earn the living wage. Govt. of Pakistan has fixed Rs. 17,500 as legal minimum wage for an unskilled worker. Very few employers pay to the workers even this very amount. Most of them are not registered with social protection schemes and are never paid their legally mandated privileges and entitlements. Freedom of Association is a right to which majority of workers has no access. In this way worst kind of exploitation has become fate of our workers. They may raise their problems to get them addressed provided their genuine representatives get opportunity to raise their voices on policy and decision making forums. Baidarie therefore considers it necessary to encourage, enable and facilitate them part of the electoral process.

In the nutshell, Baidarie' efforts aim at encouraging the left-behind social segments to be the part of solution of the problems being faced by them. That is why we are trying to impress upon all the relevant stakeholders to empower the marginalized segments to be active, efficient and effective partners of local governance entities.

Remarks by Guests of honor

Shahid Mehmood – Secretary Union Council Raja Ghumman, Daska:

First of all, I would like to thank the Baidarie for inviting us here today. It is a great initiative to ensure representation of the left-behind social segments in the local governance entities. This is really a great effort. Women, youth, Non-Muslims, peasants and workers understand the causes, effects and solutions of their problems well. We should surely support the marginalized social segments to come forward and be part of the election. Thank you very much.



Mr. Ihsan Ullah Butt - Secretary Union Council Werowala, Daska:

I am grateful to all of you for joining this program and taking your precious time to participate in this program. I am also grateful to Madam Hina Noureen for her organizational efforts for the left-behind social segments that they too should get an effective share in the elections. I would like to request all of you to cooperate with them and support Baidarie Organization. They are working for your welfare.

And secondly, Madam said that they are also facilitating women to get their ID cards through generous support by NADRA. This is a great effort of their organization. You must get your ID card as soon as you are 18 years old. After getting CNIC your vote can be registered in the electoral rolls with Election Commission of Pakistan and you can become eligible to cast your vote which is the basic right of every citizen. You must also cast it. Thank you so much.

Muhammad Khalid – Secretary Union Council Mali Por, Pasrur:

I am thankful to the Baidarie Organization for inviting us to this event today. I think this is a very good program that they have started. To this day no one would have thought of the development of these particular classes. It was very important for these classes to have people from their class come forward and be part of the electoral process. Those who live in the villages find lesser opportunities to read the newspapers so they do not have much information. The poor generally do not muster up courage to be part of the electoral process. However, their problems can only be solved if people from their own class come forward and be part of the electoral process.

I think the most important thing is that we have to support them fully. With our support they can succeed in the project they are working on and it will become easy for them to accomplish their noble objectives. Baidarie team is not working for its own benefit but for us and for the development of the left-behind social segments so I assure the Baidarie Organization of my full support and I believe that you will also fully support them. I will end my talk with this. Thank you all very much.

Mr. Zahid Iqbal – Senior Lecturer VTI Tehsil Pasrur:

I sincerely thank the Baidarie Organization for organizing such a great event here today. To this day, I have not seen anyone think of the development of these classes. Madam Hina, I appreciate your organization which has started such a good project. So I would say you should continue this program. And if you need any help from us in our tehsil, we are always there. Thank you very much.

Muhammad Kaleem – Secretary Union Council Moma Kalan, Sialkot

First of all, I would like to thank all of you who took your precious time and came here. After that I would like to thank the Baidarie team who organized this wonderful event and invited us to this event. I know the Baidarie Organization very well. They have made ID cards for many women in our areas and also registered their votes. They had held several sessions on increasing women's voting. In addition, many of his projects are underway. So I will say that we will give you full support in our area and you must contact us wherever you need our help. We will be there for you. Thank you very much.

Mr. Karamat Ali – Secretary Union Council Ugoki, Sialkot:

I am thankful to the Baidarie Organization for inviting us to this event today. I think this is a very good program that they have started. To this day no one would have thought of the development of these particular classes. So this is a great effort of their organization. He said that the Baidarie Organization was also making women's identity cards in collaboration with NADRA. You must make your ID card as soon as you are 18 years old. And after that their vote also becomes which is the basic right of every citizen.

And if Baidarie is doing this for you, I think it's their good intentions for you. So you people should also fully cooperate with them so that they may do their work with perfect ease. Thank you very much

Mr. Ansar Butt – Secretary Union Council Jethike, Sambrial:

I am thankful to the Baidarie Organization for inviting us to this event today. I think this is a very good program that they have started. I have not seen anyone think of the development of these classes. Sir Arshid Mirza, I appreciate your organization which has initiated such a good project. It was very important for these classes to have people from themselves come forward and be part of the electoral process. This is a very good step for you. We are here to support you in every way. Thank you.

14. Sessions to assess the performance of elected representatives

Two (02) Accountability sessions were conducted at the Two (02) locations in Tehsils Sialkot and Sambrial in district Sialkot. These sessions were attended by 107 persons (58 Men + 49 Women). Following topics came up for discussions during the sessions.

1. Introduction of Project and Baidarie
2. Need and Importance of Performance review of public representatives
3. Government Initiatives at level of Union Council level to reinforce local Government structures.
4. Problem Analysis current Situation in the Area.
5. Roles and Responsibilities of Public Representatives/ public office holders.

Proceedings of session at Sialkot:

The proceedings of the sessions began with the recitation of verses from the Holy Quran. Ms. Hina Noreen welcomed the participants and provided details of organizational efforts for political empowerment of women and Program for Strengthening Democratic Local Governance in Sialkot-Pakistan.



Addressing the participants Mr. Arshid Mehmood Mirza said that the nature of today's program is educational in its essence. We will be having collaborative deliberations about how the local democratic institutions can be strengthened. He quoted the saying of Abraham Lincoln, the sixteenth president of the United States that "Democracy is the government of the people, by the people and for the people" Democracy is a way of life as it protects the rights of the people.

In a democracy, the people can question the performance of their elected representatives and institutions. Democratic system is not a system like monarchy in which a person who is the king, can himself make laws, implement them and himself administer justice. None can dare to question his doings. He added that in a democratic set up, the voters have great responsibilities to perform. They must elect their representatives after evaluating the eligibility of the election contestants to

perform the legally ordained roles associated with their coveted positions. Secondly, the voters must keep an eye on the performance of their representatives and keep close linkages with them to keep them on track for responsibly performing their legal roles. He added that election to local governance is due to be held shortly. We must encourage, enable and facilitate Women, youth, peasants, workers and Non-Muslims to contest elections on general seats as well so that true representative of the people come forward to deliver much needed municipal services and address people's grievances.

Mr. Muhammad Iqbal Ghumman stated that "I have been chairman of the Union Council twice. And I've learned that the municipal system teaches politics to the common man. And then the same people go to the national or provincial assemblies. In this way, the voters have tremendous responsibility of electing eligible and competent representatives. He said that local bodies are a virtual hatchery of leadership at provincial and national levels. If we elect those who have the vision to serve the people they will prove themselves to be worthwhile investment for the future leadership. On the contrary, if our preferences will the petty personal interests for power mongering, the results will be highly detrimental.

He emphasized that in the forthcoming elections, only competent and eligible persons should be elected and for making that possible massive awareness raising campaign should be run.

He was optimistic that forthcoming elections to the local bodies will massively contribute to the strengthening of democratic culture in the country.

Mr. Babar Ghumman - renowned political activist said that unfortunately dynasties have firm grip over the political parties in Pakistan and they do not allow the party formations to function democratically. At the district level, the political mafia awards party ticket to those persons who are willing to invest money. He said that that true democratic system has never been in place in Pakistan. Political parties function on the pattern of family incorporate entities where office bearers are appointed through top to bottom nominations. If we have a look at the western countries where democracy has turned up to be a way of life, the political system begins functioning at the level of primary units.

