

Citizen Engagement in Pakistan

Final Report

OCTOBER 2019

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This study has been funded by South Asia Research Hub, Department for International Development, Government of UK. However, the views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the UK Government.



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List of Abbreviations

CE	citizen engagement
CFPM	Citizen Feedback Monitoring Program
CSO	civil society organisations
CNIC	Computerized National Identity Card
DC	District Commissioner
DFID	Department for International Development
DFID P	DFID's Pakistan country office
DIK	Dera Isameel Khan
DRC	Dispute Resolution Committees
FATA	Federal Administered Tribal Area
FIA	Federal Investigation Agency
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
LGO	Local Government Ordinance
LSO	local support organizations
NC	neighbourhood council
NMD	newly-merged district
PAC	Public Accounts Committee
PCMC	Primary Care Management Committees
PCSW	Provincial Commissions on the Status of Women
PHC	Punjab Health Councils
PML-N	Pakistani Muslim League
PPMRP	Punjab Public Management Reform Program
PTI	Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf
PSPA	Punjab Social Protection Authority
PWD	people with disabilities
RtS	Right to Services
Rtl	Right to Information
SEAH	sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Department for International Development (DFID) Research and Evidence Division commissioned a research report on citizen engagement (CE) in Pakistan, to inform the programming of DFID's Pakistan country office (DFID P). DFID is committed to enhancing CE in line with the 'leave no-one behind' agenda and the imperative to tackle inequalities. The report is to make recommendations that will improve both the efficiency of the citizen engagement components of programmes and the programmes overall.

The research consisted of a rigorous literature review (conducted by Verso Consulting) of citizen engagement in Pakistan and globally; qualitative enquiry through key informant interviews in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) provinces; an assessment of recent project-based interventions for improved citizen engagement and a political economy analysis of CE in Pakistan.

The report covers both mandated mechanisms (formal, where the state engages directly with citizens) and non-mandated mechanisms (informal, non-state means by which citizens seek to influence the state directly or through intermediaries) for CE.

Key findings:

- » Mandated mechanisms for CE in Pakistan are mostly for citizens to make complaints about service-delivery. There is little by way of mandated avenues for consultation, co-design or accountability for policy, budgeting or planning.
- » Those most marginalised - who stand to gain most from CE – are least likely to have access and face the greatest barriers to engagement with the state, through mandated or non-mandated mechanisms.
- » The most significant barrier to CE across both provinces is a 'trust deficit' whereby citizens (particularly marginalised groups) have little faith that the state is interested in their views or experiences and does not consider itself accountable to citizens.
- » Digital mechanisms for CE, while demonstrating government commitment to hearing from citizens about service delivery, risk amplifying inequalities, gaps in service delivery and the trust deficit. Women, the very poor, rural populations and people with disabilities (PWD) are particularly excluded from digital CE mechanisms.
- » In a time of political change, economic constraint, shrinking space for civil society and urbanisation, CE is all the more important yet less likely to be prioritised by government institutions struggling under a series of burdens.
- » CE in the newly-merged districts (NMDs) in KP pose a particular challenge as most citizens more used to relying on traditional structures.
- » Non-mandated mechanisms face a challenge of sustainability. Tending to be 'projectised' and lacking self-sustaining means, civil society organisations (CSOs) face constraints in identifying entry points for CE that result in sustained change.
- » There is a dearth of provision or even attention to the safeguarding issues that can prevent effective (or any) citizen engagement. The literature, also, is largely silent on this issue, while both civil society and government are yet to address these concerns.

Drivers of Citizen Engagement

- » **Right to Services (RtS) and Right to Information (RtI) legislation:** Civil society has used this body of legislation in conjunction with other mechanisms to hold government to account at both provincial and Federal level, with concrete results. The legislation positions both services and information as rights, breaking with the tradition of benevolent state. Mechanisms established under the legislation have recently become more accessible, although most recourse by or on behalf of marginalised people tends to be through CSOs.
- » **Civil society:** CSOs work at all levels, including at the grass-roots with communities and as advocacy organisations at provincial or Federal levels, although they operate in a constrained environment, particularly when addressing human rights issues. They have an important role to play in mobilising citizens and in providing capacity-building and technical guidance to state institutions.
- » **Improved services and citizen-state relationships:** Where citizens see concrete changes in one area of service delivery, the trust deficit is reduced and they are more likely to engage on other issues, even where the latter is more contested such as policing or dispute resolution. Improved relationships between state and

citizens eases the work of government institutions, makes insecurity less likely and encourages citizens to take an active part in their own communities.

- » **Digital technology:** There are opportunities across both provinces for strengthening the use of digital technologies for CE. Both KP and Punjab and at Federal level have invested in citizens' portals as mandated mechanisms and there are opportunities for greater levels of CE through non-mandated, digital forms such as social media. Further, there is a current emphasis on data-collection, which is yet to become an effective tool for CE.
- » **Strategic litigation:** Civil society has used class actions, other forms of strategic litigation and through media to prompt the Supreme Court to act *suo moto* on issues of concern to citizens.
- » **International human rights mechanisms:** Pakistan is an elected member of the UN Human Rights Council and a State Party to major human rights instruments.
- » **Political participation:** Greater representation of women, minorities, youth and PWD in parliaments can lead to more engagement with citizens and greater trust between the state and citizens. Getting marginalised groups into political positions (e.g. local government) can also be catalytic in terms of triggering other forms of CE.

Barriers to Citizen Engagement

There is a difference between the barriers to mandated and non-mandated citizen engagement. While both types are of course contextual, barriers to mandated mechanisms cluster around access and capacity (of both citizens and government), whereas barriers to non-mandated mechanism include the capacity of citizens *and* factors relating to the environment in which civil society can operate.

Citizens Capacity: Citizens first must know that (a) services, policies and processes exist; (b) their entitlement; and (c) the governmental mechanisms through which they may engage. Lack of awareness is compounded by the 'vicious circle' of illiteracy, poverty, discrimination, risks of harassment or abuse and lack of quality information about services, governance structures or accountability mechanisms.

