

## 5. WOMEN'S WORK AND MOVEMENT INTO THE PUBLIC SPHERE

*And their lord hath heard them (and He sayeth): Lo! I suffer not the work of any worker, male or female, to be lost. Ye precede one from another.*

—*The Qur'an*, verse 3:285.

5.1. Women in Pakistan tend to be less “visible” with respect to their work outside the home and their contributions to household income, as well as their participation in social and political life. This chapter analyzes the constraints to women’s participation in the public sphere. We first focus on labor force participation. This analysis is then used to discuss how women’s participation in the political process can be enhanced.

5.2. As the previous chapters demonstrate, women lag behind men in schooling and are restricted in their use of public services, including health facilities. Not surprisingly, women have significantly lower rates of labor market participation, and they have much lower rates of participation in other dimensions of public life, including political activity.

5.3. There are several reasons to link poor human capital outcomes to reduced economic, political, and social productivity among women. First and foremost, low education sets off a vicious cycle of lower attainments for females. Lack of schooling makes women ill-equipped to obtain higher-skilled and better-paying jobs. These lost opportunities for remuneration make households poorer and less likely to invest in the education of all children, especially girls. Research findings indicate that when resources are constrained, parents are more likely to cut back on investments in girls’ education than in boys’ education. Low education levels also limit opportunities to obtain information on employment opportunities, as well as the benefits of community and political participation.

5.4. Another reason to expect low female activity in the public arena is the pervasive nature of constraints on women’s mobility in Pakistan. The same socio-cultural restrictions that curtail female access to education and health facilities circumscribe their opportunities to work and participate in political and community decisionmaking. Indeed, we find that women take up opportunities for paid work only in a very geographically circumscribed manner, limiting themselves to work within their villages, for the most part.

5.5. As with girls attending school, restrictions on women’s activity outside the home are rooted in concerns for female safety and family honor. Males in the household may be concerned that women’s safety is at risk. In socially conservative areas, men may also worry about damage to the household’s reputation if young women venture out of doors, particularly to earn money. Such activity can brand the family as low status and imply that the men cannot adequately provide for the economic needs of the household. In more unequal communities where status hierarchies are quite rigid, such actions can also make women vulnerable to loss of reputation or honor. Families thus may worry even more about the safety and honor of young women who leave the household for work than they do about girls who leave the household to attend school.

5.6. The analysis of labor force participation by women can be summarized as follows. First, mobility restrictions limit women’s participation in the labor force. Of course, determinants such as household wealth or the education level of the woman also play a role. Evidence from Egypt, Turkey, and other countries in the Middle East and North Africa, where women’s education levels are high but their participation in work activities remains low, suggests that social barriers to female mobility can

significantly stifle women's labor force participation.<sup>174</sup> Restricted female mobility in Pakistan, particularly as it limits access to services and generates practical problems of traversing distances, has become a topic of scrutiny.<sup>175</sup> Second, participation in work, particularly paid work, has important ramifications for women's autonomy. Analysis suggests that women who participate in paid work are also much more likely to participate in community and political activities. Given the increasing role of local government under the decentralization process, and thus the increased role of communities in political decisionmaking, participation in work is perhaps one avenue through which women's civic participation can be enhanced.

5.7. The analysis considers the statistics on women's labor force participation. According to the Pakistan Integrated Household Survey (PIHS) 2001-02, at the end of the 1990s, only one in four adult women (aged 10 and older) participated in the labor force, a far lower rate than the nearly 70 percent participation rate for men. Women's rate of labor participation is higher in rural areas (30 percent) and lower in urban areas (15 percent), while male participation rates are close to 70 percent in both regions.

5.8. We rely on PIHS instead of the Labor Force Survey (LFS) to analyze labor force participation because of certain survey procedures with the LFS that may undercount labor force participation by women. The LFS asks about labor force participation during the one week preceding the survey and does not pose detailed questions about the type of activities undertaken. The LFS therefore is less likely to capture labor force participation by women because women are more likely than men to engage in seasonal or unpaid work on the family farm or enterprise. Future LFS rounds may need to take into account longer reference periods to accurately capture women's work (see Annex 5.1 for more details). The PIHS has a longer reference period and asks about labor force participation over the month preceding the survey. Also the gender of the enumerator and respondent may matter when measuring female participation. For social and cultural reasons that confer negative connotations on female work, a male respondent, such as the household head, may under-report female participation in the labor force. Having female enumerators, who directly interview women in the household, as does the PIHS, removes this particular bias.

5.9. At the policy level, there appears to be recognition of the need to encourage women's work. The National Policy for Development and Empowerment of Women (2002), for example, seeks to increase women's capacity to earn a living wage as a means of enhancing their economic empowerment. When asked, most women say they want to work. The recent survey on Adolescents and Youth in Pakistan (AYP) asked young women who were not working whether they would like to work in the near future if work opportunities were to become available<sup>176</sup> and 77 percent of females aged 15-19 and 70 percent of females aged 20-24 reported that they would work if such opportunities arose. The 33-percent reservation of local government seats for women in the year 2000, moreover, has created a noticeable female presence in the public sector for the first time. Increased participation in all these aspects of the public arena translates into an opportunity for greater autonomy for women, as well as a broader range of venues in which they can give voice to their concerns and aspirations. This chapter discusses in detail the constraints to women's participation in the labor market and the relationship between work and autonomy. It also offers policy recommendations for encouraging women's participation in the labor force.

5.10. The remainder of the chapter is organized as follows. Section I uses the latest round of PIHS data to summarize the dimensions of women's labor force participation. Section II discusses the constraints to women's participation in the labor force. Section III examines the relationship between labor force participation and women's autonomy, and Section IV offers some recommendations for policy. Our

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<sup>174</sup> Assaad and Arntz (2005); World Bank (2004).

<sup>175</sup> Sathar and Kazi (1997); Khan (1998).

<sup>176</sup> (Population Council 2002): Adolescent and Youth Survey, 2001-02.

analysis is based on the data available from the nationally representative PIHS (1991, 2001-02), Pakistan Rural Household Survey (PRHS) 2001 (which provides data that is representative of rural Pakistan), and PRHS 2004, which provides data representative of rural Punjab and Sindh.

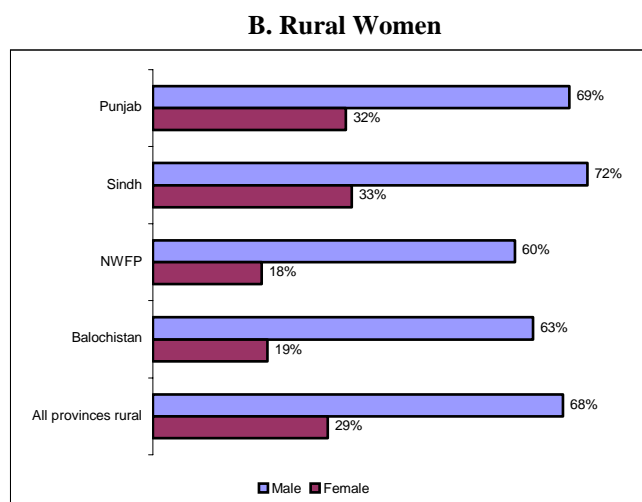
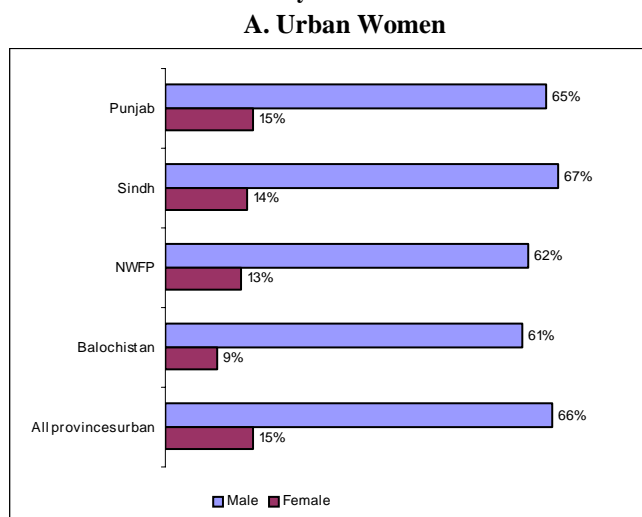
## I. DIMENSIONS OF WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN THE LABOR FORCE

5.11. Analysis of survey data indicates that women participate in the labor force at substantially lower rates than men do in both urban and rural regions. Data for 2001-02 yields an overall participation rate of about 25 percent for women and 67 percent for men. The female labor market activity is different in rural and urban areas. Female rural participation rates are roughly twice as large as female urban participation rates. There also are significant differences across the provinces in the rural participation rates. A much larger fraction of women report labor market activity in rural Sindh and Punjab, as compared to NWFP and Balochistan. The rate for men is roughly the same in rural and urban areas. (Figure 5.1).