The party structure there grows in a bottom-up style. In Pakistan we are experimenting distorted version of pseudo democracy. Unless and until, the entire system is purged of its weaknesses embedded in personal vested interests Pakistani nation cannot have the least of the benefits of the much cherished democratic governance. In our country, ideology is not practiced and no party's manifesto is made public in contravention to the advice by Election Commission that requires political parties to make their manifesto widely publicized. Unless we know the party's motives, we will only vote for them on the basis of promises and false hopes and we will never be able to question them about their performance.



Syeda Farah Azmi-Member of Provisional Assembly -Punjab said in her presidential address that in a democracy, the people decide who to be their representative, whereas in our country we do not pay any attention to which people we have to elect. And then that is what is happening in our country. We vote on the basis of personality. We should not vote on the basis of the personality of anybody. Rather, we should look at the wisdom, acumen and discreetness of the representative and make a choice. Our political parties award party tickets to those who can provide funds for the party. The public should understand that every ones vote carries equal weight.

There have been so many departments and representatives in our country but still no work is being done to ease the life of the people. Prime Minister Imran Khan has given new thoughts to the people, but our people do not want to accept fresh thoughts. The way Prime Minister Imran Khan is working day and night for the development of our country, hopefully one day our country will be on the path of development.

Questions raised by participants

Q: The bridge is being constructed on Shahab Pura road but it has not been completed despite passage a long spell of time. People are facing a lot of problems in commuting by this road. How long will it take to get completed?

Answer. We know very well about the community problems. The bridge will be constructed soon.

2. There is a lot of inflation in the country right now. Flour, ghee and everything else you need is very expensive. Gas and electricity bills are high, and the average person's salary is 17,500, which is too low to cover those costs. Can you tell that by when the trend of unrestrained increase in prices will be bridled?

Answer. There is no doubt that priced of essential commodities have increased manifold. Government representatives are also worried about this trend. Govt. is trying its level best to minimize the pace of inflation. For this, the government has provided subsidy of twenty (20) billion rupees.

There are some irregularities in the gas and electricity bills that you have been charged with. Govt. will reimburse the excessive amounts charged to the people.

3. The name of our village is Dughran Khurd. And there are piles of dirt everywhere. There is no specific place where people can throw garbage. Therefore, you are requested to resolve this so that the public can avoid the risk of diseases that may erupt because of garbage heaped up there?

Answer. The government has allotted a separate place for throwing garbage in each village. You should look in your village or contact a patwari to identify the place so that you can solve the problems.

Vote of Thanks: Mr. Arshid Mirza thanked the participants for their kind participation and taking part in this thought provoking discussion.

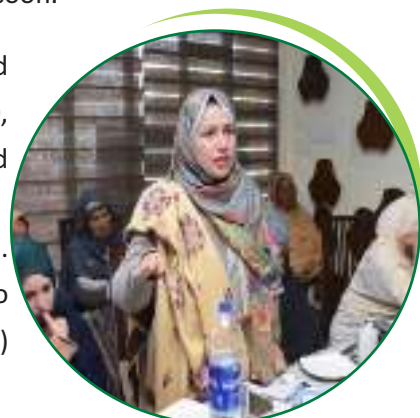
Proceedings of session at Sambrial:

The proceedings of the session commenced with the recitation of verses from Holy Quran.

Ms. Hina Noreen welcomed the participants of the session. She provided comprehensive overview of the organizational contributions to empower women and other vulnerable social segments in social, economic and political terms.

Mr. Arshid Mehmood Mirza said that very wrongly an understanding is being promoted and popularized in the society that Pakistani nation by temperament is not fit for the democratic form of government and it likes to be ruled by scepter. He said that such ideas are being marketed by power mongering dictatorial thought holders. In actuality, it was the will of the people that became manifest through general elections held in 1946.

The results of these elections provided substantial power and logic to the demands for a separate homeland for Muslims in Indian sub-continent. Aside democracy, there is no system in the world that guarantees systemic and peaceful transfer of power, that allows people to elect their representatives to form a government for a specified period of time, that promises basic human rights to the people and that allows the people to hold their rulers accountable for their performance. It is our own responsibility to elect such representatives as may have understanding of their legal, social and moral roles and responsibilities and who have the eligibility and competence to perform their role and address the problems facing the people. He highlighted the need to elect true and eligible representatives of the people who may work for delivering benefits of democracy to the common people. Mr. Muhammad Iqbal Ghumman said that we as a Pakistani are worried about the future of our country that what it will be. Quaid-e-Azam always delivered his speech in English which was not understood by common people but the people believed in his leadership because they knew that he was sincere and committed to his cause. The result is that today we are a free nation. Now when the electoral process begins, the people do not understand



that electing eligible people is part of their national duty. The people who contest the elections, they general do it for their personal projection and gains. They never work to deliver anything for the development of the people. Those who believe in the development of the people and come forward to serve the people, they really dedicate their potentials for easing the lives of the people.

Mr. Qaiser Sajjad Cheema said that initiatives taken by Baidarie are really good and much needed. As a result of increased awareness, the general public will be able to elect better representatives having potentials to solve their problems.

These interventions will also enable women to perform effective role in the elected bodies.

Mr. Muhammad Azeem Noori Ghumman former MPA and Chairman Public Accounts Committee Punjab said that democracy is a good system in which people have the right to govern through their elected representatives. Voters should have the ability and awareness to choose the right representative and then hold them accountable. Selling votes for petty gains is harmful to the wider interests of the public. Today, every sector of our country is on the way to fast deterioration in moral and social spheres. A person who does not know the problems of the people how he can meaningfully represent them. It is important for the general public to vote for competent representatives who have the ability to solve the problems of the people.



Questions raised by participants

1. What features are required to be considered for a representative's election?

Answer. You see how his past record is, how much he has knowledge, how much he has contact with the public. Choose your representative on these grounds.

2. The Nai Abadi is a location in Sambrial, with no gas or no municipal facilities. What is the solution?

Answer. Yes. This problem is in our notice. We will try to solve the problem at the soonest.

3. Tell us when the intolerable inflation will be brought under control?

Answer. Inflation is really high, at the moment all things are very expensive but in the near future the prices of essential commodities will become under control. You should ask for a rate list from a shopkeeper who sells items at a higher price. If they sell the items in an expensive way, then you may tell us.

Session at Daska (26 Feb 2020)

A session to assess the performance of the elected representatives was organized at Daska. Specific Objectives of the session were as under:

1. Introduction to Baidarie and NED supported project "Program for Strengthening Democratic Local Governance in Sialkot-Pakistan"
2. Highlighting the need and importance of the assessment of the performance of elected representatives against their legally ordained roles and responsibilities.
3. Government's Initiatives to strengthen local governance entities at gross roots level.
4. Problem Analysis: Current situation in the area.
5. Roles and Responsibilities of Public Representatives/ public office holders

Proceedings of the session:

The proceedings of the session began with the recitation of verses from holy Quran.

Introducing Baidarie to the participants of the session Ms. Nazima told that the organization was founded by women and girls in 1993 in a small village named Roras in Tehsil Sambrial District Sialkot. Since then the organization is making efforts to provide women with the access to spaces and options for their development.

During the last three years, skill training has been imparted to 2000 women. These women have also been facilitated to get jobs in the Sialkot based factories. Most of them are now earning up to Rs. 22,000 every month. Consequently, the living conditions of these women and their immediate families have improved. These days the organization is undertaking activities under following in the following thematic areas.