- » Access to CE mechanisms: Constraints here include physical access (remoteness of provision; lack of disability access; poor transport and infrastructure); the type of reception citizens can expect (such as shaming or being mocked or even abused); or language constraints.
- » Convention and tradition: Pakistan, particularly in the more remote, rural or conservative areas, has a tradition of quasi-feudal state-citizen relationships, exacerbated by discrimination along the lines of poverty and ethno-linguistic or religious grouping. The notion of rights and entitlements is growing in some areas but remains contested.
- » Discrimination: There are many forms of discrimination in Pakistan, varying along geographic, gendered, historical and religious lines, to name but a few. The most marginalised (such as those living in slavery-type conditions) face insurmountable barriers to CE. The very idea of raising an issue, of taking part in a local development plan or speaking out at a meeting with government officials can be beyond the frame of reference for many people in Pakistan.
- » Digital technologies: As Pakistan's governance becomes more digitised and information is more routinely disseminated through digital means, those without access are multiply disadvantaged. While mobile and internet use is increasing, this tends to be amongst the relatively privileged, leaving an increasing and multi-layered digital divide.

State Capacity: The 2017 Voluntary National Review of the Sustainable Development Goals, local government representatives from across Pakistan noted that they needed increased resources (human and financial) and to be empowered politically and administratively to perform their functions, also expressing a commitment to working with communities and citizens to tackle inequalities. State capacity to respond to citizen engagement or to drive engagement with citizens includes having personnel who are incentivised and able to engage, as well as the financial resources to do so. Across both KP and Punjab, with a few notable exceptions, state institutions often lack sufficient capacity and therefore motivation to engage with citizens.

- » Government bodies in both provinces also often lack knowledge and training about how to ensure that citizen engagement includes marginalised citizens.
- » Elected representatives are also still in need of capacity-building about citizen engagement. As with government officials, those who have come from or are closely linked to civil society are more likely to see the value of citizen engagement compared to those who have been selected then elected by the usual means.

- » Financial: Despite devolution, local government is constrained by blockages in finances from the provincial level, disincentivising CE.

Entry Points

Guiding principles for identifying entry points for DFID P include the following:

- i. Mechanisms which are already functioning – even with limitations; that can be catalytic for citizen engagement outside of a narrow band of issues or can be replicated and that are not so beset with obstacles as to be unworkable or unsustainable.
 - ii. Sustainability, particularly given the multiple pressures on civil society to eschew a human rights-based approach in favour of service provision or philanthropy.
 - iii. Inclusivity and support to the global ‘leave no-one behind’ agenda. Entry points that may appear successful in a ‘business as usual’ manner are unlikely to be effective except for the engagement of and for a privileged few.
 - iv. Political economy approach: There must be identifiable incentives as well as imperatives. It will be important to choose investments that align with current political incentives.
- » **Local government:** Recent geographical and legislative changes create an opportunity for working directly with decentralised structures in both provinces (with adaptations as necessary). This includes building the capacity of village and neighbourhood councils (NCs) alongside local people and elected representatives in participatory, local level planning and budgeting and monitoring progress. To be effective, these initiatives should drive inclusivity, build the confidence and capacity of women, minorities and people with disabilities to participate and to help those who hold relative power in communities to accept the rights and benefits of inclusion. This will be particularly challenging in KP and so it is recommended to use a ‘progress’ or ‘scaled’ approach, rather than (for example) setting targets for ‘how many issues get resolved by local government’.

Supporting local government with basic resources and capacities (e.g. human resource management, financial management) creates incentives for involvement in activities that engage with citizens and removes obstacles to participatory governance.

- » The mandate of **Parliamentary and Senate Committees** creates a framework for public hearings and therefore an entry point in working with the Committees and citizens simultaneously to increase oversight and budgetary control.
- » The mandate of the **Ombudsman** makes this institution an obvious entry point. There is a particular opportunity with the office-holder in KP who may welcome support, for instance, with regard to women’s use of the mechanism. Adaptation of the model developed in Punjab of the women’s helpline and Gender MIS could be a useful entry point here.
- » **RtS and Rtl Commissions:** the permissive legislation, civil society familiarity with the issues and the rights-based framework encourage this as a entry point.
- » **Health Care Commissions** are empowered to carry out investigations of poorly administered facilities and to issue heavy fines, and they may work with other organisations, including community groups, to efficiently carry out their duties.
- » **School Management and Parent Teacher Committees** in Punjab and KP respectively present an opportunity for reinvigorated support, given the potential of their role in ensuring children’s right to quality education.
- » **Jirgas** retain an integral position in dispute resolution and conflict management at the community level and are also the main interlocutors for citizens with the state in the NMDs, where citizens have had little contact with state machineries.
- » **Civil society:** In addition to the advocacy and capacity-building role of CSOs, the multiple forms of civil society have connection points with state structures. Supporting civil society can include capacity-building and support in terms of the inclusion agenda and conflict sensitivity.

Making Citizen Engagement Transformative – lessons from programming

1. Programmes that integrate CE with support to government structures – including jointly-designed or implemented – and that consist of repeated, layered interventions over time, in different forms are more likely to have a sustained effect and can in turn be catalytic in countering barriers both to further CE and to good governance.

2. Designing and measuring success through the lens of the 'leave no-one behind' agenda does more to lift up communities and local areas than those which work mainly with those that are 'easy to reach'. This entails (a) focusing at the local level as well as at policy and legislative reform and (b) using interventions to challenge obstructive power structures. Clear pathways for reform from local to provincial and national level are also needed.
3. Establish entry points at legislative and policy level. CSOs have most success in transformational change when they have a clear line of sight to institutional / legislative / policy change as well as *ad hoc* gains at individual or community levels. Examples here include strategic litigation or building coalitions for change.
4. Support rights-based civil society: Substantive, sustained change at policy, legislative and practical levels come about as a result of joint efforts by focused, right-based civil society and reform-minded state institutions or people within institutions.

Measuring Success in Citizen Engagement

Good CE programming sits alongside or is even integrated into work with government institutions, structures and processes, leading to questions of attribution and contribution.