5.12. Provincial differences in rural female participation rates are likely to reflect differential opportunities for agricultural employment. As we discuss below, women in rural areas work predominantly in agriculture, and Sindh and Punjab constitute the agricultural heartland of the country.

5.13. Table 5.1 decomposes labor market participation by industry. Three aspects of female labor market participation are evident from this table. First, women work in a much narrower set of occupations than men. Rural women tend to be concentrated in agriculture, while urban women tend to work predominantly in unskilled service jobs such as personal and household services. Second, the occupations in which women are predominantly engaged offer lower wages. Third, these occupations are much more likely to keep women close to or inside the home.

**Figure 5.1: Labor Force Participation Rates in Urban Areas by Province**



*Note:* Percentages are calculated for individuals aged 10 and older  
*Source:* World Bank staff calculations using data from PIHS 2001-02.

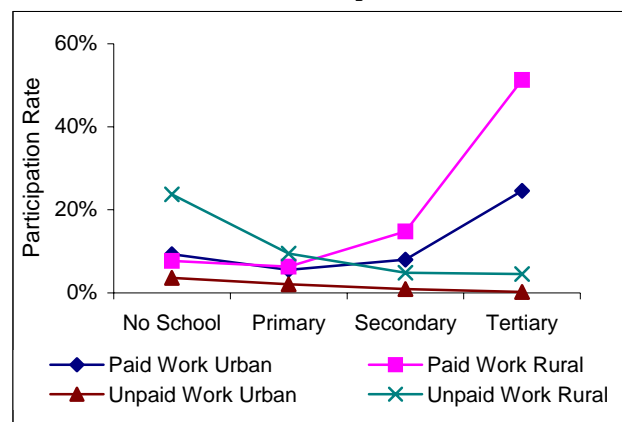
**Table 5.1: Distribution of Workers in Industry by Gender (percent)**

	<i>Rural</i>		<i>Urban</i>	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Agriculture	53.8	76.9	5.3	9.4
Other services	13.2	10.6	27.6	57.5
Manufacture	6.6	11.2	20.2	27.1
Construction	10.0	0.2	6.7	0.5
Trade	9.9	1.0	27.1	4.3
Transport	5.6	0.0	11.1	0.8

Source: World Bank staff estimates calculated using PIHS 2001-02.

5.14. As elsewhere in the developing world, the analysis obtains an inverted U-shaped relationship between women’s labor force participation rates and female education.<sup>177</sup> Participation rates are highest among women with no education and women who have completed secondary school. (Figure 5.2). Women with a primary school education have the lowest participation rates. Education levels also affect the occupations in which women work. Women with no schooling tend to be engaged in unpaid activities, while those with secondary and higher schooling are more likely to be engaged in paid work. Women with some schooling may be less likely to engage in unpaid work on the family farm because it may not be attractive to them, while paid work may require education beyond the primary level. For instance, to be able to teach in a primary school, a woman has to have completed at least class 10 (secondary school).

**Figure 5.2: Impact of Schooling on Women’s Labor Force Participation Rate**



Source: Regression reported in Table A5.1, both based on data from PIHS 2001-02 for women aged 15-49

5.15. Breaking down labor force participation by occupation shows that a much higher proportion of urban men than women are engaged in white-collar jobs, such as clerical and sales professions. While about 18 percent of working women report working in clerical jobs, more than 33 percent of working men are engaged in such occupations. Within occupations there is further gender segregation by type of white collar job. A recent report on the need for quotas for women in public sector jobs reports that, despite the existence of quotas across all cadres, women tend to be concentrated in the education and health departments. This may reflect, in part, a decision by women to remain within the domain of “socially acceptable” work.<sup>178</sup>

5.16. Beyond the white collar jobs of the type described above, women’s labor market participation in urban areas seems to be concentrated in home-based manufacturing work.<sup>179</sup> One study estimates that since the 1980s, there has been a dramatic increase in the proportion of urban women engaged in informal home-based work, primarily crafts and related occupations. Home-based work is defined by the

<sup>177</sup> Mammen and Paxson (2000). Note this relationship in the case of Thailand and India for example.

<sup>178</sup> National Commission on the Status of Women (2003).

<sup>179</sup> The informal sector includes much of the services sector, the construction labor force, women’s home-based work, vendors, hawkers, and so on. The 2001-02 LFS reports that a majority of both working men and women (more than 60 percent) in urban areas were employed in the informal sector.

International Labor Organization (ILO) as work carried out by a person for remuneration in his or her home or in alternative premises of his or her choice, other than the workplace of the employer.<sup>180</sup> While Pakistani researchers and policymakers have increasingly focused on the plight of home-based informal workers, especially that of women home-based workers, initiatives in this area are hampered by a lack of data. Due to the nature of activities undertaken in this sector, it is difficult for most surveys—including the PIHS—to gauge the extent of home-based informal work.

### Changes in Women’s Work Experience During the 1990s

5.17. Whereas female participation rates remained below male participation rates throughout the 1990s, the percentage of *working* women in certain occupational categories such as teachers in urban areas and paid agricultural work in rural areas rose. What could be driving the increased female participation in these occupational categories?

5.18. The expansion of schools—particularly private ones—during the 1980s and 1990s improved employment opportunities for educated women in rural and urban areas. In 2001-02, slightly more than one quarter (27 percent) of urban working women were employed in the professional category.<sup>181</sup> Since the 1980s there has been an increase in women’s participation under this occupational category and this increase has been confined mainly to the teaching profession; analysis of the 2001-02 PIHS finds 21 percent of urban working women to be teachers or teaching associate professionals. In contrast, only three percent of men report being in the teaching profession. The increased presence of women in this category can thus be attributed to the increase in demand for female teachers from public and private schools alike.<sup>182</sup>

5.19. In rural areas, between 1991 and 2001, the percentage of working women participating in paid agricultural work increased significantly in Sindh and Punjab (Tables 5.2a and 5.2b).<sup>183</sup> Women in these

two provinces mainly work as wage laborers picking cotton during harvest time. It is noteworthy that women continue to dominate this task even though cotton is a cash crop. Evidence from other parts of the world suggests that men tend to take over tasks related to cash crops. As tables 5.2a and 5.2b show, the proportion of working men participating in paid agricultural work also increased between 1991 and 2001. Men, however, tend to be involved in harvesting food grains such as wheat and rice.