1. With the support provided by Amplify Change, Baidarie is implementing “programme for promotion of Gender equity, empowerment and justice” in all the six districts in Gujranwala Division. It basically aims to evolve social deterrence against gender based discriminations, harassment and violence and child abuse. It also aims at provision of psychosocial counseling, para legal advice, legal aid and medical treatment to the women, girls, transgenders and child survivors of torture and violence.

2. With the support provided by AFGP-TDEA Baidarie is implementing the project “Development of gender responsive entrepreneurship in District Sialkot”. The project aims at pulling a batch of vulnerable but enterprising fifty (50) females ((divorced, widows & separated women, the jobless home-based women & girls soccer stitchers, the female victims of violence) and 25 males (orphans and domestic workers/employees) out of the vicious cycle of poverty, minimizing the level of their economic and social exclusions and making them equal partners of mainstream life on gender responsive basis.

3. With the support provided by “Trust for Democratic Education and Accountability” Baidarie is implementing project titled “Strengthening Electoral and Legislative Process” in Sialkot district. The organization with the support provided by Election Commission of Pakistan and NADRA has facilitated approximately 50000 women & girls to get their CNICs and be registered as voters.

Today' meeting has been convened under the banner of “Program for strengthening democratic local governance in Sialkot District”. The programme is supported by National Endowment for Democracy. The programme aims at political empowerment of women, youth, Non-Muslims, peasants and workers. Actually these people have not been provided effective space and options to raise their voices in the process of decision making. Political elite never lets any power slip away from the domain of their so-called exclusive prerogatives so they always work to cater and strengthen their vested interests. The rights of the left-behind social segments are always compromised. Under this program we have to encourage the left-behind social segments so that they too can become a strong and active part of the political process. To make it possible, we have been conducting training sessions for the people at forty selected locations in all the four tehsils in Sialkot district. We are motivating the people to understand their basic human rights and be active and effective part of local governance formations and functions so that they may themselves be part of the solutions to the problems being faced by them. We also understand that objective assessment of the performance of the elected representatives plays an instrumental role in improving the performance of the local governance entities. You can ask your representatives present here about their performance or you can share your area based issues with them. This interactive sharing of views and problems will certainly help in the improvement of the performance of our elected representatives.

Ms. Hina Noureen while addressing the participants of the session said that the common people will have to come forward to themselves be the owners of their destiny. None other understands the problems experienced by the small landholders or the farmers than their own selves. They understand the root causes of their problems and only they can solve them. It is necessary therefore for the farmers themselves to come forward and make decisions to solve their problems. Similarly, workers should contest elections so that they may effectively solve problems confronting the working classes.



through new “local bodies Acts” has not provided for any reserved seats for peasants and workers. Prevalent nomination practices to the representation slots in local governance entities supports to keep the hegemony of ruling elite intact and does not allow actual representatives of the farmers and workers to be effective partners of the decision making processes. This is something very bad. If these vital segments do not have effective representation, then the problems of these classes

will always remain unaddressed to take high toll on the developmental options for those who keep rotating the cycle of economy of country.

She said that non-Muslims in the country also do not get effective representation in the decision making processes. Complaints of frequent encroachment of the rights of Non-Muslims are also common. If these people are not even involved in the electoral process, none else will bother to raise their issues and get them addressed through nondiscriminatory process of policy and decision making. It is therefore vitally necessary that Non-Muslims be given opportunity to themselves explain their view point and be effective partners of the efforts for solving their problems.

In addition, youth comprises of the 64% of total population in our country. None can differ that these young people are our future. Unfortunately is left dimensionless in our society. They are not adequate space to be the part of the political process. Due to such practices, not only the problems facing the youth remain unaddressed but also youth cannot get necessary training for assumption of their futuristic roles and responsibilities. In perfect neglect of these practicalities, the Govt. of Punjab has not provided any reserve seats for youth in the local governance entities. It is needed that govt. should be impressed upon to provide reserved seats for male and female youth in the local bodies and we must encourage the youth to take active and effective part in the electoral process.

The purpose of this program is to ensure that people of all classes should take part in local bodies' elections. So that problems facing each and every class may be discussed and resolved. And those who are aware of local issues must come forward in the local elections. And today's event is about to share their opinions and suggestions and problems with you people so that their problems can be solved practically in an expedited way.

Mr. Mian Muhammad Rafique:

First of all, I would like to thank Baidarie which invited us to this event here today. Madam Hina spoke in detail about the formation and functions of local bodies. I am thankful to her for this awareness program. Prime Minister Imran Khan has the vision to bring forward the left-behind social segments. Local bodies' elections are coming and today's program is also aimed at local elections.

This is where the local representatives come forward. Who know how to solve local problems? We tend to forget to assess the eligibility of the representatives when choosing them. It provides space for the ineligible ones to come forward. And lastly, I would say that this program of Baidarie's is very good and we are present wherever the Baidarie organization will call us.

Mr. Choudary Iftikhar Sahi:

I am so grateful to all of you that you come for such an important work. Local representatives are the nursery of democracy. And from here strong representatives come forward. The present government has passed Acts to provide a very good local system. And the government is providing information through various NGOs. The government has divided the areas according to the population. And here are the 247 villages nominated in our tehsil where elections will be held on non-party basis. And people of all classes can participate in these elections. And street problems or cleaning up will be done at the local level.



Then there will be the Tehsil Council elections. So you should all prepare yourself for these elections and the candidate who goes door to door and asks for votes will succeed. And you people should make yourself part of these elections so that the system that is running can be abolished and people from the same family will not come forward at all times, but other people can come forward. Funds have also been distributed by the government which will be spent at the local level. And I urge you guys to go ahead with this program in every village.

Mr. Choudary Mumtaz Ali

All the activities of the Baidarie, especially for women, are commendable. There are many villages in our area and it is a very difficult task to be aware of every Village. But at the union council level, this program should be strengthened. Before today, people used to get vote by money or by using their influence. But now I hope the trend is eliminating as the Baidarie organization is working. And anyway this time elections are taking place on non-party basis. So the impression of casting a vote on the basis of the party will be wiped out.

I tell you guys should cast your vote. Everyone, especially women, must get their ID cards. Be sure to register your vote and if there is a mistake in the vote registration entries, get them corrected in time. Let's put an end to the tradition of voting for those who have money. Choose good representatives to strengthen the new system. Thank you all.



Question Raised by the Participants:

Q-1: Ever since the new government came into power, there has been a lot of inflation. The fees for schools and colleges are high. By when will the inflation be controlled and the cost of education reduced?

Ans: Yes, I agree with you that there has been a real inflation. But we are going to establish a government college in Daska very soon. What you have talked about is that the fees have gone up a lot with private colleges. You should take admission in government colleges as there are lower fees than private colleges.

Q-2: The name of our village is Shamsa Cheema. There is a lot of problem of natural gas in our area. No gas and the bill is up to Rs 4000. Please solve this problem.

Ans: We will try our best to resolve the issue, but it is the task of representatives of the local bodies. Local elections are coming. So you people should choose good representatives so that they can solve these problems.

Session in Pasrur on 27-02-2020

The session was organized to inculcate and promote tradition of accountability of elected representatives/public office holders at the hands of women & men voters. Following topics came up for the discussion during the session.

1. Introduction to Baidarie and NED supported project "Program for Strengthening Democratic Local Governance in Sialkot-Pakistan"
2. Highlighting the need and importance of the assessment of the performance of elected representatives against their legally ordained roles and responsibilities.
3. Government's Initiatives to strengthen local governance entities at gross roots level.
4. Problem Analysis: Current situation in the area.
5. Roles and Responsibilities of Public Representatives/ public office holders.