CE can lead to (a) improved services; (b) improved governance processes (e.g. planning and budgeting) that meet the needs of marginalised people; (c) policy/ legislative change. Measuring the impact of CE can be more to do with the process than the result – asking whether citizens (which citizens?) were able to participate, use social accountability tools or strengthen their own organisations and whether state institutions, processes or structures engaged with citizens to effect change.

In Pakistan's different contexts, measuring success in CE may require different parameters. In some areas, for instance, simply empowering women to leave the house and join a public event is a transformative step, whereas in others success will be more easily measured by concrete improvements in services such as health workers' timekeeping or quality of education received by children.

The choice of baselines is likely to be different across the contexts, leading to a more flexible, 'scale' type of measurement than a target-based set of outcomes. Targets at given times will also need to be measurable against what can be found at any given time, again according to the context. Another way is – having conducted baselines - to focus on learning what facilitated or held back progress and how it can be supported further over this programme or others.

Inclusivity needs to be the guiding principle for measuring CE in Pakistan, whichever model is used (outcome harvesting, counter-factual, contribution analysis or process tracing). Asking the 'who?' question (Whose voice is being solicited and heard? Who does the intervention aim to benefit? Who did benefit?) means interrogating change at the local level and amongst those who CE interventions are least likely to reach – yet those in most need of its benefits.

Recommendations

1. Shift the paradigm:

Moving from the question of 'how citizens engage with government' to 'how government engages with citizens' shifts the discourse away from complaints-based, take-up centred engagement to supporting government and citizens to consider engagement as a partnership.

Taking this approach means (a) being deliberate about citizen engagement across all programmes and (b) finding coherent approaches wherever possible. Adopting a governance and systems approach rather than a service delivery model means that DFID's sectoral programming can slot dimensions of engagement such as take-up and satisfaction with individual services into a system-wide approach. This approach also means integrating other approaches, namely (a) political economy; (b) gender and social inclusion; and (c) conflict sensitivity.

2. Focus on the engagement of the marginalised

The Pakistani context means that this should focus on the engagement of young people – and within this an emphasis on girls, youth with disabilities, minority youth and youth from poor and migrant communities. This will require specific expertise, capacity-building of programme teams and integration into results frameworks.

3. Support civil society

In line with global evidence and lessons learned from programming in Pakistan, it is recommended that DFID support civil society, particularly those that are focused on defending women's human rights and the rights of other marginalised groups such as disabled people's organisations and youth-led organisations.

4. Adopt a political economy, gender and conflict sensitive approach to knowing the context

The differences between and within Punjab and KP provinces require in-depth, contextual knowledge. Using this triad of approaches ensures that CE interventions are relevant, flexible and adaptive and are more likely to be sustained.

5. Work on demand and supply simultaneously

Theories of change in DFID programming should recognise the need for change on both 'sides' of the equation, while challenging assumptions around issues such as awareness-raising or the use of single accountability tools.

6. Mainstreaming

It is recommended that all DFID P sectoral and governance programmes integrate components on citizen engagement, measured through common indicators. A CE Community of Practice or working group can be established in DFID P to maximise efficiencies between programmes and make best value from innovations in CE or innovative means of learning about CE.

7. Safeguarding

- Ensure that each programme, implementing organisation and downstream partner has adequate capacity to address safeguarding issues.
- Ensure that all contractors, CSOs and down-stream partners know what to report and record and how to protect the identity of victims / survivors.
- Provide adequate resourcing for safeguarding, in line with the recommendation from the International Development Committee
- Require each DFID contractor to have policies and procedures in place for anonymous, accessible reporting of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH). Ensure that the reporting mechanisms are accessible to citizens and officials in rural as well as urban areas, in appropriate languages.
- Incorporate safeguarding into the results framework.
- Incorporate SEAH into risk management, including escalation and reporting
- Ensure a no-retribution policy and protection of whistle-blowers. This is particularly challenging where communities are close; measures need to be in place to encourage reporting or the raising of concerns.

Research Needs

To address the gaps in the evidence – particularly at the sub-Provincial level and particularly regarding marginalised groups, research is necessary in the following areas:

- » **Women and girls:** There is a distinct lack of evidence about the gendered barriers to CE, or the ways in which CE can be made more accessible to women or girls.
- » **Young people:** There remains a need for youth-centred, positive research on how young people do and could engage as citizens. Specific research is necessary to understand the barriers faced by young people and the mechanisms that they use and to understand how government institutions (and civil society as intermediaries) can engage more effectively with young people. It is recommended that DFID commission research that supports a cadre of young women and men from different groups (including those who are multiply marginalised) in designing and conducting research into youth engagement and the effect this has on services and governance.
- » **Safeguarding:** There is an urgent need for research into how government institutions do (or could) protect those seeking to engage any form of violence or harassment. It is recommended that an in-depth research is conducted across both provinces to identify opportunities and barriers to safeguarding associated with citizen engagement.
- » **Digital Technology:** Technology is celebrated as facilitating quick, cheap and accessible means for citizens to engage with government. Yet global research shows that the digital divide can exacerbate all forms of discrimination and social control of marginalised groups. It is recommended that research is conducted into the positive and negative effects of digital technology, that is highly contextualised across the two provinces and according to different social groups.

INTRODUCTION

This research was commissioned to provide recommendations to inform DFID Pakistan's understanding of how and where there is opportunity to realise efficiency in citizen engagement in three programmes singled out for consideration namely: **AAWAZ II; Inclusion, Accountability and Preventing Modern Slavery, Sub-National Governance Programme – II (SNG II)** and **Provincial Health and Nutrition Programme**. The aim is that these recommendations will also be used to inform future programmes in Pakistan and ensure that they will benefit the communities the programmes are working and improve the outcomes of the programmes themselves. This work aims to produce specific recommendations about how citizen engagement can be designed into these new programmes in a way that ensures that engagement is clearly part of or coherent with a bigger system of citizen engagement.

