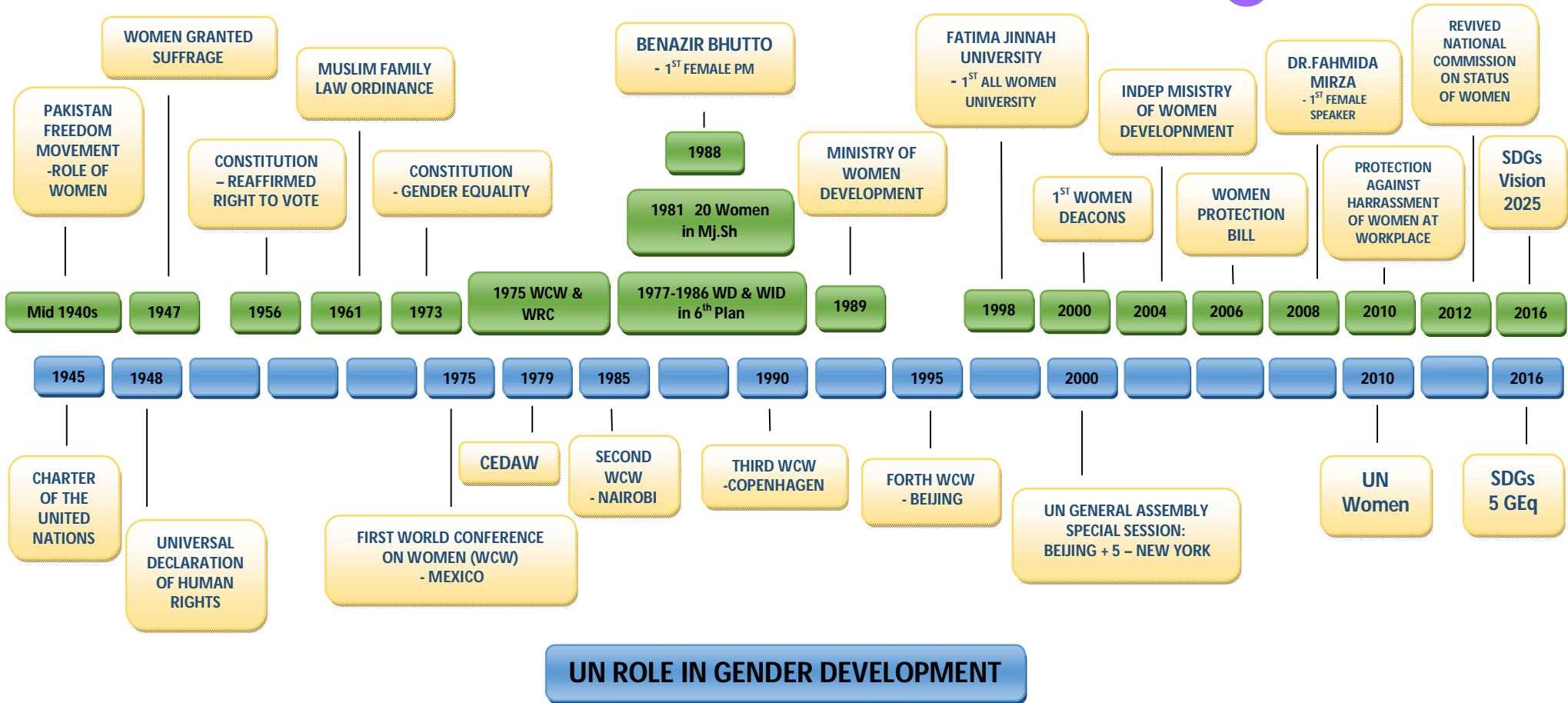
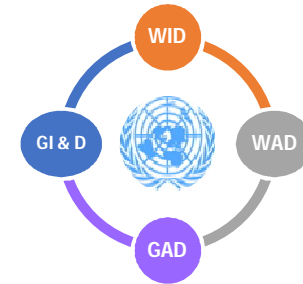




**PAKISTAN**

**GENDER DEVELOPMENT**



**UN ROLE IN GENDER DEVELOPMENT**

\*1973 - Reservation of Women Seats (10% in NA and 5% in PAs)  
 \*\*1981 - National Women's Movement in Pakistan "Women's Action Forum"  
 \*\*\*1989 - MWD established Women's Studies Centers at five universities in ISL, KHI, LHR, PHR and QUET  
 \*\*\*\*2006 - Women Cadets from the Military Academy Kakul assumed guard duty at the mausoleum of Muhammad Ali Jinnah  
 \*\*\*\*\*2012 - World's Largest Women's Political Rally in KHI

# INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY AND GENDER EQUALITY

Shahid Najam and Tabeer Riaz

***"No nation can rise to the height of glory unless your women are side by side with you; we are victims of evil customs. It is a crime against humanity that our women are shut up within the four walls of the houses as prisoners."***

Quaid-e-Azam 1944

International Women's day is celebrated globally on 8 March every year to acknowledge the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of the women. This day is also a reminder to the world for collective and accelerated action to work together for gender parity. The theme for 2017 is: "Be Bold For Change".

The Equality of women and men has been enshrined in a number of international declarations, conventions and goals including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979), the Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015) and Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030). Successive World Conferences on Women (1975, 1985, 1990, 1995) followed by a special session of UN General Assembly of 2000 reiterated the world community's resolve to ensure full integration of women in the political, economic, social, cultural and decision making spheres. The SDG 5 on gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls constitutes the kernel for achievement of the rest of the 16 SDGs.

UN estimates that an extra year in School can add up to 25% to a girl's future income while closing the gender gap in employment could augment the GDP to \$12 trillion by 2025. Similarly, public institutions become more representative and innovative by increasing women's proportion besides improving decision making and benefiting the whole societies.

As regards Pakistan, women's active participation in the freedom movement is well documented. In 1947 on the creation of Pakistan, full suffrage was granted to the women. The 1956 Constitution reaffirmed women's right to vote. The 1973 Constitution declares equality as a fundamental right for all. Other important legal frameworks include the Muslim Family Laws Ordinance 1969, Women Protection Bill 2008 and Protection Against Harassment of Women at Workplace 2010. The election of Ms. Benazir Bhutto as the first female elected Prime Minister of Pakistan in 1988 provided tremendous boost to mainstreaming gender in political life which was further consolidated in 2008 when Ms. Fahmida Mirza became the first women Speaker of the National Assembly in 2008. Earlier the Local Government Ordinance 2001 ordained that 33% seats will be allocated for women in the local government tiers.

However, the growing gender inequality in case of Pakistan continues to remain a major challenge as is evident from the fact that on Gender Gap Index, the country ranks 141/142; on literacy rate 129/142; on educational attainment 141/142; and on health and life expectancy 128/142. Out of 342 seats of National Assembly, at present only 60 seats are occupied by women legislators while they have 17 seats in Senate out of 104. The situation on the extent of economic participation and opportunity is even worse- out of 142 countries surveyed, Pakistan ranks 141.

Gender equality indeed is an inviolable value for democracy to nurture and mature. In order, however, to fully achieve gender parity, these rights should not only be legally recognized, but, more importantly, be effectively applied to all aspects of life.