<b>Table 5.2a: Rural Labor Force Participation Rates, 1991-2001 (in percent)</b>				
	<i>Females</i>		<i>Males</i>	
	1991	2001	1991	2001
Participation in paid and unpaid work (in percent)	55	57	77	73
Of those participating, percent participating in agricultural wage work	30	27	11	19
Of those participating, percent in nonagricultural wage work	2	2.4	38	55

<b>Table 5.2b: Participation in Paid Agricultural Work among Those Working by Province (in percent)</b>				
	<i>Females</i>		<i>Males</i>	
	1991	2001	1991	2001
Punjab	40	46	14	20
Sindh	19	26	7	29
NWFP	5	2	6	3
Balochistan	3	4	6	18

*Note:* The participation rates are for men and women aged 15-49. Comparing time trends in female and male labor force participation rates requires comparable data sources over time. As section 5.2 will show, the LFS may not capture female participation fully, so other data sources must be used for this exercise. Fortunately, the 1991 PIHS and 2001 round of the PRHS have comparable questions on labor force participation, as well as similar reference periods and survey procedures that allow us to compare participation rates.  
*Source:* World Bank staff calculations using PIHS 1991 and PRHS 2001-02.

<sup>180</sup> ILO, Convention 177 on Home Work; Haider and Tahir (2002).

<sup>181</sup> Pakistan Poverty Update (2004). Women aged 15-59.

<sup>182</sup> Kazi and Raza (1991) report a significant increase in professional women workers in urban areas during the 1980s.

<sup>183</sup> PIHS 1991 and PRHS 2001 are used for this analysis.

5.20. Government agricultural statistics data on growth in output of cash crops and food grains during the 1990s, shows an increased proportion of women and men participating in paid agricultural work. The increase in participation may have been driven to some extent by rising demand for men's and women's labor as output of food grains and cash crops increased.<sup>184</sup> What has happened to wages as more women and men have entered wage work in rural areas and output has expanded? A comparison of nominal wages suggests only a modest rise in male and female wages. In 1991, for example, female daily wage rates for cotton picking were in the range of Rs. 20-30 in Sindh and Punjab (Table 5.3).

	<i>Females</i>		<i>Males</i>	
	1991	2001	1991	2001
Cotton Picking	20-30	26.82	--	--
Sugarcane harvesting	25-30	30	40-60	61

*Note:* Participation in agricultural wage work among those who are participating in the labor force. Wages are for Punjab and Sindh. These are nominal wages, not adjusted for inflation. Inflation averaged 9.7 percent per annum between 1991 and 2001. No male wages were reported for cotton picking because this is a predominantly female activity.  
*Source:* Mansuri (1994) for 1991 wages and PRHS for 2001, and Economic Survey (2003) for inflation rate.

5.21. The PRHS data also suggest that in 2001, the average female wage rate for the same activity in these provinces was about Rs. 26.82 per day. Given the high rate of inflation over this period,<sup>185</sup> real wage levels have decreased as female participation in agricultural wage labor in cotton has increased. In sugarcane as well, wages appear to have stagnated (Table 5.3). Throughout the decade of the 1990s, opportunities for agricultural wage labor expanded in rural areas of Sindh and Punjab as food grain and cash crop output rose. This expansion may have absorbed increased participation by both men and women. The rise in agricultural output together with an increase in labor force participation appears to have dampened wage increases.

5.22. What is noteworthy is that the majority of female paid agricultural workers in rural Sindh and Punjab—almost 80 percent—reportedly work within their village.<sup>186</sup> This would suggest that employers within a village are likely to face little competition for women workers from outside employers, leading to fairly monopsonistic village labor markets. This is certainly consistent with the wage stagnation observed, despite the increased demand for agricultural wage labor. As shown below, restrictions on women's mobility, particularly those arising from security concerns, indeed structure preferences for the location of work and are thus likely to pose a significant constraint on rural women's participation in paid work, as well as on the returns to such labor.

## **II. CONSTRAINTS ON WOMEN'S LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION**

5.23. Evidence presented in previous chapters has shown that restrictions on female mobility significantly constrain female access to schooling and health. The analysis of female labor force participation demonstrates that restrictions on women's mobility affects their ability to participate in the labor force as well as contributes to the gender gap in wages among those who work.

5.24. Evidence from a number of qualitative and in-depth quantitative surveys, reviewed in earlier chapters, suggests that it is difficult for a woman to cross the boundary of her own village or settlement to undertake work (or even to attend school) in a neighboring village or settlement. For example, data from

<sup>184</sup> Agricultural Statistics of Pakistan, Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock, 2000-2001. The output of food grains increased from 19,587,000 tonnes in 1990-91 to 25,986,000 tonnes in 2000-01 (one metric tonne = 2,204.62 pounds). The output of cash crops increased from 38,285,000 tonnes in 1990-91 to 45,867,000 tonnes in 2000-01.

<sup>185</sup> The Economic Survey of 2003 reports that inflation averaged 9.7 percent per year between 1991 and 2001 (this is based on the CPI with 1990-91 as the base year).

<sup>186</sup> Based on 2001 data from PRHS, which asked women where they worked: within the village or outside the village.

PRHS-II clearly shows that girls' enrollment rates were significantly lower if a girl had to cross a settlement boundary to attend the closest school (Chapter 3). A recent qualitative study from Punjab that assessed social barriers to women in rural areas accessing health facilities,<sup>187</sup> found that mobility patterns vary depending upon the women's marital, education, and social class status, as well as upon whether they were going someplace within the village or outside it. Women were able to move freely within the village, but they could rarely leave the village alone or without permission and tended to avoid public transport.<sup>188</sup>

5.25. The qualitative survey on health covers only three villages in Northern Punjab; therefore, these results may reflect location-specific effects. Data from the PRHS-I, however, is representative of rural Pakistan in 2001 and covers the four provinces. This survey asked women engaged in paid work about their work location. The patterns reflect mobility restrictions described in the qualitative study mentioned above: almost 80 percent of women engaged in agricultural wage labor and about 60 percent of women engaged in some type of nonagricultural wage labor report working within their own villages. The lower percentage of women in nonagricultural wage labor working within the village could arise from the fact that most of these women work as teachers or health workers, which may necessitate travel outside the village. Evidence from the qualitative and quantitative studies show that mobility restrictions matter greatly for women's participation in work outside the home. These restrictions therefore can greatly reduce the number of women who work since they must seek job opportunities within the village.

5.26. Proscriptions on women's movement outside the home are rooted as much in social taboos as in practical concerns for female safety. Fear of harassment by males and consequent loss of reputation is frequently reported in qualitative surveys. Results from the qualitative survey fielded as part of the Gender Assessment as well as the qualitative study cited above show safety concerns to be important reasons why mobility of women is discouraged by families. Also women who were interviewed in the qualitative survey expressed concern for their physical safety, which, they feared was at greater risk the further they traveled from the household (see Box 5.1).

5.27. The PRHS-II survey provides a unique opportunity to assess how safety concerns affect women's participation in paid work. Tabulations based on this survey data presented in Table 3.6 (Chapter 3) shows that almost 60 percent of rural women in Punjab and Sindh felt unsafe outside their settlement, as compared to only 18 percent who felt unsafe within the settlement. Evidence from rural areas of Punjab and Sindh shows that participation in the *paid* labor market is strongly related to safety concerns. Mirroring the "crossing boundaries" effect, moreover, concerns about safety within the settlement have a stronger and more significant impact on participation in paid work than concerns about safety outside the settlement. Women who feel unsafe walking within their own settlement are much less likely to work for pay (see Table 5.4).<sup>189</sup> Since women are less likely to travel to jobs outside their own settlement, fears about safety outside the settlement of residence do not discourage women's participation as much as such fears within the village.

<i>Woman's concerns about safety</i>	<i>All paid work</i>	<i>Paid farm work</i>
Feels unsafe within settlement	Negative impact	Negative impact
Feels unsafe outside settlement	No impact	No impact

*Source:* Based on probit regression results reported in Table A5.3, PRHS 2004.

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<sup>187</sup> Khan (1998).

<sup>188</sup> See also Mumtaz and Salway (2005) on this issue.

<sup>189</sup> Regression results are presented in table A5.3.