The research also aims to build the evidence base on effective citizen engagement for DFID Pakistan (and elsewhere) and to help DFID realise its ambition to 'leave no-one behind' in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goals 5, 10 and 16. In this regard, and cognisant of the context across the provinces of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, DFID is particularly interested in the gender dynamics of citizen engagement, as well as in the experiences of youth, people with disabilities and religious minorities with regard to their access to the appropriate mechanisms.

Objectives

- » Provide an understanding and analysis of literature on citizen engagement in Pakistan;
- » Map out mandated and non-mandated interfaces between citizens and government at the local level in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). Highlighting key links across programmes and external initiatives.
- » Provide understanding of the drivers and barriers to citizen engagement in Pakistan.
- » Understand what safeguarding issues might be specific to citizen engagement in Pakistan and can be implemented to enhance safeguarding.
- » Make clear recommendations on how citizen engagement elements of programmes could be designed whether this should be sector specific, part of a wider system of citizen engagement or at least how it could be coherent with other systems.

Why Citizen Engagement Matters to DFID

The Sustainable Development Goals are predicated on the belief that issues of poverty, inequality, governance and sustainability are intrinsically inter-connected; that together and separately they are dependent on the full involvement of all citizens and that success is reflected in how well states (and the international order) protect and realise the human rights of all citizens. The latter is more frequently referred to as the 'leave no-one behind' agenda and reflects a realisation that citizens – the people for whom institutions are created and maintained – have a crucial role to play in shaping policy, practice and the delivery of services and in holding the state accountable. The 'leave no-one behind' agenda also illuminates the imperative of addressing inequalities, including through tackling the barriers that prevent citizens from playing their full part in public life; factors that in Pakistan include poor education, mobility restrictions, limited access to information and discrimination.

In reality, it is those who stand to benefit the most from good governance, service delivery and accountability who are least able to engage. The converse assumption, however, that those with education, privilege and time, who are able to engage do so, is not always true. One explanation for this is that the latter are comfortable with the way things are, are not dependent on public services and are content that government institutions responsible for planning, budgeting and any services they do need will meet their needs. In other words, that the congruence of interests between the two groups (elite citizens and policy makers/ political elites) lead to the formers' interests being served as a matter of course.

It is also apparent from the research that some of the citizen engagement mechanisms such as text message consultations or web-based portals, favour those who are already relatively privileged¹ and so their views, needs and perspectives end up translated into policy and planning, while the very marginalised (those who are in danger of being 'left behind') do not have this access and so are invisible and unheard. To break this vicious circle which holds back development at local, provincial and national levels, it is necessary to intervene to tackle the barriers to citizens' engagement with state processes and mechanisms.

¹ Hernandez, K. Roberts, T: Leaving No-One Behind in a Digital World, Institute of Development Studies, 2018

DFID is keen to ensure that its investment in programming in Pakistan is sustainable – that it outlasts development programmes and the outcomes are continued, not least to ensure value for money. DFID’s programming in Pakistan includes work in the health and education sectors as well as in peacebuilding and core governance. To ensure that there is continued commitment from government and its institutions and from communities, DFID requires that citizens are engaged with government at the local, provincial and national levels in all these programmes. At the same time, one of the issues raised repeatedly in reviews of development programming in Pakistan is that citizen engagement is largely donor-led and ‘projectised’; that mechanisms are set up or supported by DFID and other donors with variable levels of continuity once the project is finished or the funding ceases. The aim, therefore, is to make sure that the engagement of citizens with government processes, services and accountability mechanisms can be sustained after the development programme.

METHODOLOGY

The findings of this research are based on (a) a rigorous literature review of existing evidence on citizen engagement globally and in Pakistan, (b) qualitative enquiry through key informant interviews in the Punjab and KP provinces of Pakistan; (c) an assessment of recent project-based interventions for improved citizen engagement and participation (d) a political economy analysis which distinguishes between:

- » formal State mechanisms for engagement with citizens (we refer to these as “mandated” CE) where the state exercises a direct relationship with the citizenry;
- » informal mechanisms (referred to as non-mandated CE) where citizens engage/collaborate with state actors, political actors, and civil society actors (and vice versa) to influence the State’s decision-making.

The findings of the literature review were used to make initial recommendations and identification of evidence gaps and opportunities for further research. The evidence gaps also informed the design and parameters for the primary research which aimed to examine the prevalence of citizen engagement with the state, particularly in the Punjab and KP provinces. The literature review avails a diverse set of sources, including (i) reports by development agencies; (ii) reports by governments; (iii) journal articles; (iv) blogs and newspaper articles; (v) project websites and (vi) Key informant interviews.

The research team consisted of Pakistan based company Verso Consulting which conducted the literature review and political economy analysis; two national field researchers; an international team leader and junior researcher, to provide global and national contextual subject matter-expertise.

The field research was qualitative, based on semi-structured interviews with 14 key informants in Punjab, KP and Islamabad. The research team interviewed government officials, civil society organisations and other experts, identified in collaboration with the DFID Pakistan team. These included youth activists, academics, DFID implementers and women’s human rights defenders.

Table 1: Summary of Field Research Interviews²

Respondent Type	Number of Interviews	Number of Respondents		
		Men	Women	Total
Key informant interviews - Experts and CSOs	11	14	03	17
Key informant interviews – Government Officials	11	10	05	15
Total	22	24	08	32

The political economy analysis (see Annex C) was informed by the field research and the literature review. The consultant also conducted a total of 14 key informant interviews (KII), including national and international experts

² A list of all Key informant interviewees to be found in Annex A.

on citizen engagement in Pakistan (academics, members of civil society organisations (CSOs) members and people involved with DFID and other donors' programmes).

The field research team documented the interviews, which resulted in over 100 pages of transcripts, they identified common patterns emerging from the interviews as well as supporting or contradictory data. This was followed by an analysis of identified patterns and a fleshing out of the data points under the key themes. Through this analysis period, the team members considered the validity of the findings, taking into consideration the background and expertise of respondents and triangulating the interview data with the literature and their own expertise.