Proceedings of the session:

Session began with the recitation of verses from holy Quran. Ms. Nazima welcomed the participants and provided an introduction to Baidarie, history of its inception in 1993, its professional track record and its on-going projects aiming to empower the poor and to pace up the process of social, economic and political inclusions.

She briefed the participants about the rationality, objectives, implementation methodology and expected outcome results of the "Program for strengthening democratic local governance in Sialkot District."

She explained that through implementation of this program, locals and especially those called left-behind social segments of society, will be strengthened politically. These people have never had a chance to get effective role in the democratic electoral politics. The political monopolists belonging to traditional ruling elite at the local levels always suppress the voice of the poor and never provide them any space to them to be a part of the local governance entities and processes. These left-behind social segments cast their votes in accordance with the peoples. The rights of these left-behind social segments are

always compromised and encroached to squeeze the liberty of action. Under this program we have to encourage the left-behind social segments so that they too can become a strong and active part of the political process. In this regard, we have been conducting training sessions for the people at forty selected locations so that these people can comprehend their rights, secure, protect and promote them. Their active participation in the system will let them to solve their own problems so we keep encouraging women, youth, non-Muslims, peasants and workers to take part in the elections for the local bodies. We have invited you today to be the participants of one of the activities of this program. It is an act of popularizing idea of the “need and importance of performance assessment of public representatives”. In today's program, the participants from different communities can ask questions from their representatives about their performance. You can also share with them your area specific issues so that they can raise voice of the people to get their problems addressed.

Mr. Arshid Mehmood Mirza:

There is a general complaint surfaced by the people that we elect our representatives during the elections but later on we lose our access to them. They get out of access for us. Neither they know our problems nor do they try to assess the immensity of the public grievance to make efforts for addressing them. It happens so because the voters do not make the least of the efforts to assess the eligibility of the election contestants against the roles and responsibilities they are legally obliged to perform. Moreover there is massive disconnect between the gross root voters and those who formulate policies and take decisions for them.

It is unimaginable that decision makers at the level of governments have ever experienced the pains that generate when their child might have not enough food to eat or no fee to pay at school or no dress to save him/her from the severity of weather. They do not know about these problems because they never personally experienced them then how can we expect that their policy formulation or decision making be exactly pro poor. It is therefore necessary that we should elect such representatives for the legislative /decision making slots who have real understanding of the problems of the poor and have the ability to find out workable solutions for them. He added that according to a report published by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 64% of Pakistani population is comprised of youth bulge. Those who are in age bracket between 15 and 29 years are 30% of the total lot. This is the class that is our future. They have the passion, time, energy and potential to do constructive work but unfortunately youth has been left dimensionless in our country. There is no attractive program to engage youth and translate their potentials into useful actions. If no attention is paid to engage youth in national development process then not only their future will be ruined but also the pace of the national development will slow down to the hopeless extent. Similarly, in our country the female population is approximately 49% of the total population. The male population is 51%. Is it God's plan to create men in relatively more numbers and women lesser in numbers? No, certainly it is not so. God has set a balance in everything present in the universe. It is the mankind's gender biased behaviors, attitudes, conducts and practices that have led to squeezing the life span for women to end up in the numerical imbalance on statistical data.

The restrictions on women in our society rob them of their freedom to survive and put them on quick way to death. If women are provided with the opportunity to move with freedom of choices, they can better represent themselves. It can be even better if the families and society support women to act for their development. Women can reach the assemblies and perform their duties very reasonably and responsibly. In the broader perspective of national development, it is necessary to let women have effective representation in elections to local bodies. Similarly, there are non-Muslim, labor and peasant classes. They are playing an important role in national development. No reserved seats have been provided in the new system of local bodies. Therefore, we must make efforts to encourage, train, and make these segments an effective part of the local bodies system so that local level issues can be solved by local leadership and each section of the society has a role in this struggle. Baidarie has fixed its target to increase the turnout of women's votes. During the general elections held during July 2018 we set a target to increase women voter's turn out by 60% . We were able to achieve more than that that as through cooperation of all the relevant stakeholders' women voters' turnout was increased up to 62% at forty selected villages during



the 25 July 2018 general elections. Now for the local bodies elections expected to be held during 2020 we have planned to increase women voters' turn out by 70%. This target can be achieved only through the support by all the relevant stakeholders and we request you to very kindly extend the needed support. Our team is working hard to increase awareness in women voters at these forty selected locations. Massive input is being provided for women voters' education. We hope that the target will also be achieved through collaborative efforts of the organization, women and the respective communities.

Mr. Rana Maqbool Hussain: Former President Tehsil Bar Association Pasrur

First of all, I am grateful to the Baidarie Organization for inviting us here today. Baidarie organization has an important role in providing training to the people. If we get knowledge based guidance and our paths are accurately outlined, we can make rationale choices for our future. It is generally misconceived that women are inferior to men in terms of human power, intellect and wisdom. Treating women as weaker social segment and leaving them behind in every field of developmental process is just counterproductive. The irrefutable fact is that women have always performed very significant role in every field of life.

Therefore, if women are denied the right to representation, it would be unfair to almost half of the population of the country. Only a woman can understand the needs and problems of the womenfolk. Pakistan is a democratic country and our country has been in existence for over 70 years. But things are exactly the same. So to improve the democratic system, we have to improve the local bodies system. Women have to exercise their right to vote. You have to cast your vote wisely and choose the best possible representatives.

Mr. Amir Bajwa: Senior Vice President Pakistan Tehrik e Insaaf Pasrur

Mr. Arshid Mirza has talked about the vitality of the role of the left-behind social segments in the socioeconomic development and the opportunities denied to them to be effective partners of the decision making processes. I think if we are living a life in an environment of freedom then this is the beauty of the democratic process. The democratic process moves forward on the robustness of the public opinion. When the local elections come closer all the people especially women should exercise their right to vote without entertaining any pressure from any side.

It will help in choosing the good representatives to solve our problems. And our party, also known as PTI, wants to elect the representatives at the grass root level. We want to advance women at the level of the village as well as at the tehsil level. And as you said in the upcoming local council system, the seats of left-behind social segments have been eliminated. So I would like to say that this step of yours in which you are encouraging these classes to come to contest elections to the general seats is very useful. I pay tribute to you. All classes need to take a step by themselves. They should support the Baidarie organization. And we hope that with time, change will come and you will find success in what you are doing.

Mr. Ghulam Mustafa: Former President Tehsil Bar Association Pasrur

I would like to thank the Baidarie Organization for inviting us here today. I strongly recommend that they should be supported in their efforts to provide information and build knowledge regarding women empowerment in Pasrur tehsil. The work being done by Baidarie is very useful. We appreciate their efforts in Pasrur Tehsil and I promise that we will be with them wherever the organization requires our services. Thank you very much.

Mr. Rana Muhammad Afzal-Member Punjab Provincial Assembly:

I am thankful to Baidarie for inviting so many people here today and providing us with the opportunity to sit in front of them. Our religion is Islam. And this is the religion in which has promised all the rights to women. They are fully entitled to have these rights. Therefore, women should also develop self-esteem. First of all, our women should know what their rights are. And secondly, the rights of a man are as much as that of a woman. Just as much as a man's vote matters, so does a woman's vote. We need to understand the importance of our vote and make the right decision so that the right representatives can come forward. Another thing I would like to say is that if there are some responsibilities of public representatives there are some responsibilities of the voters as well.