### Box 5.1: Social Perception of Paid Work by Women

Sathar and Kazi's (1997) study from rural Punjab found that husbands tended to underreport their wives' participation in paid work. A quote by a male respondent cited in their report depicts the underlying social stigma attached to women's work:

*The reality is that most women work outside the home in the fields but we want them to stay indoors. We feel ashamed when our women work but they can do so in extreme need.*

– Male respondent residing in barani (rain-fed) village in Punjab

Women in Pakistan also perceive a tradeoff between the status of a household and the incidence of any female member of that household participating in paid work. Out of 60 women interviewed for a qualitative study (described in Box 1.3) associated with this Assessment, 25 (42 percent) linked strict *purdah*, practiced both in terms of strict dress code and being confined to their homes, with people from high-status households that are relatively well off and of relatively high caste. Women from poor and lower-caste households were perceived as those who could not afford to practice strict *purdah* because their families' lack of means that necessitated their labor—usually in the fields, though a few were midwives. Table 5.5 shows that while women in more conservative regions tended to perceive the practice of strict *purdah* as a privilege observed by higher-status households (41.7 percent in Sindh and 66.7 percent in southern Punjab), more women in both parts of Punjab than in Sindh lamented the ways in which *purdah* (customary mobility restrictions) limited their capacity to work and/or join community organizations in which they could meet with other women and receive training in small business matters:

*I wanted to do some kind of business in order to earn for my house and to bear all the expenses myself. It was not possible for me, as I had the responsibilities of house and children. To be a woman was also a restriction. In villages, women hesitate to go out. The women, who go outside, are not considered respectable. That's why women prefer to live inside.*

–Woman, age 42, from Faisalabad

Most surprising was the high number of northern Punjabi women who, like Sindhi women, varied their dress code according to distance from home: 75 percent of interviewees in Talagang and Faisalabad, and 58.3 percent in Sindh, observed strict dress code (i.e., wearing a *burqah*) only during trips to the city or the nearby large town, but dressed more casually in their own villages. In Lodhran (Southern Punjab), the majority practiced similar levels of *purdah* inside and outside their communities.

**Table 5.5: Women's Perceptions of the Tradeoff between Status (Practicing *Purdah*) and Mobility by Percent Interviewed Per Region**  
(frequencies in parentheses)

	<i>Percent who perceive purdah to be an indicator of wealth and/or caste-based status</i>	<i>Percent reporting purdah restricts their ability to work and/or join in community activities</i>	<i>Percent who practiced stricter purdah in the nearby town/city than in their village</i>
Northern Punjab	29.2 (7)	41.7 (10)	75 (18)
Southern Punjab	66.7 (8)	58.3 (7)	16.7 (2)
Sindh	41.7 (10)	33.3 (8)	58.3 (14)
All	41.7 (25)	41.7 (25)	56.7 (34)



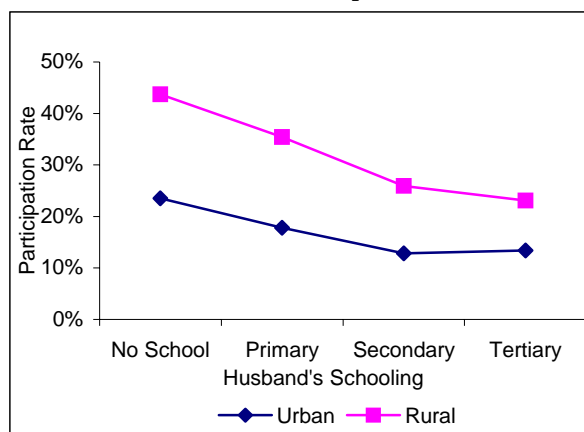
5.28. There is also a status or class effect of women’s work. In rural areas in particular, the potential costs to women who leave the household—not to mention leaving the community—to perform labor can be prohibitively high. More social than economic, these costs derive from the fact that family honor hinges so greatly on the discretion, concealment, and public perception of female members who have reached puberty. Consequently, mobility restrictions tend to be more stringent for women belonging to wealthy or higher-class families. A majority of women interviewed for the qualitative study (see Box 1.3) expressed reservations about working outside the home—even those from poor households in dire need of added income. The major concern was the perceived tradeoff between the incidence of household females working outside the home and the status of that household.

5.29. Since working in paid jobs would necessitate leaving the home on a regular basis, women belonging to wealthy families are less likely to work. Analysis of PIHS data confirms this pattern. Multivariate regression results show that controlling for women’s own schooling, the socioeconomic characteristic of their household and their husband’s schooling are important determinants of their participation in the labor force. Women whose husbands are educated and women who belong to higher-income households are less likely to undertake work, both paid and unpaid and in both rural and urban areas (Table A5.1 and Figures 5.3 and 5.4). This feature of female participation in Pakistan is in contrast with patterns observed in other developing countries, like India and Thailand, where paid work by women (not unpaid work) rises with household income as well as with husband’s education.<sup>190</sup>

5.30. A study of men’s and women’s work preferences from rural Punjab corroborates the existence of such a social stigma attached to women’s work (see Box 5.1).<sup>191</sup> These patterns also suggest that women in higher-income households perceive less need to work to supplement the household resources than women in the poorer households, who might be pushed into work to support their households.

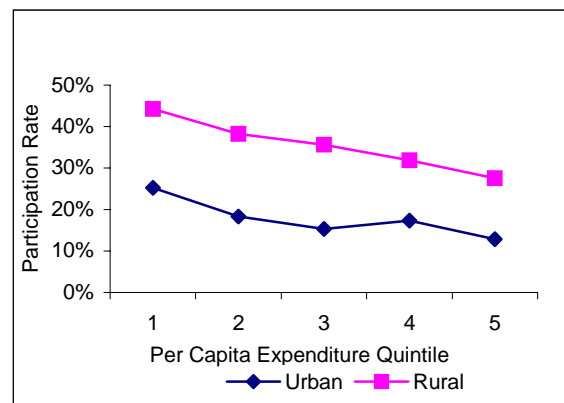
5.31. Mobility restrictions and the social stigma attached to women’s work in Pakistan, particularly paid work, result in a strongly segmented women’s labor market: female workers do not freely move between markets to exploit work opportunities. The women’s labor market is geographically limited to jobs to which women can easily commute. The geographical limitation arises not from a lack of demand for women’s labor in neighboring or faraway locations—indeed, Chapters 3 and 4 demonstrate a desperate need for qualified female workers in girls’

**Figure 5.3: Impact of Husband’s Schooling on Women’s Labor Force Participation Rate**



Source: Regression reported in Table A5.1, based on data from PIHS 2001-02 for women aged 15-49.

**Figure 5.4: Impact of Household Socioeconomic Status on Women’s Labor Force Participation Rate**



Source: Predicted using regression reported in Table A5.1. Data are from PIHS 2001-02 for women aged 15-49.

<sup>190</sup> Mammen and Paxson (2000).

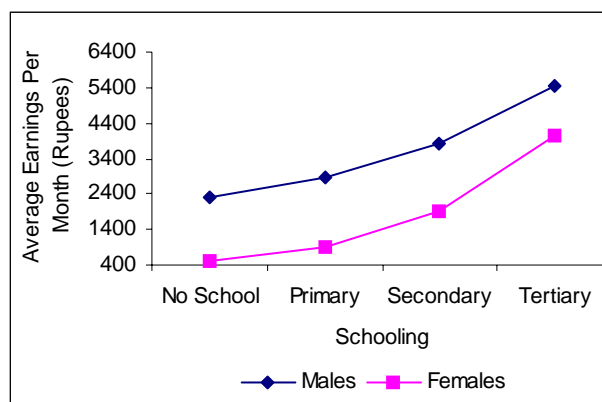
<sup>191</sup> Sathar and Kazi (1997).

schools and health centers that serve women—but from restricted mobility. The evidence regarding increased female participation in paid agricultural work in Sindh and Punjab, discussed in Section I, confirms that female labor participation will increase with the emergence of work opportunities that accommodate the geographical limitations on women’s movement.