Limitations

In the course of the literature review and primary research, certain challenges and limitations were identified, which, has shaped the findings provided in this report.

A key limitation of the field research is the difference in understanding of the concept of citizen engagement. As the literature identified, there are different understandings of citizen engagement which was reflected in the key informants' different levels of knowledge on citizen engagement. For instance, key informants in state mandated forums understand citizen engagement differently from the civil society actors. From the state level perspective in Pakistan, citizen engagement is seen almost exclusively as happening through the voices of elected representatives and complaint mechanisms. As such, the real issues faced by citizens are often not well represented; there is a heavy reliance on citizen's reactions to unsatisfactory services/programs rather than proactive inclusion of citizens at all levels of planning and decision making. At the civil society level, citizen engagement is seen as the active inclusion of all (women, people with disabilities, transgender, various social classes and statuses) to demand their rights. Additionally, within CSOs, engagement is seen as creating incentives for citizens to take action, in the belief that their demands will be heard and resolved.

In interpreting the interview data, the team took into consideration who articulated a response, privileging views of well-informed respondents and those with more detailed information on citizen engagement as a concept and mechanism.

Pakistan's fluid political situation means that the priorities of the government can change at any given time. The impact this has on government institutions, the civil service, and civil society organisations means that the findings are applicable at the time of this report but may become outdated as the context changes.

Given the limited research time and wide field of enquiry, the field research was conducted at Provincial level in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) only. Baselines of citizen engagement at district or community level were not conducted by the field research team.

Finally, it was notable that there is a limited amount of research on the impact of inequalities on citizen engagement³. Despite recognising that marginalised citizens are those most in need of services and most affected by poor governance, there is little by way of targeted research on how women or youth engage with the state and even less relating to people with disabilities or minority groups.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Citizen Engagement

DFID uses the term 'citizen engagement' to mean mechanisms for voice and accountability; those that lead to public-involving, citizen-centred collaborative public management. From the literature review conducted for this assignment, it is apparent that a multiplicity of terms and concepts apply to the broad umbrella of 'citizen engagement', including social accountability mechanisms, social movements, 'participation', and public consultation. It can include the take-up of social benefits or social protection mechanisms as well as engagement in political processes (such as elections). A useful definition is 'the processes by which public concerns, needs and values are incorporated into decision-making'⁴.

Citizen engagement within DFID's nomenclature can be direct (people's immediate engagement) or indirect (through representatives or representative organisations (intermediaries)). The global evidence and that from

³ Lorraine Corner and Sarah Repucci, "A User's Guide to Measuring Gender-Sensitive Basic Service Delivery," *UNDP and UNIFEM*, March 2009. https://www.undp.org/content/dam/aplaws/publication/en/publications/democratic-governance/dg-publications-for-website/a-users-guide-to-measuring-gender-sensitive-basic-service-delivery-users_guide_measuring_gender.pdf

⁴ Tina Nabatchi, 'A Manager's Guide to Evaluating Citizen Participation' IBM Center for the Business of Government, Syracuse University, 2011

Pakistan indicates that it is deeply contextual – informed by social and cultural norms, political structures, local, national and regional events, demographic factors and history.

Mandated Engagement

This refers to mechanisms that are set up by government to elicit citizen engagement. This can either be a specific mechanism or institution that is dedicated to citizen engagement (such as an Ombudsperson office) or a mechanism by which government invites citizens to engage in the course of developing policy or practice, such as a consultation period in the course of legislative review or a plebiscite.

Non-Mandated Engagement

This is often called ‘informal’ or ‘non-invited’ engagement, whereby citizens engage or collaborate with state actors, political actors and civil society to influence decision-making of state institutions. For this document, the term ‘non-mandated’ is preferred as these mechanisms can be more formal than the term ‘informal’ reflects.

Non-mandated engagement refers to a variety of means by which citizens engage or attempt to engage with policy makers, legislature or service providers. It can include citizen activism such as petitions, demonstrations or lobbying through social or traditional media. It can also include engagement through intermediaries such as civil society organisations and it can include citizen engagement through non-governmental governance structures such as traditional, tribal or religious institutions (such as *jirga*).

There can be some overlap between mandated and non-mandated engagement. For instance, a social movement can use both mandated (such as a public consultation) and non-mandated (media exposure) means to achieve a change in policy; or a non-mandated activity may lead to a mandated mechanism (such as where an on-line petition gets taken up by parliamentarians). In Pakistan, a *jirga* can be adopted by government as a means of communicating with communities.

SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review provided an overview of global, regional and contextual Pakistan conceptions and evidence of citizen engagement. The full review is attached at Annex B.

Globally citizen engagement as a concept is about fostering and enhancing the participation of local communities in development projects from inception, implementation and beyond. There are several definitions of citizen engagement, depending on the sector to which the discussion applies, and the type of engagement being sought. The core concept, however, remains the same: involvement of the beneficiaries of projects or activities, in designing projects, implementing them, creating accountability, and providing feedback.

A key distinction in types of citizen engagement is between mandated and non-mandated systems, where the former refers to forms of engagement or institutions set up mostly by government, specifically to promote consultation with citizens, or to address grievances; and the latter refers to systems that have come about through customs and traditions, or simply because people found that they work. Much of what is discussed in the literature is the mandated form – institutions or processes set up for the purpose. There is little literature about social movements (a form of non-mandated engagement) within the ‘citizen engagement’ or ‘social accountability’ discourse.

The literature also addresses instances where citizen engagement has not worked. Some key lessons from these experiences relate to the finding that providing information and raising awareness among citizens is not enough without changing power structures; bottom-up monitoring is often not incisive enough; and local elites often end up taking over community-driven development programs. Other studies find that lower tiers of government have such little capacity that more innovative ideas are needed for citizen engagement.

The review found that globally and in the Pakistan context, citizen engagement was most effective at the local level. A lack of awareness of rights and information about services, lack of political will and incentives for participants prevent effective engagement at the central level both globally and in Pakistan.

