

Awaz-e-Niswan

National Network of Women Voters



AAN

National Secretariat: Center of Gender & Policy Studies (CGaPS)

Introduction

Women constitute 44% of registered voters in Pakistan yet remain invisible with low political participation as a result of restrictive gender norms, few sex segregated polling booths and female staff, and the culture of political parties to disenfranchise women.

For women to be recognized as influential constituents in their own right, female voters need to be organized and be informed and aware of the power of their vote and how to exercise it beyond Election Day.

AAN is set up as a non-profit, non-partisan, membership based entity. Women ages 18 and above who understand and accept the **AAN** Charter, will be facilitated to form a local chapter. All local chapters in a province and region will become members of the national **AAN** network.

AAN Goal

Increased political commitment towards the needs and concerns of women voters in Pakistan with gender responsive political processes

AAN expects to achieve the following **outcomes**:

- Informed and aware women voters with identified priorities and action plans based on the needs and interests of members of each local chapter of **AAN**.
- Engagement of network members i.e. active women voters, with duty bearers at district, provincial and national level to attract additional resources for prioritized concerns of women
- Increased public awareness of women's issues and sustained support for the **AAN** network

Membership Rights

- o Women with Pakistani nationality ages 18 and above residing in the area corresponding to the local chapter
- o Voting Members: Women enrolled in a local chapter attended at least 3 previous meeting
- o Associate Members: Organizations and individuals who are interested in the work of **AAN**. They will not have

voting rights and cannot serve on decision making bodies of the network.

AAN Charter

Awaz-e-Niswan (AAN) is a membership based network of women voters across the country. It is not affiliated to any political party or organization and aims to represent the concerns of women voters in Pakistan irrespective of their political, social or geographic locations.

AAN Principles

1. Women are full-fledged citizens of Pakistan able to exercise all their Constitutional rights.
2. Women have the right to political, economic and social participation and advancement
3. Women have a right to live a life free of violence
4. Women have the right to participate at all levels of decision-making, whether in their homes, their communities, at the workplace or in politics.
5. Women have the right to be informed about political parties, the candidates fielded by them and the process of voting
6. Women have the right to cast informed votes in local, provincial and national elections
7. Women have a right to be engaged in political processes without fear of violence

Membership Obligations

- To understand, accept and abide by the **AAN Charter**
- To participate in meetings of the local chapters and pay membership dues as decided by the chapter
- Participate in the elections for the local chapter office bearers
- To remain non-partisan in their capacity as **AAN** members, irrespective of who they cast their votes for

Roles and Responsibilities of Members:

1. Be active and informed voters

2. Participate in the local chapters meetings regularly
3. Participate actively in identification and prioritization of needs of women in the area to develop Action Plans for the local chapters
4. Identify and engage with duty bearers in local and provincial government and administration hold meetings on prioritized needs with them.
5. Represent Awaz-e-Niswan in different forums as requested by the local chapter or the secretariat.
6. Pay annual membership fee unless exempted, as decided by the local chapter.
7. Participate in fund raising activities for the network.
8. Hold the network office bearers accountable for using the funds in the best interest of the network.

Membership Fee

Each local chapter will decide the membership fee to be charged by consensus and collect it annually or six monthly. It is recommended that a minimum fee be agreed upon and members can also pay on a voluntary basis. The office bearers can also decide to exempt certain members from membership dues if they are unable to pay.

Terms of Membership

Membership can be discontinued by the local chapter or the secretariat if:

1. a member works against the non-partisan status of the network
2. a member works against the goals and objectives of the network
3. a member does not participate in any meeting of the local chapters
4. Non-payment of the membership fee without any prior exemption

Local Chapters

AAN will gradually broaden its membership base through membership drive and forming local chapters. The local chapters will be self-governing and self-sufficient bodies adherence to the guiding principles of AAN. Each local chapter will have an

Executive Committee democratically elected by the votes of the general members in a general body meeting, which should meet at least annually. Each chapter will raise funds to run the day to day activities of the local chapters.

Roles and Responsibilities of Local Chapters

1. Maintain non-partisan status of the local chapter
2. Hold elections for office bearers every two years
3. Active membership and mobilization drive to increase membership base
4. Hold regular local chapter meetings- set meeting times and dates in advance so maximum participation is ensured
5. Set membership dues and collect regularly
6. Facilitate identification of priority issues and development of work plan
7. Facilitate meetings of members with local administration and elected representatives to resolve issues noted in work plan
8. Facilitate resolution of rights violations of women in the area including cases of violence against women
9. Facilitate political participation of women by liaising with organizations that provide voter information and registration sessions
10. Maintain record of Chapter activities, such as minutes of meetings, key decisions, membership database and funds raised and spent
11. Send six monthly reports to provincial and national secretariat and represent **AAN** at local and national events. Provide information as requested by national secretariat for **AAN** policy advocacy materials
12. Raise funds locally for implementation of the annual work plan. Care should be exercised when raising funds to remain non-partisan
13. Under no circumstances should local chapters accept funds from a political party or a political representative or candidate, nor should events for a specific party be hosted

Electing Office Bearers of Local Chapters

- There should be a minimum of 25 members per local

chapter

- These members will elect a 5 member Executive Committee comprised of the following office bearers: Chairperson, Secretary cum Treasurer, and 3 executive members
- Members of the Executive Committee should not belong to the same (extended) family
- At least 3 members must be present for the quorum of the Executive Committee meeting to be achieved.
- The terms of office for the office bearers will be 2 years.

Responsibilities of the Office Bearers

- The Chairperson.** The Chairperson shall have such powers of supervision and management as customarily pertain to the office; shall preside at all meetings of the local chapter; may sign or endorse checks, drafts and notes in the absence of the treasurer; and shall perform such other duties as per chapter benefit.
- The Treasurer cum Secretary.** The secretary shall keep minutes of the chapter meetings and inform the members for meetings and decisions. The Secretary will ensure, in collaboration with the Chair that the elections for the office bearers are held on time and organize a smooth handing over. The treasurer shall perform such duties as customarily pertain to the office; arrange for an annual audit of the books; and, at the direction of the chairperson maintain deposits in authorized financial institutions. The treasurer will send quarterly signed financial reports to the national secretariat.
- The Executive members:** Each executive member will ensure attendance at Executive Committee meetings and stay informed of all discussions and decisions taken to further the objectives of **AAN**. These members will facilitate in the achievement of the local chapter work plan, assist members in the resolution of issues related to the work plan, liaise with local government and elected representatives and assist the Chairperson in the performance of her duties.

AAN National Secretariat

AAN has a national secretariat based in the Center of Gender and Policy Studies. The terms of office for the National Secretariat will be three years. The national secretariat will be selected in consultation with members.

Role and Responsibility of the National Secretariat

- i. Provide a leadership role and strategic direction for AAN.
- ii. Research and prepare policy briefs on women political participation
- iii. Disseminate information and IEC materials to the local chapters and policy makers.
- iv. Maintain a data base of local chapters
- v. Provide technical support and mentoring to local chapters e.g. for development and implementation of their action plans. Support capacity building of local chapters as needed.
- vi. Ensure that local chapters function within the network policy and guidelines.

Becoming a Member

Persons or organizations who wish to join AAN should read the AAN Charter and understand its purpose and objectives. They can complete an application form and approach a local chapter or the National Secretariat that can forward their form to the relevant local chapter. Where no local chapter exists, the national secretariat will facilitate the applicant to form a chapter if they are interested in doing so.



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