5.32. Also useful to note is the fact that women are less likely than men to migrate in response to employment opportunities. In PRHS-I, 98 percent of the few currently married *female migrants* migrate to marry or to join a family member after marriage, rather than in response to employment opportunities. Men may move their families to their place of work, but family migration in response to employment opportunities for women is much less likely. The high incidence of village endogamy also diminishes the need for a female to leave her village or settlement. Most married women report being born in the village in which they reside, and most also have natal families in the same village. In northern Punjab, 45 percent of women marry within their own village, and the rates are even higher in Sindh and southern Punjab, where 59 and 53 percent of women are in endogamous marriages, respectively.

5.33. This pattern of limited mobility—stemming from custom and marital practices—not only limits participation in the labor market but also constrains returns to such participation. As illustrated in the case of private schools in Chapter 3 and agricultural wages in this chapter, these constraints enable employers to pay female workers much less than male workers. Multivariate regression analysis shows a large and significant male-female earnings gap among salaried jobs: women earn significantly less than men, even after controlling for age and education of the worker (Figure 5.5). Analysis shows that the gender gap in earnings is widest among workers with no schooling and narrows as education levels increase (Table A5.2).<sup>192</sup> The gender gap in earnings falls from about Rs 2,000 per month for workers with primary schooling to about Rs 1,385 for workers with education levels above secondary school. (Figure 5.5). Most of this gender gap (about 70 to 80 percent) can be attributed to women’s relatively lower schooling and fewer years of experience in the labor market; however, a significant portion of the gender gap remains (20-30 percent). Given the above discussion, some of this gap is probably reinforced by the lack of geographical mobility that most women face.

**Figure 5.5: Impact of Schooling on Earnings**

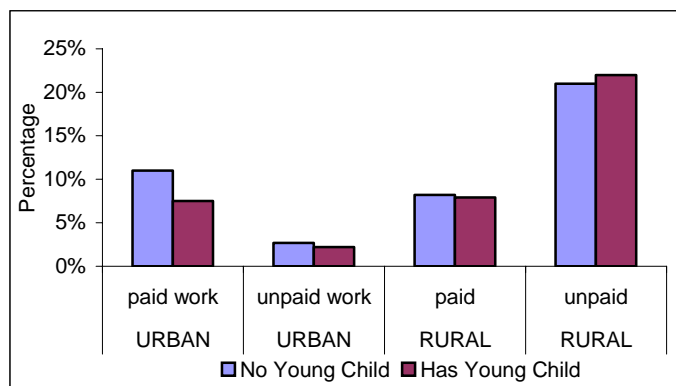


Source: Predicted using regression reported in Table A5.2. Data are from PIHS 2001-02 for men and women aged 20-65 who are engaged in salaried jobs.

<sup>192</sup> Since a very small proportion of female workers engage in paid work, there is a sample selection issue in estimating such a regression equation. The literature is divided over whether or not sample selection correction (using Heckman’s method) is critical to such an exercise. The available procedures for correcting sample selection require variables that explain selection into paid work, but not earnings. In the absence of such identifying variables, the estimation of a sample selection-corrected earnings regression is likely to produce inconsistent coefficient estimates.

5.34. The preceding discussion highlighted the role of social barriers in constraining female labor force participation. In addition to these social barriers and low levels of female education, women’s work burdens within the home are an important constraint to participation in paid work (see Box 5.2). Women remain responsible for almost all of the household caretaking activities. They retain primary responsibility for young children, for ill or aged family members, and for all other housework. In rural areas this often includes the care of livestock and the production of milk and other dairy products for household consumption. In households with young children, women are much less likely to participate in paid work. This is even more the case in urban areas (see Figure 5.6), where children cannot be carried to the fields.<sup>193</sup>

**Figure 5.6: Impact of Young Children on Women’s Labor Force Participation Rate**



Source: Regression reported in Table A5.1, based on data from PIHS 2001-02 for women aged 15-49. Young children refers to children aged three or younger.

5.35. Such constraints promote a vicious cycle of undercutting female human capital attainment and work experience: by limiting educational attainment among females, there is no pool of female workers from which to draw skilled workers, so such jobs do not exist for women; parents, in turn, perceive the lack of a daughter’s potential to earn money from jobs that require education, and thus tend not to educate them. Looking at the brighter side of this challenge, positive steps can reverse this cycle and promote a virtuous circle: improved labor market experience for women will convince parents of the benefits of educating their daughters, which will create a pool of skilled female workers and promote the absorption of these women in higher-skilled, higher-paying jobs. Likewise, by having a greater sense of their employment potential, women will be encouraged to be more active partners in decisions about activities outside the home and their earning potential, which in turn enhances their position in family dynamics.

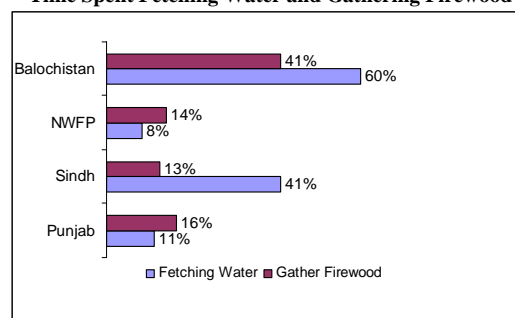
<sup>193</sup> Empirical evidence shows that increases in women’s participation in labor market activities tend to be associated with fertility decline (e.g., Lam and Duryea 1999).

### Box 5.2: Improving Access to Basic Services Can Raise Women’s Labor Force Participation

In most parts of the developing world, women and girls are mainly responsible for collecting water and gathering wood for fuel. In rural areas where basic energy and water infrastructure tends to be poor, women’s search for water and wood reduces the amount time they can spend on income-generating activities. Investments in time-saving infrastructure, conservation efforts, and developing markets for energy and water can greatly reduce the time women spend on household maintenance chores, enabling them to participate in earning activities.

In the PRHS 2001 survey, 25 percent of women aged 15-49 reported fetching water during the week prior to the survey and about 15 percent reported gathering firewood during the same period. Women’s involvement in these activities varies by province and access to such resources (Figure 5.7). For instance, rural areas of Sindh and Balochistan are prone to water shortages. In the PRHS 2001 survey nearly 60 percent of women in rural Balochistan and 40 percent of women in rural Sindh reported spending time fetching water during the week, in addition to their other chores. The highest participation in firewood collection was in rural Balochistan, where about 40 percent of women were engaged in this task.

Figure 5.7: Percentage of Rural Women Who Report Time Spent Fetching Water and Gathering Firewood



Source: Cross-tabulation based on Pakistan Rural Household Survey 2001 data. This is tabulated for women aged 15-49. The women were asked about their participation in these activities in the week prior to the survey.

Kamal’s (2005) paper on “Women and Water in Pakistan,” written for this Country Gender Assessment, stresses that when access to such basic resources as drinking water worsens, women, not men, bear the higher time costs. She highlights this issue against the backdrop of the alarming depletion of water resources, particularly in Sindh. Based on total availability of water, Pakistan is classified as a *water-stressed* and *water-scarce* country since water availability is just above 1,000 cubic meters per capita per year. Given the population growth, water availability is only likely to worsen in coming years.

A study using multivariate regression analysis and based on national-level data shows that deterioration in the access to water in rural Pakistan significantly raises the amount of time women spend on water collection and also lowers the time they spend on earning activities. Such effects make women’s involvement in water and drainage management projects critical. Kamal (2005) discusses the constraints that women face in being effectively involved in such activities. She describes the experience of a drainage project in rural Sindh (Sanghar District in 1997) in which women participated. As result of this project, the domestic workload for women decreased, while their participation in work activities increased.