In Pakistan, citizen engagement is not widespread, and essentially a recent phenomenon within the last decade. Through donor funded programs like the DFID funded AAWAZ, and Alif Ailaan, the value of citizen engagement was found to engender trust, and accountability within citizen and state relationships. The research also finds an increasing role of media and digital technology in promoting engagement as they present better access to technology and information which have spurred participation among the youth and growing middle class population in Pakistan. However other challenges such as access to technology due to cost, education and socio-economic status limits effective engagement through this mechanism.

Although more avenues for citizen engagement are now available in Pakistan, the exclusion of women and marginalised groups from such processes remains an issue. For other traditionally excluded groups, such as youth, trends are changing as youth are now politically aware, volunteering, participating in politics as candidates, and being part of political, economic, and social decisions. In general, some of the typical challenges to citizen engagement in general are more pronounced in the case of Pakistan, including state resistance, lack of capacity of state institutions, and participating local elites being unrepresentative. There are also specific challenges of marginalized communities not reached out to, women's voices remaining side-lined, and a lack of trust preventing citizens from working with public officials. Even though several laws and structures in Pakistan seem to support citizen engagement – such as anti-corruption bodies and right to information acts – they are often unclear and there is not enough information available for people to make use of them.

There is a dearth in literature regarding women and their roles in social accountability programmes globally. This is reflected in the Pakistan context as citizen engagement largely maintains the exclusion or marginalization of women from the process. This is both evident in, and the result of, the relatively poor political participation of women – both as voters and as electable candidates⁵. Unless inclusivity is pursued by those organising engagement, there is a strong possibility of elite capture taking place of consultations, which can skew the whole engagement process.

Additionally, the voices of people with disabilities and transgender people are often lost or insufficiently represented in the literature on citizen-state engagement. In general, some of the typical challenges to citizen engagement in general are more pronounced in the case of Pakistan, including state resistance, lack of capacity of state institutions, and participating local elites being unrepresentative. Furthermore, other challenges including internal security remain a significant challenge to social accountability; cultural and social norms and unstable law and order situations also pose challenges in Pakistan.

Safeguarding

The term 'safeguarding' refers to the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH). DFID's concern with issues of SEAH extends to its programming, as well as the behaviour of its implementers⁶. It seeks to ensure both that women, girls and others who are vulnerable to SEAH are not put in danger (directly or indirectly) by DFID programmes – in this case of support to government or civil society - and that its support to government and civil society actively prevents SEAH from taking place. The International Development Committee recommends that DFID builds resourcing for safeguarding into every programme 'where there is a risk'. Although this recommendation is addressed to preventing and responding to SEAH within the aid sector, safeguarding risks do arise in all programming that work with or for individual citizens or communities.

The threat or reality of SEAH can affect citizen engagement across the spectrum, and both directly and indirectly. It can, for example, include sexual harassment or abuse of women seeking to participate in public for a or trying to make a complaint to a public body; families may be reluctant to take part in an engagement activity for fear of exposing themselves to damaging gossip about the girls and women in the family; people can be reluctant to call a help line, report corruption or submit information to an on-line portal if confidentiality is not ensured for fear that their identity and that of their families will be exposed, in turn risking that the honour of the family will be compromised, for example as a form of backlash for reporting a state official. The enthusiasm amongst some government institutions in Pakistan to gather data can also entail a safeguarding risk unless there are robust measures in place to encrypt and protect personal information.

Gender-based discrimination – including SEAH - intersects with other forms of discrimination. Given the multiple forms of discrimination faced by many people in Pakistan – particularly on the basis of ethno-linguistic group, religion, disability and sexuality and the issues faced by people who live in poverty (whether urban or rural), safeguarding issues can be multiplied. For instance, women and girls from minority religious groups are more likely to experience (or fear) sexual harassment by those who control access to government institutions, while access to information about redress for SEAH perpetrated by state officials is less available to illiterate or very poor people.

CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT IN PAKISTAN

Pakistan Context⁷

Mechanisms for citizen engagement can be categorised as follows:

⁵ Khan, A and Naqvi, S: Women in Politics: Gaining Ground for Progressive outcomes in Pakistan, IDS Working Paper Vol 2018, no 519.

⁶ DFID Enhanced Due Diligence: Safeguarding for External Partners

⁷ Much of this section summarises the political economy analysis

- » Citizen awareness mechanisms – designed to disseminate information to citizens through one-way communication campaigns
- » Citizen consultation, feedback and monitoring mechanisms – solicitations of citizens’ opinions and demands to inform decision-making. These can include participatory citizen monitoring mechanisms
- » Grievance, referral and redressal mechanisms which provide not only a point of engagement - docking points - for citizen complaints but can include pathways for responsive governance
- » Rights-based citizen engagement – citizen empowerment actioned for an integral place in the state’s decision-making.

The research has found that, in Pakistan, most mandated citizen engagement mechanisms are functionally limited (by intent and design) to those which ‘inform’ or ‘consult’ citizens or those which are set up for citizens to complain about services. There are some instances where citizens have been involved in participation at the local government level although these are new and vulnerable to frequent interruption. In short, it is rare for mechanisms to engage citizens in collaboration or co-design or for genuine, effective empowerment. Rights-based citizen engagement remain absent in the mandated mechanisms.

Regarding non-mandated mechanisms in Pakistan, civil society organisations are active to varying extents across the two provinces and with regard to *which* citizens are engaged and for what purpose. This is highly contextual within each province and affected by shifting political dynamics and demographics. For example, in the Newly Merged Districts (NMD), where, historically, civil society has been less organised around human rights issues and principles, non-mandated mechanisms tend to coalesce around traditional community structures of decision-making. In addition, where the state has been largely absent (as in some rural areas in Punjab), traditional structures and communities take on the functions that are more often assumed to be those of the state. The private sector also plays a major role in providing services, meaning that - from a citizens’ perspective – the state becomes irrelevant with regard to daily life.

The following outlines some of the factors that influence citizen engagement in Pakistan.