Before exercising their right to vote, they should make sure that the person in favor of whom they are casting the vote is eligible or not. Is that representative able to solve your problems after being elected? So while men have the right to think they can exercise their right to vote, women have the same right to exercise their right to vote. Cast your vote without anyone's pressure. Thank you.

Questions raised by Participants:

At present, the country is experienced the highest rate of inflation. By when will the public get rid of this inflation?

Ans: Rana Muhammad Afzal: I am not a member of the ruling political party at this time. I am currently part of the opposition party. Members of the government team are sitting here so they should respond to this question.

Mr. Amir Bajwa: Yes you have made a good point. There is a lot of inflation in the country right now, but our Prime Minister is working hard to get rid of it soon. So hopefully soon we will control the trend of increase in the prices of essential commodities.

We belong to Village Salimeke. The road to our Village is all broken. In the rainy season it is very difficult to get through, so please solve this problem.

Ans: Well we will try to resolve this issue as soon as possible. I will visit your area myself and i will see this problem myself.

Session at Tehsil Sambrial (07-03-2020)

The session was organized to inculcate and promote tradition of accountability of elected representatives/public office holders at the hands of women & men voters. Following topics came up for the discussion during the session.

- 1.Introduction to Baidarie and NED supported project” Program for Strengthening Democratic Local Governance in Sialkot-Pakistan”
- 2.Highlighting the need and importance of the assessment of the performance of elected representatives against their legally ordained roles and responsibilities.
- 3.Government's Initiatives to strengthen local governance entities at gross roots level.
- 4.Problem Analysis: Current situation in the area.
- 5.Roles and Responsibilities of Public Representatives/ public office holders

Proceedings of the session:

Sessions commenced with the recitation of verses from Holy Quran.

Ms. Nazima Irshad welcomed all the participants for their kind participation in the session and provided to them an overview of the organizational efforts to empower those marginalized social segments that have been kept excluded from the opportunities, options and spaces for social, economic and political development. She added that Baidarie is making strenuous efforts to politically empower the left-behind social segments, including women, peasants, laborers, non-Muslims and youths and is encouraging them to be part of the democratic electoral process.

She added that we are also highlighting the need and importance of the performance assessment of public representatives. The purpose of this activity is to let the public representatives and the general public sit face to face and listen to each other. There is a general impression that the public representatives do not usually meet their voters after the election. Therefore, we have tried to bring the public representatives to the public so that the public may objectively evaluate their performance by raising different questions.



Ms. Hina Noreen shared with the participants of the session that Baidarie has been making efforts to strengthen local bodies system at forty (40) locations in Sialkot district. Through different interventions the communities are being encouraged and motivated to take part in elections for local bodies and make their representation effective. Previously we set a target to increase the women voters' turnover rate to 60% at the selected locations in Sialkot district. We remained successful in increasing women voters' turn out rate to 62%. Now our target is to increase the voting rate of women by 70%, and apart from that we have to make the marginalized classes an effective part of the electoral process and I think this is possible with the help of you people only.

Mr. Arshid Mehmood Mirza:

There is an impression in our society that our nation is not essentially democratic in nature so some dictatorial rule is the best option for governance here. If we look back at the history of Pakistan, it turns up that All India Muslim League was a democratic party which had struggled with the help of the people and succeeded in getting an independent country. If the people of Pakistan are trusted then they can very much help developing a system of democratic governance in Pakistan. He lamented that political system in the country has been corrupted to the core. The electorate has not remained an exception to it. People have not been trained to set their priorities on the basis of reason so while exercising their right to vote they get allured by the attractive rhetoric of the contestants generating false hopes in them. Voters neither bother to assess the workability of the manifestoes of the political parties in the electoral arena nor do they assess the eligibility of the contestants against the roles and responsibilities they are obliged to perform in accordance with the constitutional/legal provisions.

Outcome of elections is by and large the incompetent and ineligible representatives who sit silently in the legislature and never speak on the parliamentary forums to voice the needs of the people. It is necessary that people should be motivated to exercise their right to vote for electing the most suitable representatives who may know the requirements of their job and may have the capability to do that efficiently and effectively. If we have a look at the matter from the angle of representation of the left-behind social segments in the governance formation and functions, it becomes perfectly clear that real and genuine representatives of farmers, workers, youth, women and non-Muslims have very scarce access to the governance formations and functions.

It is unfortunate that women's representation is done by the sisters, wives, mothers or other relatives of powerful and most influential sections of the ruling elite. Common women living at the gross root levels of the society never get the opportunity to be elected to represent their gender on the legislative and/or local governance forums. It may not be possible that women representatives coming from powerful and affluent elite may bother to highlight the woes of the poor and ultra-poor women and make some effort for pro poor legislation and decision making. There are frequent complaints among communities that the elected representatives just disappear after becoming successful during the elections and then become inaccessible to the voters till the eve of the next elections. They never bother to listen to the grievances of the people and seldom try to get them addressed. Actually, in addition to blaming these representatives, we voters need to have the self-assessment of our own conduct as well. If we elect the most eligible representatives then certainly they will make efforts to ensure best possible delivery of services and grievance addressing. We must elect those persons who have close connections with their electorate and who have the maximum of capabilities to perform their legally ordained roles and responsibilities.

According to a report released by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 64% of the population in Pakistan comprises of youth. 30 % the youth are in the age bracket i.e. 15 and 29 years. Youth have tremendous potentials to do something constructive but we have left them at their own. There is no policy and /or programme to fully utilize the potentials of the youth. We must involve them in all the nation building activities so that they may evolve to be the best contributors to the developmental phenomenon in the country.

Mr. Umar Ihsan: Political Activist

I would like to thank Baidarie for inviting us here today. I pay rich tribute to Baidarie team. You've really raised the valid point that after having been elected the public representative do not try to meet the general public. The effort being made by Baidarie team to let these elected representatives sit face to face with the public is really a good step forward. I would like to suggest that you should also train these representatives once they are elected so that they become aware of their responsibilities. It will help them to work well for the development and welfare of the people. I assure you on my behalf that I am always there for you, wherever you may need my help. Thank you all.



Mr. Umar Abdullah Ghumman- Political activist:

Increasing efficiency and effectiveness of women's role in local governance formations and functions is a topic of tremendous importance for the development of the society and the nation. Mr. Umar Abdullah said while expressing his views during the proceedings of the seminar.

Mr. Arshid Mirza has said that women constitute 49% of our country's population. If we look at our society, we find that men are considered more powerful than women in our society. We live in a society where several opportunities are denied to women solely because we consider them inferior and weaker portion of society. We ourselves are the builders of such a gender biased discriminating system. Actually women perform the most decisive role in social, economic, cultural and political spheres of the society. Pakistan's 1973 constitution acknowledges the vitality of their role in national development.



It provided for reserved seats for women on special quota in addition to the option of contesting on general seats in the provincial and federal legislatures. We need to make all out efforts that real and genuine representatives of the women living on gross roots of the society get elected and perform their role in the pro poor and gender responsive policy formulation, decision making and across the board enforcement of the statutes. It is something disturbing that the present government has introduced a very complicated system of local bodies. Through the newly promulgated laws the women's seats have been reduced and provision for the reserve seats for certain classes like youth, peasants and workers has not been made. I think that this government has done something unfair to these social segments. I would like to add that the local bodies system introduced by Pervez Musharraf's government was the best system. Through this system all classes were effectively represented. I am sure that Baidarie is making very good efforts to politically empower women, youth, Non-Muslims, peasants and farmers. I would like to encourage women to exercise their right to vote, they all must be part of the electoral process so that a truly democratic system can be established in the country. Thank you very much.

Brig[®] Muhammad Aslam Ghumman: Vice Chairman Anti-Corruption Committee Punjab.