Source: World Bank (2001) and Illahi and Gramard (1999)

### III. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK AND AUTONOMY

5.36. The sociological literature on women’s autonomy (in the context of development) tends to link it with the equally slippery concept of *empowerment*. While specific definitions of empowerment vary, scholars tend to agree that empowerment for women describes the range of choices and the degree of her control, choice, and power over the decisions she regards as important to her own situation, and to that of her family. Some authors essentially equate autonomy and empowerment, arguing that both grant control over one’s own life via family, community, markets, and society.<sup>194</sup> Other authors pointedly distinguish the two terms and emphasize that independence is critical to autonomy, whereas individuals may attain

<sup>194</sup> Jeejeebhoy (2000).

empowerment through interdependent means.<sup>195</sup> We employ this latter definition, understanding “autonomy” to refer to a woman’s ability to make independent decisions and to have control over her immediate decisionmaking environment. It is believed that earning an income can enhance a woman’s bargaining power within her family, enabling her to participate in decisionmaking. The ability to contribute to the household’s earned income also can give a woman an increased sense of her own individuality and well-being, the chance to form and benefit from peer relationships, and a “widening of horizons.”<sup>196</sup> International evidence lends credence to such effects: a woman’s own income, be it her own earnings or nonwage income, often is found to be associated with her sense of autonomy and involvement in decisionmaking.<sup>197</sup>

5.37. Based on the above descriptions women’s labor force participation, it is clear that the relationship between work and autonomy is highly complex. Women belonging to better-off households (and likely to be educated) participate very little in paid or unpaid work. These women are likely to have a say in decisionmaking inside the household despite the fact that they do not earn an income.<sup>198</sup> Indeed, various studies comparing working and nonworking women’s ability to influence decisionmaking within the family in Pakistan yield different results. Research based on the recent round of the PRHS 2004 finds that women’s earned income has no effect on decisions such as a child’s education, use of family planning, or the purchase of consumer durables (see Box 5.3, above).<sup>199</sup> Other studies find that paid work is associated with increased autonomy and participation in household decisionmaking for working women, including decisions regarding their children’s education, making large purchases, and using contraceptives.<sup>200</sup> A study spanning 10 communities across different agro-ecological zones in rural Punjab finds that working women tend to have more say than nonworking women in some aspects of household decisionmaking (such as food preparation) but not in others (purchase of consumer durables).<sup>201</sup> Another study based on urban women working in the manufacturing sector (including both home-based workers and women working outside the home), finds that despite reports of limited control over their own earnings, working women had greater authority in household decisionmaking than women who did not work.<sup>202</sup>

### **Paid Work as a Conduit to Autonomy outside the Household**

5.38. These findings indicate that the effect of women’s earned income on household decisionmaking follows no predictable pattern. It is therefore interesting to note that, even though restrictions on women’s physical mobility figure so prominently in deterring their paid work opportunities, such restrictions may not limit women’s authority in decisions that affect the family. Because much of the sociological literature regards physical mobility as a subdomain of empowerment (Malhotra, Schuler, and Boender 2002 ) and equates empowerment with autonomy, it assumes that women whose movement out of doors is restricted also lack autonomy—and specifically the ability to make decisions about matters both within and outside the household. The research conducted for this Assessment, however, conveys the important distinction between physical mobility and autonomy and, equally important, the distinction between autonomy within the household and autonomy outside the household.

5.39. Other aspects of paid work that set it apart from not working or engaging in unpaid work involve exposure to the world outside the home. Unpaid work mostly occurs on the family’s farm or enterprise,

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<sup>195</sup> Malhotra and Mather (1997) ; Govindasama and Malhotra (1996); Kabeer (1998).

<sup>196</sup> Agarwal (1997); Sen (1990b).

<sup>197</sup> See Kabeer (2000); Thomas (1990); Schultz (1990).

<sup>198</sup> Sathar and Kazi, 2000

<sup>199</sup> Ongoing study by Jacoby and Mansuri, 2005.

<sup>200</sup> Sathar and Kazi (2000); Khattak (2001).

<sup>201</sup> Sathar and Kazi (2000). A central idea of the study was that gender norms in Pakistan vary by agro-ecological areas due to differences in familial systems and modes of production.

<sup>202</sup> Khattak (2001).

so these women rarely leave the household for work-related reasons. In contrast, paid work usually involves leaving home, which provides opportunities for a woman to interact with peers, understand the needs and circumstances of her community members, and gain a broader perspective on her own needs and circumstances.<sup>203</sup> Few Pakistani studies have tested whether women who participate in the labor force also are more likely than nonworking women to participate in community activities. One exception is the study based on the recent round of the PRHS 2004 referred to above. As Table 5.6 shows, rural women who engage in paid work are also more likely to be involved in community and political activities.<sup>204</sup> Since most rural women working for wages are from relatively low-income households with little power in the community, their involvement in community activity is of particular interest. Several of the women interviewed for the qualitative study (described in Box 1.3) who provide health services mentioned that, though their paid work activities marked them as relatively low-status and poor—even bringing condescension from some of those who used their services—they also greatly appreciated the regular contact they had with members of their respective communities. As one woman from Faisalabad remarked:

*People consider us poor and they come to me when they need me; otherwise if they do not have any work, they will not come. . . .Allah has blessed me. People trust me. Initially, it was a big problem in our village. There was no daai [midwife] who could administer injections. I can administer an injection to women and can also administer the drip.*

—Woman who works as a midwife in Faisalabad, Punjab, age 31

5.40. Amartya Sen has argued that education and participation in paid work are likely to be important determinants of female *voice* or *agency* in a society's decisionmaking processes. Indeed, the data support this. Even though earned income may not immediately enhance a married woman's ability to participate in decisionmaking over household matters, we have shown that the increased freedom of movement granted by labor force participation has a direct effect on participation in other aspects of public life. The qualitative study also indicates that women engaged in paid work, particularly those who provided services to the community, were remarkably well-informed about the state of political and economic development in their villages, patterns of behavior among other villagers, and the nature of gender relations among their communities.

5.41. Thus, public policies that encourage gender equality in human development outcomes and in access to income-earning opportunities can strengthen women's agency and their capacity to participate in broader community life political decisionmaking. While such policies will take time to raise women's visibility in the public and political spheres, affirmative action such as quotas or reservation of seats for women could bring rapid results. In Pakistan, reservation of seats for women in local, provincial, and national governments has increased women's political participation in a relatively short time (since 2001). The unprecedented number of women elected to district, subdistrict (tehsil) and union councils following the quota adoption opened up an enormous political space, and opportunities for women to make a difference in setting and implementing local government agendas.

5.42. A number of countries including India, the Philippines and Uganda have successfully used affirmative action to increase women's representation in political decisionmaking.<sup>205</sup> But have these short-term measures to empower women actually influenced political decisionmaking? Studies based on

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<sup>203</sup> Sen (1990b)

<sup>204</sup> This is based on multivariate regression analysis. Results are presented in Table A5.4.

<sup>205</sup> World Bank (2001).

the Indian experience show that women representatives have, in fact, made a difference: women leaders are able to influence how resources are utilized for community development.<sup>206</sup>

5.43. Whereas the implementation of the quota system was achieved with few problems<sup>207</sup>, the actual impact of drawing women into local government is not yet clear. Women councilors, for instance, lack access to development funds with which they can make meaningful improvements in their communities. The lack of resources derives mainly from the implementation of the devolution process and is not limited to female representatives alone; nevertheless, a number of studies suggest that this intensifies women representatives' sense of being ineffective leaders.<sup>208</sup> This sense of ineffectiveness was echoed by responses from the few women Union Councilors interviewed for the qualitative study. A more problematic constraint is women leaders' lack of knowledge about political processes. Most of the women elected in the 2000-01 local government elections were new to governmental decisionmaking and had little knowledge of their rights, roles, and responsibilities as councilors. Recognizing this, several government agencies and nongovernmental organizations have sponsored skill-building activities to increase the governance capacities of elected female councilors.<sup>209</sup> These efforts have become increasingly critical as the country moves toward local government elections in 2005. In a paper written for this Assessment, Naz (2005) assessed the effectiveness of these training programs. One of the main failures of the training programs has been an inability to teach councilors the basic rules of functioning in the council, such as how to introduce resolutions in the council, maintain links with the district offices, and address the demands of voters.

