

May 15, 2015
American Institute of Pakistan Studies

Dear Members of the Fellowship & Grants Committee,

I am writing to apply for the AIPS Summer Grant to fund dissertation related research in Pakistan in 2015. I am a doctoral candidate at the Department of Political Science at Columbia University. I received my MPhil in Political Science in October 2014 and successfully defended my dissertation proposal titled Making Democracy Work for Women in February 2015. I am a Pakistani citizen, currently based in New York on an F-1 student visa.

My dissertation project explores the issue of women's participation in the political sphere, and specifically addresses the following questions: 1) What forms of participation incentivize elected representatives to respond to women's preferences? Is women's participation as voters enough to induce responsiveness? 2) Under what conditions are representatives most likely to respond to women's preferences?

I intend to explore this question in the aftermath of the 2013 national elections and the more recent and ongoing local government elections. Pakistan has experienced considerable democratic instability since independence and women's participation as voters, both in terms of registration to vote and actual turnout, in elections (provincial and national, held concurrently) has been varied with average turnout as high as 40% in the 2013 elections. In the lead-up to the 2013 national election in Pakistan, there were purposive attempts by international organization such as UN Women and the World Bank along with local civil society groups and NGOs to register and convince female voters to turnout (Gine and Mansuri 2011). Furthermore, the 2013 elections were also a case of new information for politicians about their female constituents as it was the first time that the Election Commission of Pakistan recorded gender-disaggregated statistics for turnout at all levels. While parties may have a good sense of the composition of their support from local brokers and informal sources, this is the first time these gender-disaggregated statistics were calculated officially. Given that women increasingly make up a considerable part of the electorate and politicians have access to information about their participation, how does this affect their strategies and willingness to take policy action on women's issue?

My research uses a mixed methods design to answer these questions relying on statistical analysis of available electoral data and semi-structured interviews with political representatives at different levels of government as well as members of the National Commission on the Status of Women and non government organizations working for women's rights and mobilization in Pakistan e.g. Aurat Foundation.

I am seeking funding from AIPS to conduct preliminary fieldwork in Pakistan to explore how representatives at different levels of government perceive their female constituents and how they appeal to them. Do representatives consider women an important constituency to appeal to? In places with large gender gaps in turnout i.e. very few women turning out to vote do representatives tend to ignore women's interests in policymaking entirely?

I plan to use my time in Pakistan in Fall 2015 for the following research tasks:

- Obtain and analyze data from the Electoral Commission at the constituency level, in particular the gender-disaggregated data on turnout
- Conduct informational interviews with identified civil society organizations, NGOs and international development agencies to map out the location of mobilization and collective organization efforts targeted towards women
- Using the data and information obtained, identify a set of constituencies for in-depth case studies with a range of
 - high and low turnout rates
 - 3rd party mobilization efforts vs. no mobilization efforts
- Conduct in-person interviews with political party organizers and legislators from these constituencies with a focus on their information about women's participation, knowledge of women's preferences and efforts to effectively represent their female constituents

I will use the funds from this AIPS grant to cover the cost of international travel between New York and Islamabad, Pakistan, within- and inter-city transportation in Pakistan, and access to statistical datasets and reports. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,
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