I am grateful to all of you and Baidarie for organizing this wonderful program on a very serious and practical topic. I have never seen anyone thinking that public representatives and the general public should be encouraged and motivated to sit face-to-face with each other to touch basis of the problems and make commitments to address them in an efficient and sustainable way. I would like to pay rich tribute to Baidarie team for organizing this useful session of social and political dialogue. I understand that the biggest problem in this country is corruption. It has also damaged the economic robustness and social equity in the country. Initially I have served in Pakistan army and later in the anti-corruption departments. I've been struggling to put an end to corrupt practices.



Corruption is not only about money only, it's about the rights as well. Denying women of their legally acknowledged rights is also a form of corruption. Usurpation of women's rights is against the teachings of our great religion as well. Actually Islam is the first religion that has promised equal rights to women. For God, the best thing to do is to work for people. Yes, people vote for someone offering them incentives in cash. This is very bad thing. Such representatives will no longer work for your good. They will cause destruction. I understand politics is also a form of worship as it provides you with the opportunity to protect and promote the basic human rights. No one should allow encroaching upon the rights of some other one. No one knows when one is to exit out of this world. I urge you to never cast your vote under influence of some bias. Never cast vote to favor some clan or on caste based preference. Always use your vote in the right place. Power is a huge responsibility. This was a very disturbing thing even in the time of the companions of our holy prophet (peace be upon him). They were always highly concerned to make just use of their authority and exercise their powers. Here we have the nasty tradition of buying votes with money. Women keep an eye on the unlawful or forbidden earnings of their husbands. Keep up the good work and always be there to improve your area. That is our success. Secondly, I urge my mothers, sisters and daughters to take particular care of the eligibility of the election contestants more specifically while exercising their right to vote. When you people do not exercise your right to vote carefully, then the elected representatives will not work for your development nor will they be aware of your problems. They do not know whether the voters in their constituency do not have access to safe drinking water or have do not roads to comfortably commute. Because these representatives are not chosen by your vote on merit, they are elected through spendthrift use of money. I would like to insist that you people should elect the most eligible ones as your representatives so that they may pay attention to the solution of your problems. You never accept anyone's pressure when casting a vote. It is your right to vote for a representative of your own choosing. No one else can take this right from you. So you recognize this right and use it well. And one thing I want to add is that our Prime Minister Imran Khan listens to everyone. And what has been spoken by the Baidarie's platform today that the seats for the left-behind social segments for whom you are working should be prominent in the local elections, I will also be communicating to them so that we can leverage on improvement. Thank you very much.

Questions Raised by Community:

Q-1: My name is Farzana Kausar and I belong to Village Pannu Attari. Sir my question to you is that you have done very good things. But if you ever visit our area, you see the state of the schools. There is not a single government school up to matric in our village. There are elementary schools for both boys and girls. After passing middle standard the most of the children leave education. So please visit there and do some effort for upgradation of the schools.

Ans: Yes, I agree with you. I live mostly in Lahore but I spend three days every week in my constituency. Your area supports us a lot, but I come to your area less because our MPA candidate comes there so he knows the problems. I will talk to him about this issue so that he can resolve this issue as soon as possible.

Q-2: Before the Tehreek-e-Insaf government came to power, it had promised that ten million jobs would be given to the youth and fifty lakh houses would be given to the poor. But that promise has not yet been fulfilled. Will this promise come true or not? Or was it just lying to the public.

Ans: See, the question you raised is a really good question. But previous governments have given a lot of loss to the country's economy. And it will take two years to deal with this loss. That loss is there to slow down our progress. But now that our government has made this announcement, believe it, that promise will surely come true.

Vote of Thanks by Mr. Arshid Mehmood Mirza:

I would like to thank all the guests who have dedicated their precious time for the session today. You people also asked questions and got answers. So now I would suggest that you use your vote rationally to elect competent and eligible representatives so that may make sustained efforts to address your problems in a timely manner. Thank you all



Discussions on F.M. Radio among panel of Experts:

Panel Discussion on F.M. Radio 101 Sialkot (Jan 29, 2020) among following experts was organized for duration of one hour was organized.

- ◆ Mr. Asad Bajwa- Deputy General Secretary Labor Wing (Punjab Region) Pakistan Tahreek e Insaf
- ◆ Ms. Alia Hina- Senior Advocate District Bar Sialkot
- ◆ Mr. Usman Riaz –Assistant Professor University of Management Sciences & Technology
- ◆ Mr. Arshid Mehmood Mirza-Executive Director Baidarie

Live calls of the audience during the broadcast were taken and their questions were answered as well.

Proceedings:

Mr. Arshid Mehmood Mirza-Executive Director hosted this panel discussion. Initially he briefed about Programme for Strengthening Democratic Local Governance in Sialkot and objectives of the panel discussion. Panelists were requested to discuss the vital requisites for development of democratic culture in Pakistan. He added that just as our elected representatives know what their role is in the legislature, voters should also know what powers their elected representatives have. Both the electorate and the elected ones must perform their roles in the ambit of law and work for strengthening the pursuance of democratic principles, values and norms.



Ms. Alia Hina. It is necessary that when a voter comes to vote, he/she should know what his/her representative can do for him. What options does he have? The representative should have knowledge of the legislature and play a role in his actual tasks and legislation, in addition to small tasks and street or drainage. The voter should know if all these features are present in his / her representative. Voters should also see if their representative can legislate to safeguard the rights of the people.

Mr. Usman Riaz. If we have a look at the education field, the teacher should first know whether he has enough knowledge to make our child the architect of the nation. In the same way, we should look at our country before handing it over to a human being, whether he has the knowledge of how to do his job. Does he have the capability of carrying out this responsibility with competence?

At least they should have the legislative powers so that they can represent their area and assist the process of pro people legislation.

Mr. Asad Bajwa. When we think of voter status, voters have lots of responsibility before the day of elections. All left-behind social segments in the country, including women, labor, youth and non-Muslims, and people from all walks of life including government members, farmers and students and all those who should have the right to vote in our law. - All these voters should have the knowledge to look at their representative's track record of performance. The people should be provided adequate guidance over voter education so that more people may exercise their right to vote.

Ms. Alia Hina. Prices of the essentially required commodities of everyday use are soaring skywards. Rate of inflation and devaluation of currency is experiencing no restraint in the country. The general public should see where there are irregularities in electricity and gas bills. Where do these changes occur? These changes come from assemblies. And people are not aware that this is not why ordinary people take such people to the assemblies above.

Who are not able to figure out how to make better legislation and solve people's problems? The 18-year-old's seats in the new municipal system have been eliminated. Because the government thinks they lack consciousness. It requires voter awareness of who we are voting for. And what is our representative's role?

Mr. Usman Riaz. We need to improve the age and quality of education for the elections. Whether a person who is participating in the elections on the basis of his personality will ever appear before the public for accountability or not. It is very important to choose the right representative.

Mr. Asad Bajwa. Basic human rights are the right of every human being and how can he use his vote better if a person does not have basic rights despite being a Pakistani citizen? How will he recognize his right and how he will vote to elect a good representative? We have to change our attitudes. Then good representatives will emerge on the scene.

Ms. Alia Hina. Each legislator is affiliated with some party and works in accordance with the manifesto of his party. They are supposed to discuss the needs of their area by having in-depth consultations with the people and then taking them to the assembly. But when it comes to the distribution of funds, it has been seen that the preferences of the representatives change. They begin making money instead of serving the vital interests of the people.