5.44. The female electorate (or constituency), which is crucial to making women's "voice" louder and more effective in the political arena, also face a number of gender-specific limitations, including access to information and cultural constraints. First, women are significantly less informed than men about political matters. The qualitative study informing this Assessment (see Box 1.3) reveals that awareness of local government and the existence of the quota for women's seats in government is extremely low. In data available from two Northern Punjab sites, only three out of 24 women surveyed knew the name of the Union Nazim; none knew the names of the Tehsil Nazim; two out of 24 knew the name of the District Nazim; none knew the name of the Chief Minister; only three knew the name of the Prime Minister, and less than one-half (11 out of 24) knew the name of the President of Pakistan. Women interviewed in southern Punjab and in the two Sindh sites were even less informed about political matters and faced greater restrictions on their ability to vote, mostly due to impositions placed on them from male family members. Out of the 24 women interviewed in Sindh, eight knew the name of the President, three of the Prime Minister, and two of the Chief Minister. In Lodhran, southern Punjab, the collective knowledge about political representatives included one woman knowing the name of the President and two women thinking the President was the Prime Minister.

5.45. Second, women's political involvement also is inhibited by restricted mobility and the practice of *pardah*, both of which strengthen local resistance to legal reform. In one of the five interview sites, Badin, none of the 12 women interviewed had ever voted. Several of these women reported that they were not *allowed* to vote by the men in their families:

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<sup>206</sup> Analysis by Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2001) shows that women heads of local government allocate more resources to development of basic infrastructure (water, fuel, and roads) that affect women's work burdens.

<sup>207</sup> Women in a number of districts in NWFP were prevented from contesting the elections and voting in the elections. (Aurat Foundation)

<sup>208</sup> Naz (2005).

<sup>209</sup> Examples include the Women's Political Participation Project (W3P) of the Ministry of Women's Development, Social Welfare and Special Education; and the Citizens' Campaign for Women's Representation in Local Government convened by the Aurat Foundation.

*No, I have never voted. Only our men go for voting; we are not allowed to go. . . . If we were allowed to vote, we would have voted for the same people who our men vote for.*

–Married woman, Badin, Sindh

5.46. The experience reported by women in Mirpurkhas—another district in Sindh Province—was slightly more promising: although only two of the 12 interview subjects had voted, both had made their own decisions about candidates. One of these was the Union Councilor, who had contested a reserved seat. In southern Punjab, a majority of the women (10 out of 12) had voted in the most recent elections, but for the most part, their decisions were determined by men in the extended family (usually the head of the *biradari*) who told everyone in the extended family whom they should vote for. The majority of northern Punjabi women had voted in the previous elections, but had also done so based on instructions from their husbands, brothers, or fathers-in-law. In Faisalabad, which had by far the highest voter turnout (75 percent) among women interviewed, only two of the nine women interviewed who voted did so according to their own choice. Several women in Talagang also expressed the view that for women to engage in any political activity beyond voting—such as participating in political rallies and campaigns, or contesting elections themselves—was socially unacceptable:

*There is no tradition of women going out for such purposes except voting. They just go out for voting. They have no other responsibility in party affairs or conflicts. Men do not like women to be involved in political gatherings. It is considered against their honor.*

–Married woman, Talagang, Punjab, age 20

5.47. These views point to the need for more efforts to better train women candidates for local government seats, including knowledge of the political process, as well as information campaigns that inform women about their right (and obligation) to vote. Any efforts to strengthen and increase female participation in the political process are likely to see better success if they also strengthen and support the several NGOs currently working on these issues in the country.

5.48. Women's limited access to information about the importance of their political participation has implications for all public policy aimed at increasing gender equality. Data on female political participation have revealed that women's access to information is extremely limited due to restrictions on female mobility and girls' low levels of education. Other than hearsay from male family members and children who happen to attend school, women who do not work have minimal contact with the outside world. They obtain most of their information from television, radio, and newspapers. Government and NGO-sponsored media public information programs aimed at educating women about their rights to health care and legal protection have been successful in changing behaviors of women. (see, for example, the excerpted interview with a woman from southern Punjab, in Chapter 2, Box 2.1). The government's commitment to increase rates of girls' enrollment and schooling no doubt will bring dramatic improvements in women's access to information, including knowledge of the political process, over the longer term. .

5.49. For the current generation of adult women, the greatest potential instrument for enhancing women's knowledge and status lies in community organizations for women. Numerous NGOs are working to form and strengthen community-based organizations. Although there is little evidence to indicate how successful their efforts have been, particularly in mobilizing rural women, a formal evaluation of one such initiative is currently underway. This evaluation should tell us much more about the role of participatory development efforts in empowering rural women.<sup>210</sup> Meanwhile, reports from governmental oversight organizations, NGOs, and interviews from the qualitative study (Box 1.3) for this assessment have contributed to a growing pool of feedback on rural women's experience with community

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<sup>210</sup> A research team led by researchers from the Development Economics Research Group (DECRG) within the bank are currently undertaking an evaluation of the National Rural Support Program (NRSP).



organizations (COs).<sup>211</sup> According to these sources, COs have been successful at involving and mobilizing women in rural areas to the extent that these women are (1) made aware of the existence of COs and the opportunities they provide; and (2) allowed by male family members to participate. Many rural women interviewed for the qualitative study had not heard of women's COs, even when their village had created one, suggesting lack of sufficient public outreach:

*Nobody ever asked me to join the CO or to become a member. If they (had) contacted (me), and had my husband allowed, I would have joined the CO; otherwise, I would not have.*

–Woman from Badin, Sindh, age 35

5.50. Of the women who had heard of a CO in their community, few had knowledge about its functions or benefits or were able to join because of household responsibilities or cultural prohibitions against their participation in public fora:

*I have heard that they [COs] give credit. No one ever approached me. ... I was alone in the house and did not get spare time; therefore, I have been restricted just to household responsibilities. No other elder, like my mother-in-law or relative lives with me. So I do not get the time. Otherwise, I am interested in joining CO.*

~Mother (age 31) of three children below age 7, Faisalabad, Punjab

5.51. When women participate in COs the benefits extend to many domains of life. For many, credit schemes offered through COs have provided funds for small household-based economic activities and training for economically remunerative work. Some interview subjects also shared that CO membership had increased their self-confidence as well as their power and status within the household. Many reported a greater sense of freedom due to increased mobility:

*I used to go for my training to attend my classes with burqah and sit there in that manner. But my mobility has increased because I have a responsibility now. My knowledge has increased and I have gained more confidence as we meet different people.*

–Woman's CO President, rural Pakistan, age 29

*My husband's attitude has changed a lot since I became a CO member. He is very nice to me now and respects me.*

–Woman CO member from Badin whose husband also is a member of a CO, age 22

5.52. The qualitative data exhibits a strong positive correlation between women's CO membership and their sense of autonomy and well-being within their households, but it is hard to pin down the exact cause of the improved household status of female CO members. Many of the women who joined COs were persuaded or at least allowed to join by husbands who were members of a community organization for men; in many cases, a husband's membership appeared to be a necessary pre-condition for a wife's participation in a CO for women. Unfortunately the data are unable to tell us whether male members let their wives join COs because these men were prone to value some degree of autonomy in their wives (making them more likely to be interested in community development in the first place) or whether they let their wives join COs *because* of learning to value women's autonomy from their own COs.

5.53. An interesting aspect of the qualitative study is the resounding emphasis placed by all the women interviewed on their desire to have greater input in decisionmaking that affects their communities, and their ability to support education for their daughters. Even in regions like Sindh and southern Punjab,

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<sup>211</sup> The qualitative used in this gender assessment was co-sponsored by the team conducting the evaluation of the National Rural Support Program. See footnote 40.

where female literacy and schooling rates tend to be the lowest and female mobility the most restricted, respondents were unanimous in their support for higher female education and greater involvement in the public sphere as well as within their households.