Structural Factors Influencing Citizen Engagement in Pakistan

Population Growth and Urbanisation

Pakistan is a rapidly urbanising country, with over 50% living in large cities. In total, 63% of the urban population of Pakistan lives in 15 cities with a population of over 500,000, while the rest live in what is termed ‘peri-urbanisation’.

Urbanisation can be a force for improved governance. A political economy analysis conducted in 2018 for the UK’s Consolidating Democracy in Pakistan (CDIP) programme noted that “Urbanisation allows for greater aggregation of interests at lower transaction costs, reduces coordination problems and improves information flows between public institutions and the population. In Pakistan, however, the structures of local administration have been historically oriented towards rural governance, leaving the urban local government structures ill-equipped to deal with the influx, particularly from poorer areas. People (especially marginalised people) moving into urban or peri-urban areas also have little experience of dealing with government institutions and even less experience of this interaction being positive. This lack of experience compounds the reality that there is little trust between state and citizen, in turn reinforced by reliance of the private sector as a ‘vendor’ of public services such as education or health and in turn reducing the incentive for government at local or provincial level to engaged meaningfully with these citizens.

Urban planning provides an opportunity for including citizens in shaping their own environment, leading to greater citizens’ investment in keeping towns and cities clean, safe and prosperous. In most cases, however, citizens (especially the poor, migrants, minorities and women) are excluded from planning processes. For instance, low-income Christian communities or refugees often live in unregularized settlements where they are vulnerable to draconian state action and will tend to try to live ‘below the radar’. This situation is also compounded by the phenomenon that many migrants to urban areas do not have registration as citizens, reducing at a stroke their ability to engage and giving licence to unreceptive state institutions to ignore their complaints, demands or need for improvements.

Scarcity – Debt Burdened Economy and Revenue Generation

Decades of economic mismanagement by successive regimes, both civilian and military, have frequently left the public sector without adequate funds and insufficient mechanisms for accountability of public spending or an effective approach to revenue generation. The current economic situation in Pakistan has worsened recently, with an associated debt burden. Current taxation reform, focusing on taxation enforcement, has led to a contraction in

the informal economy (upon which many poor people depend). Taxation on consumption also has a disproportionate impact on poor and middle-class people who are already paying taxes as they are then effectively taxed twice, while the elites are perceived to avoid paying tax, pushing the burden down. The implication of this for citizen engagement is that it contributes to the 'trust deficit' between citizen and state and reinforces a sense of futility in engaging on issues such as local budgeting or service provision.

As stated earlier, it is the poor, rural, newly urban or marginalised who are most in need of public sector services. Pakistan's political and economic elites who can afford private sector options for health and education have consistently opted out of the public system. In a situation of scarcity, therefore, the public sector has less incentive to improve quality of services for poor, rural, newly urban or marginalised citizens.

Poverty

Wide discrepancies across Pakistan's socio-economic groups mean that many people remain in poverty, despite a growing and increasingly affluent middle class. Poor people have the most relevant views about urban planning, service provision, conflict management and public financial management. They have fewer buffers, are less resilient and more vulnerable to shocks such as earthquakes, floods or forced displacement and live exposed to daily risks of illness, accident, violence and injustice as well as paucity of infrastructure or economic opportunities. At the same time, being poor reduces citizens' opportunity, incentive and access to citizens' engagement. Taking a day away from work to attend a meeting or travel, talk to a government official can be impossible for people with precarious employment or hand-to-mouth earnings or who are the only provider of care for children or elderly relatives. The evaluation of DFID's EVA programme noted that poverty is a clear determinant of take-up of health services and, by extension, the possibility of holding service providers to account. Poverty is also covered below in the section on 'barriers'

The Youth Demographic

The majority (64%) of Pakistan's population⁸ is currently under 30 years old, of which nearly half is between 15 and 29 years old. Young people are directly affected by government policies, services and institutional practice affecting themselves and their families. They are also vulnerable to targeting by security forces or (for girls and young women) to being subjected to dispute resolution mechanisms that treat them as commodities for exchange.

Young people are not only concerned with their own issues but have a strong role to play in shaping their whole societies. Many young people, particularly those from poor families or communities, carry burdens beyond their years in keeping their families together, are family breadwinners, play a role in the resolution of conflict within and between families and are acutely aware of the needs of their younger siblings. Young people are also, of course, the decision-makers and workers of tomorrow and will be voters soon. It is clear, however, that most young women and men, girls and boys across Pakistan are excluded from meaningful, constructive engagement. They report that no-one with power is interested in their views, they are not consulted and – particularly if they are poor, rural, migrant, minority or have disabilities, they risk being ignored or even ridiculed when they attempt to engage⁹.

This varies to some extent geographically. In strongly conservative areas, especially those ruled by custom and tradition, only older men are considered to have a valid voice, excluding young people (male or female) from any chance of engagement within established mechanisms. For girls and young women, the factors that influence their opportunities for engagement differ starkly between and within the provinces. In North, Eastern and Central Punjab the Youth Gender Inequality Index is described as low, as medium in South Eastern and Western Punjab and 'very high' in KP. This is borne out by the experience of DFID's programmes in the two provinces, particularly the Empowerment, Voice and Accountability for Better Health and Nutrition (EVA)¹⁰ and the first Aawaz (Voice and Accountability) programmes. Where girls and young women are particularly marginalised and excluded, their limited access to services mean that they do not know how to raise issues, advocate for improvements or hold service-providers to account. While this applies to all marginalised and excluded citizens, it is multiplied for girls and young women who are also facing family and social pressure to remain ignorant and passive.

There is a dearth of meaningful engagement opportunities in Pakistan and access to information regarding the few opportunities that are available. It should therefore come as no surprise that despite the youth's high level of willingness to engage in community and political affairs, their engagement remains relatively low.

⁸ UNDP 2017 Pakistan National Human Development Report <https://www.undp.org/content/dam/pakistan/docs/HDR/PK-NHDR.pdf>

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ EVA Assessment (2018) and Aawaz quarterly reports (unpublished).