Mr. Usman Riaz. Generally voters do not know what the elected representative is doing. Some influentials are managing to hold their seats in the assemblies over several preceding decades. Do they go to assemblies to speak for their voters? Do they talk about developing their area? Education, bread, clothing and housing, and then there are many other important things that are very important to human life. When we elect a representative to the Assembly, we also have the right to ask him about the work you have done to improve our area.



Mr. Asad Bajwa. We have to see if the representative of the legislature is conscious. Is he able to participate in the legislative process or not? We must look at the characteristics of a representative before voting.

Mr. Arshid Mehmood Mirza. There have been many changes to the law in history. Sometimes women are stripped of their right to vote and many wrong policies are seen. Therefore, we should strengthen public interest rather than personal interest. And so people should come forward to explain what they are doing.

Panel Discussion on F.M. Radio 101 Sialkot - 17 February 2020:

The panelists included:

1. Ms. Syeda Farah Azmi, Member Punjab Assembly (Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf)
2. Syed. Abdul Waheed Bukhari- Former Advocate General Punjab
3. Mr. Muhammad Iqbal Ghumman (Former Vice Chairman UC Roras)
4. Mr. Arshid Mehmood Mirza Executive Director Baidarie
5. Ms. Hina Noureen Vice President Baidarie
6. Mr. Ahmad Raza Cheema: Station Director FM 101 Sialkot

During one hour radio broadcast, the panelists discussed the following topics.

1. The vital requisites for development of democratic culture in Pakistan.
2. The approaches, techniques and methodology of the assessments of the elected representatives/public office holders
3. Measures required for promotion of democratic, principles, norms and practices.
4. On-line calls

Proceedings:

Ms. Hina Noureen Vice-President Baidarie hosted this panel discussion. Mr. Ahmad Raza Cheema Station Director FM 101 Sialkot assisted her during the panel discussion. Ms. Hina began the proceedings of the session by providing an overview of the “Programme for Strengthening Democratic Local Governance in Sialkot” and “objectives of the panel discussion”. Panelists were requested to discuss the vital requisites for development of democratic culture in Pakistan.

Mr. Ahmad Raza Cheema Station Director FM 101 Sialkot added that just as our elected representatives must know that what role they are legally ordained to perform in the legislature, voters should also know what powers their elected representatives have and what roles and responsibilities they are legally obliged to perform. Both the electorate and the elected once must perform their roles in the ambit of law and work for strengthening of democratic principles, values and norms.

Mr. Iqbal Ghumman: Women handle all the matters in an organized way and quite proficiently. Similarly, if women participate in the elections to local bodies, this will be a very important move forward. Just as men have an important role in national development; women also need to be fully involved in the process of national development.

When it comes to the farmers, one farmer can better understand the problems of the farmer brothers. The farmer is well aware that if he cultivates a crop then he has some problems during his cultivation. What are the rates of sown seeds and what is the rate of fertilizers. Only a farmer knows these things better. If there is no representation of the farmers in the local governance entities, then who will understand the problems of the farmers and who will make efforts to address their problems. What taxes do the farmers have to pay; I think that the farmers have to choose their own representatives to solve their problems so that their issues can be resolved in a timely manner.

Mr. Ahmad Raza Cheema I am grateful to the Baidarie Organization, which hosts one program every month on the radio to provide people with information about new local elections. My question is for Mr. Abdul Waheed Bukhari; what should be the voter's preferences while casting a vote?

Mr. Abdul Waheed Bukhari I am also thankful to the Baidarie Organization who has invited me to this platform today. And as far as the service and welfare of the people is concerned, the struggle of the Baidarie Organization is very impressive. Addressing the voters, I would like to say that whatsoever may be the responsibilities of the elected representatives, it is the basic responsibility of the voters to cast their votes very thoughtfully. They should elect those representatives who know their local issues and may work hard to address them. It is basically voters' responsibility to wisely determine their priorities. There are two types of representation; one at the level national or provincial assembly and another at the level of local bodies. Our country is a democratic country. It's been 72 years since this country's emergence as an independent state. So if the locals are getting an opportunity now, they should bring the eligible representatives to the front on the basis of merit.

People from all classes should participate in the elections to local bodies. Young people who are 18 years old should also be given space to participate in these elections. We cannot leave the youth behind. Young people are our future.

Mr. Arshid Mehmood Mirza

Speaking of voters' preferences, I would like to say that all responsibility is not just for elected representatives but it is also important for the public to exercise their right of vote by developing maximum understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the elected representatives. They must not cast their vote under any pressure, but should use the right to vote at their own free will and choice.



The prevalence of high literacy rate does not mean that the literate people have the increased level of political consciousness as well. Currently, if women get elected against the reserved seats in the local bodies, it is not they themselves but the members of their families participate in the local bodies' functions on their behalf. On the other hand, fifty percent of the female representation in new structures of the local bodies has been reduced. I think women should get representation in the local bodies at least in proportion to their presence in the society.

Ms. Hina Noreen The minimum age limit for a voter in this new municipal system has been set at 18 years however none less than 25 years age can contest the elections for general or reserved seats. No final details have been made about education yet, but if a person is convicted and his sentence ended seven years ago, then he can participate in the elections. Neighborhood councils will be formed at the city level and panchayat system will be established at the rural level. In this new local system, there are no reserved seats for farmers and workers.

Question from Listeners: My question to MPA is that prices of essential commodities are rocketing skywards to make the cost of living unaffordable. After suffering how long the people will be able to get some relief?

Ms. Farah Azmi I have seen at many places that most of the shopkeepers sell their products at expensive prices. People should buy things from utility stores. If you face increased prices just report the matter to the authorities immediately. And now I come to my today's point. The representatives you elect should also be held accountable for their performance. You should meet these representatives and ask them about their performance. And one more thing I would like to say is that people should elect their representatives on the basis of merit. Don't vote for someone on the basis of religion or community. This will be your own loss. For women I would particularly like to encourage them to come forward and take part in the elections. The problems of women will be solved only when they themselves come forward and defend their rights on policy and decision making forums. And for the laborers, I would say that the worker should be represented in the election on the seat of the worker. And wherever the farmer is concerned, the same thing will be said for the farmer to come forward on the farmer's seat so that the problems of the farmers can be resolved as well. If particular classes do not get their seats, then the problems of those classes will continue to persist and then the system is going to stay the same. If you want change, you have to change.

Ms. Hina Noureen Election preparations have almost begun. The government has begun this process and as the Just Act changes, we will keep you informed regularly and you should keep telling people about it. From now on, people need to prepare themselves for this. People who do not have ID cards should create their ID cards. And those who want to participate in the election and their documents are not cleared, they should clear their documents. And as soon as the election schedule is announced by the government, we will share it with you.

Mr. Arshid Mehmood Mirza Taking the topic to the end, I would like to say that we have to see what the purpose of representation is. You have to be responsive to all the government practices that are in place. These representatives should be accountable to the public. And the public should also choose good representatives. When the representatives are elected, they should be trained on what their duties are. The people should also be trained to ask their representatives about their performance after they are elected.

Mr. Ahmad Raza Cheema I am so grateful to you that you have organized such a great program here on the radio station today. People need to focus on the duties of elected representatives after electing their representatives. I think today's program is very important and it is important that people are brought in to ask their elected representatives about their performance.

Ms. Hina Noureen I would like to add a bit here to finally tell you about this new local system. According to this new system, the candidate who gets the maximum number of votes will become the chairman of this council. The candidate bagging less number of votes than those obtained the first one will become the speaker or convener. In this way, the remaining candidates coming in the numbers will become the councilors of the respective councils. And this time these elections are taking place on open merit, whoever wishes can participate in the elections. I urge you to be a participants of the elections process this time so that you may act like responsible citizen of Pakistan. Thank you very much,

Panel Discussions on F.M. Radio 101 Sialkot – 6 March, 2020:

Following experts participated in the radio broadcast that continued for one hour.