*I did not become a CO member because of purdah; I don't know whether other women do not become members because of the same reason. The CO should sensitize our men and explain them to give us freedom and let us become CO members. Had there been no strictness, we would have become members just like Zareena [another woman in the village who joined the women's CO]. We would go out and do the shopping on our own. I think now this spirit of seeing the world has developed in Sindhi women.*

–Married woman, Mirpurkhas, Sindh Province

#### **IV. PROMOTING WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE LABOR FORCE: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PUBLIC POLICY**

5.54. Effective policy interventions will require comprehensive strategies to encourage women's entry into the labor force and their continued participation. A four-part strategy to address the range of constraints to women's participation, which are multifaceted and mutually reinforcing, involves improving the employability of female workers, adopting employment programs that speak to the special nature of labor markets for women, investing in infrastructure that alleviates constraints on the amount of time women can devote to income-earning activities, and fostering a legal environment that encourages women's labor force participation.

##### **Invest in Female Workers' Skills**

5.55. Education makes workers attractive to employers, and female workers lose out to their male counterparts because of their low schooling on average. Parents will invest in their daughters' education if returns to schooling in the labor market are clearly visible to them. One way this cycle of less visible labor market returns and low female education can be broken is through policies that promote female education (see Chapter 3).

5.56. Another way to improve the employability of female workers is to provide vocational education and training that builds specific skills for which there is demand. For example, the Lady Health Worker (LHW) program operating in rural areas and poor urban neighborhoods has been successful in recruiting female health workers to do outreach work. These women have a middle-school level education and no prior exposure to medical education. The LHW program trains the outreach workers to deliver a range of essential primary health care services to women and their children.

##### **Attend to the Specific Nature of Women's Labor Market**

5.57. The availability of educated and skilled women alone will not improve employment prospects. The experience from countries in the Middle East and North Africa shows that despite the generally high level of education obtained by women there, their labor force participation rates continue to remain low because of mobility restrictions and socio-cultural practices that discourage female participation in work.<sup>212</sup> Pakistan shares many of these socio-cultural practices, and this chapter shows how such practices restrict work opportunities locally and segregate men and women into gender-specific jobs. As the

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<sup>212</sup> World Bank, (2004a).

experience of the Middle East and North African countries illustrates, programs must be designed to work around the constraints imposed by the nature of the labor market for women.

5.58. Affirmative actions such as quotas for women are often introduced to increase the number of women participating in certain types of jobs; however, such affirmative action may be difficult to implement given the nature of the women's labor market. While Pakistan has been successful in increasing the number of women in local government through a quota system, its experience with the five-percent quota for females in the public sector has shown that such measures by themselves may not be effective in raising the number of female employees in the public sector. A study conducted by Pakistan's National Commission on the Status of Women found that a major obstacle to the implementation of the quota was that women tended to be confined to certain government departments (such as education and health) considered to have appropriate jobs for females. International evidence on the success of job quotas to improve women's participation in formal sector jobs suggests that quotas can improve gender equality in employment opportunities if there are no distortions in labor markets. Given the labor market conditions for women, it may be more effective to try complementary strategies.

5.59. One such complementary strategy is to encourage employers (public sector departments) to hire locally to overcome the limited mobility of female workers. The growing number of private schools in rural areas have recruited female teachers almost exclusively from local communities, which also ensures less teacher absenteeism.

5.60. Home-based work by women is another labor market where the government can play a facilitating role. It can sponsor entrepreneurship training for women engaged in home-based work, including training in relevant skills and business opportunity identification, as part of a larger package including credit schemes, marketing support, and access to new technology.

5.61. In the agricultural sector, knowledge about how to obtain credit and agricultural information will enhance income-producing opportunities for rural women. Because agricultural tasks tend to be gender-specific, the work of seed preparation, fertilizing, and threshing falls to women, and these activities receive little or no support from agricultural extension workers. Raising and tending livestock also falls primarily to women, and there is inadequate support available to women engaged in these activities to market their products. Technical know-how thus must be provided to women in agriculture, and the design of agricultural extension work needs to include women's tasks and needs.

5.62. Improving information and documentation systems is another critical labor market policy. Issues with measurement of women's labor market participation arise from the socio-cultural conditions that shape women's labor market activity. These measurement issues have to be addressed in order to gather accurate and timely information about the economic role of women. Policy makers at the federal and local government levels need such information to design more effectively targeted social protection programs and labor market policies and programs that deliver training and critical resources such as credit.

5.63. Awareness-building campaigns that promote female work and provide employment-related information have been shown to encourage women's participation in the labor market. In the 1970s, Jordan introduced an awareness campaign to promote women's participation in work. This campaign—which stressed the need for women in the labor force and the benefits that women derive from working—is reported to have effectively raised female participation rates.<sup>213</sup> In Pakistan information on employment opportunities, wages, job vacancies and hiring requirements could also be provided through community organizations.

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<sup>213</sup> World Bank (2004b).

## **Invest in Time-saving Infrastructure to Reduce Women's Time Burden**

5.64. Investment in time-saving infrastructure is critical to encouraging women's participation in work activities. Women in rural areas spend a large part of their time collecting water and fuel wood for the household. These activities leave them less time to participate in income-generating activities. According to Kamal (2005), households in some parts of rural NWFP could save as much as 1,200 hours per year if water was available within the home. Given that local water sources are becoming depleted, the time burden on women to fulfill these tasks is likely to increase in the future.

## **Creating a Legal Environment that Encourages Women's Labor Force Participation**

5.65. The legal environment can be modified in two ways to encourage women to join the labor market. First, the government can repeal labor laws that limit an individual's work hours on the basis of his/her sex. According to the government's periodic report to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), a prominent example of such a law is *The Factories Act, 1934*. Women can work in factories between 6 a.m. and 7 p.m., and in any other establishment between 9 a.m. and 7 p.m., unless the government permits otherwise.<sup>214</sup> The government is considering relaxing this law to allow women to work night shifts, thus allowing factories to raise production capacity and international competitiveness, while at the same time dramatically increasing women's opportunities for paid work. International experience shows that young women stand to gain the most from such measures, as they tend to be employed in large numbers in such sectors as apparel and information technology.

5.66. Because many laws limiting women's work hours were created in part to protect the safety of females, repealing such laws may require complementary legal measures to keep safeguards for working women in place.<sup>215</sup> The government would need to enact laws—or enforce existing ones—to (1) protect the physical safety of women who venture outside their homes and/or communities for paid employment (particularly if they do so for night shifts); and (2) protect women, who comprise the majority of available cheap labor, from being exploited in the workplace. To ensure the first type of protection, companies could offer door-to-door transportation for female workers.

## **Conclusion**

5.67. The policies proposed above are targeted toward increasing women's participation in the labor market and expanding the public domain in which they can participate. These policy suggestions range from improving women's skills and education to adopting laws that ease mobility constraints on female participation. Ultimately, returns to education and increased earning capacity will be realized as mobility constraints are eased and women can access work opportunities, wherever they may be. Because these same mobility restrictions impede women's ability to participate in political and community activities, the easing of such restrictions also will enable full realization of the government's active encouragement of women in seeking roles in the political realm through seat reservation and other constitutional measures to enhance their participation.

5.68. Realization of such policy initiatives in labor market participation, the political process, and community decisionmaking eventually will foster an environment that naturally reduces the need for mobility constraints on females, which arise out of safety and family honor concerns. Thanks to devolution and the government's commitment to empowering women, it is time to focus on initiatives at the local level to further involve women in the development of their communities. The obvious role for

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<sup>214</sup> CEDAW report from Pakistan

<sup>215</sup> World Bank (2004).

international donors is to continue to support government initiatives—as well as NGO efforts already on the ground—as they work to increase women’s access to information, encourage their active participation in the political process, and enhance their informed involvement in community organizations and decisionmaking. The demand is there and growing to receive such targeted efforts.