- 1.Ch. Asmat Ullah Waryah: Political Activist
- 2.Ch. Shahid Nazir Warraich: Political Activist
- 3.Mr. Umar Abdullah Ghumman: Political Activist
- 4.Mr. Arshid Mehmood Mirza: Executive Director Baidarie
- 5.Ms. Nazima Irshad: Social Organizer Baidarie

Experts discussed the following topics during the radio broadcast:

1. The vital requisites for development of democratic culture in Pakistan.
2. The approaches, techniques and methodology of the assessments of the elected representatives/public office holders
- 3.On-line calls

Proceedings of the session:

Mr. Arshid Mehmood Mirza-Executive Director hosted this panel discussion. Initially he briefed about “Programme for Strengthening Democratic Local Governance in Sialkot” and “objectives” of the panel discussion. Panelists were requested to

discuss the vital requisites for development of democratic culture in Pakistan.

Ch. Shahid Nazir Warraich:

The democratic system is very important for Pakistan. In order to maintain its continuity in Pakistan, it is important to see that the word democracy means the people. Democracy involves public opinion. So if a country has a democratic system, then no person is more powerful than the law. Therefore, the establishment of democracy is very important in Pakistan. And just as a child needs to read a nursery class, municipalities need to be strengthened to improve the democratic system. And in a democratic country, the municipal system is like a nursery. Therefore, the people of Pakistan should fully participate in democratic electoral process in Pakistan.

Mr. Umar Abdullah Ghumman:

As we were just talking about, in the democratic country the municipal system is a nursery. Likewise, our country is a democratic country and the municipal system is a nursery. And just as some of our representatives who previously participated in the elections at the municipal level are now sitting in the assemblies. And some of them are prominent in treasury benches and some on opposition benches. Therefore, strengthening the municipality is very important.

The elected representatives who come through the system of local bodies will understand the pains of the people. He understands what a poor man's problems are. What a difficult time he was going through. Therefore, the democratic system will be strong only when a representative comes up from the bottom.

Ch. Asmat Ullah Waryah:

The Election Commission should play its part in the promotion of democracy. When the Election Commission implements its rules and regulations, then the educated people will come forward, as well as the middle class, and they will be able to participate in the political process. Similarly, the left-behind social segments will also be able to participate in the democratic process.

Mr. Arshid Mehmood Mirza:

I think that there should be national consensus that what sort of governance system we prefer to have in our country. If we come to the conclusion that democratic system is beneficial for the people then we should make continuous efforts to put its pre-requisites in place and work for strengthening the democratic culture in society and state. All those countries which are economically and socially developed have progressed on the basis of democracy. Strengthening of democratic culture is essentially gradual in its essence. The people who live in the democratic countries they testify it to be the best governance system.

There political parties there are also democratic in themselves. In our country, the relevant stakeholders in state and society need to understand the approaches pursuing which the democratic values and norms may be absorbed in our living patterns. We need to have those people at the helm of affairs whose only priorities may be the solution to problems facing the people and protecting fundamental rights of the common men and women. As voters, we also have to see if the representative we are going to choose is able to solve our problems or not. Is he interested in the development and empowerment of the people or not? Unless voters are vigilant and active, the governance system in our country cannot move in the right direction. It is a bitter truth of our country that we have a great disconnect between decision makers, policy makers and those for whom that policy is being formulated and decision is being made. Law enforcement agencies believe in authoritarianism and does not at all acknowledge and appreciate even those basic rights of the people as are promised by the constitutional framework. I don't think any policy maker in the country have ever experienced the slightest of those deprivations which the poor and ultra-poor in this country experience on daily basis. I would therefore emphatically insist to say that the people whose voices have never been allowed to reach the decision making foras should be provided with space to come forward to let them forge the shape of their own destiny.

Ch. Shahid Nazir Warraich:

Democracy is one and only system that ensures respect for everyone's basic rights on nondiscriminatory basis. Our country is also a democratic country, so we should give equal representation to minorities, women, peasants and workers, etc., and they must all have equal access to their rights.

Mr. Umar Abdullah Ghuman:

I think when the 1973 constitution was approved the political and social conditions were not so complacent for democracy to flourish. But as the time went on our country's democratic system improved. It was the need of the hour then that reserved seats were provided for women at the tehsil level, at the union council level and also in the National Assembly and the Provincial Assembly. After that, the need to give special seats to farmers, laborers and minorities was also specified. But now it is happening that women have got seats in the assemblies but they are not getting effective representation yet. Because these seats are given to those women who do not represent the common women rather they are the defenders and protectors of those classes who are already the privileged ones. Such women sit there in silence, they don't talk about anything. So it needs to be improved now to give seats in the assemblies to women who can talk about women's issues there.

Mr. Arshid Mehmood Mirza:

We need to understand whether the representatives once elected by us do ever consider themselves accountable before their voters. To tame them to be accountable before the electorate, the legal responsibilities of these representatives should be made known to both i.e. the elected representatives and their voters. No one knows whether our elected members in the National Assembly or the Provincial Assembly speak for us or remain silent.

There are 347 members in the National Assembly and 371 members in the Punjab Provincial Assembly, but except few we have never heard these representatives speaking for the rights of the people. Massive majority of these elected representatives sit silently during the session and does not utter even a single word to voice their opinion on the agenda under discussion. The maximum they do is to amass more and more perks for them. We must closely and vigilantly comprehend the performance of our representatives. Only then we, the general public, can hold these elected representatives accountable on objective basis. We must make efforts to persuade these representatives to sit face to face with their voters and present their performance against their legally ordained roles and responsibilities. If we manage to do this, then the fear of accountability at the hands of the electorate will encourage the elected representatives to act more responsibly. We are already organizing and will continue to have such sessions with these representatives from the platform of the Baidarie. If the public representatives feel that they need the cooperation of the people, the people should also cooperate fully with them and solve their problems together.

Questions from the Listeners:

Q-1: I would say that public representatives are also untrained. So don't you think that these representatives should also be trained?

Mr. Arshid Mehmood Mirza: Yes, you have pointed to a very pertinent need. Generally, the elected representatives especially at the level of local bodies do not know their legal duties, roles and responsibilities. We are expecting the conduct of local bodies' elections in the near future. We have included in our program that we will train councilor's women and men regarding their responsibilities. During this process, we will include the secretaries of the union councils in this training program as well.

Q-2: I am a farmer and you have talked about representation of farmers in the election. So what should a farmer do if he is illiterate?

Ch. Asmat Ullah Waryah:

For this, it is important that you may elect a farmer member at the local level who can read and write a little. He should be sociable and interested in development of the people. Whoso ever has good relations with the people; you should fully support him and make him successful in assuming his responsibilities as elected representative.

Distribution of Hygiene Packs and IEC Material

Baidarie procured six hundred (600) hygiene packs and distributed those amongst the people @ 15 packs to 15 project beneficiaries (activists) 40 villages in all the 4 tehsils in district Sialkot (the project operational area). Posters, news clips and pamphlets (booklets) containing important information, awareness and motivational messages about the project and COVID-19



From the Press Gallery:

During the entire period of the project implementation media was kept closely engaged. Urdu and English print media provided coverage to maximum of the project activities for keeping the readers updated of the project initiatives for political empowerment of those social segments who have restricted access to the spaces, options and opportunities for making their voices heard during policy formulation and decision making. Some clippings of the news prints are given below.