Political Factors Influencing Citizen Engagement in Pakistan

Politics, culture, social norms, history and regional factors are intrinsically connected. This is starkly apparent in the differences between the two provinces of Punjab and KP. In the latter, for instance, conservative influences create the background against which any political reforms can be made, while the enduring presence of Afghan refugees and migrants can reinforce the idea of citizen engagement as relationship of benevolence and reciprocity.

With only a short history of successful democratic transitions of power, the notions of citizenship and democratic participation are still nascent in Pakistan. Frequent transitions of power have meant that the bureaucracy has consolidated its control over resources, services and decision-making. This is evidenced by the current situation in which – in response to the government crack-down on corruption – many bureaucrats are reportedly operating on a ‘go slow’ or ‘work to rule’ basis, purportedly for fear of being accused of corruption, resulting in a significant slow-down of all government processes. The Civil Service Rules are commonly understood to cement the power of the bureaucracy, even *vis a vis* elected representatives.

For many in government positions, therefore, citizen engagement is viewed either as a threat which may open floodgates of complaints or the domain of elected representatives. This bureaucratic paradigm also creates an understanding of the social contract as one of benevolence – including citizen participation which is largely viewed as ‘allowing’ citizens to have a say, rather than regarding citizens as an asset.

Feudal structures, reflected across government institutions at all levels, are both a cause and result of inequalities. Ethnicity and clan are important determinants of social organisation, both in government, in civil society and in the interaction between citizens and state. Although these links are more important in rural areas, the migration of rural populations to urban areas may mean that this is brought with them and it can mean that the urban landscape of citizen engagement is occupied by different elites who operate outside of the clan structure but according to other factors such as language, education and networks.

Weak state-society relations mean that state failure to provide basic services – particularly to the marginalised – has led to dependence on the private sector and the ‘third sector’. This is both fuelled by and fuels lack of trust between citizens and the public sector institutions and allows for a sense that there is no point in engaging with an inept, corrupt sector.

Elected representatives come from political parties which are essentially hierarchical, with weak internal democratic processes. While there is sufficient public demand for political parties to reform their internal processes and become more representative – and there has been much improvement at constituency level since 2008 – political parties still provide few opportunities for women, minority ethnic groups or people with disabilities, in turn restricting the level of engagement that most citizens expect to have with their elected representative. Increased political competitiveness the shifting nature of Pakistan’s urban electorate also means that traditional vectors of power are being replaced by stronger demands for patronage and responsiveness on the part of elected representatives. Politicians also realise that re-election in Pakistan is now partially connected to performance, while we also see an increase in contest and acrimony, with competitive attack campaigns (particularly between the three main political parties) and disruptive political conflict such as protracted protests and street mobilisation and hate speech. Whether these latter can and should be considered a form of citizen engagement is debatable.

Narratives of accountability sit at the centre of Pakistan’s populist discourse. Effectively mobilised by political actors, these narratives have contributed to an accountability drive in the country. There remains a disconnect, however, between citizens and politicians. The former prioritises responsive governance and accessibility – factoring in how well candidates perform *vis a vis* service delivery into their voting decisions and support for politicians, whereas politicians focus ‘accountability’ on purportedly tackling wastefulness, maladministration and ‘corruption’ – all contested concepts. The impact this has, reportedly, on citizen engagement is that service providers at the local level and mandated citizens’ bodies are reluctant to spend the money that has been allocated to them, reducing their responsiveness to any citizens’ demands for improved services.

Local Government Reform

Where citizens seek and recognise an entry point for engagement with the state, it is at local government level. The evolution of local government systems in Pakistan over the last 18 years has been characterised by a struggle between (a) provincial control over district autonomy; and (b) bureaucratic power versus that of elected representatives at the district level. The situation is not all gloom, however. Local governments have attempted, over the years (such as with the mandated citizen community boards that were introduced in 2001) to engage with citizens at the district level and have tried to use their relative autonomy (even where this is as a result of being ignored) to convene citizens with state officials.

Again, there are differences between how provincial governments have used decentralisation to bring services to the local level. In KP, the new government has embarked on an ambitious agenda of fiscal decentralisation by promising transfers of up to 30% of the provincial budget to district governments and devolving structures to the granularity of village level committees.

In Punjab, by contrast, there was little funding directed to district-specific, district-executed development and most of the budget is tied to provincially controlled entities, meaning that trends in budget allocation and utilisation at the district level are strongly aligned with provincial priorities. Punjab's problems with service delivery arise mostly at the Tehsil and District level as a result of fragmentation regarding the role of municipal corporations.

To address these issues, new Local Government legislation was promulgated in both provinces in May 2019. As a result, Local Government in both provinces have been dissolved (Punjab in May, KP in August); the District and Union Council tiers have been abolished. In Punjab, the Tehsil tier has been expanded to accommodate metropolitan and municipal (previously district) governments alongside tehsil and town (rural and urban, respectively) committees. In Punjab, the major change is in the creation of the Village and Neighbourhood Councils (NCs) under the Punjab Panchayat and Neighbourhood Councils Act 2019.

These legislative reforms reflect a shift in emphasis from rural to urban governance, viewed by some as politically motivated. The actual dynamics of where power lies and the opportunities that will be created for citizens to engage through mandated or non-mandated mechanisms remains to be seen. It is likely that citizen engagement will have to navigate any arising tensions between the bureaucracy and elected local representatives.

Emerging Factors

Increased Political Competition

The changing nature of Pakistan's urban electorate means that political parties need to develop more organised mechanisms for constituent engagement. Traditionally strong factors in the voter calculus such as clan or ethnic affiliation are being replaced by stronger demands for patronage and responsiveness on the part of elected representatives. Politicians in Pakistan realise that re-election is at least partially connected to performance (or the appearance of performance). There is also an increase in contest and acrimonious dispute, with disruptive political conflict such as protracted protests, street mobilisation and hate speech. Polls indicate that the two front-runner political parties are in tight competition, meaning that they have incentives to focus on the following:

The Discourse of 'Accountability'

Pakistan's current populist discourse has at its centre narratives of accountability, leading to an accountability drive across the country¹¹. However, there is a disconnect between the political discourse and public expectation: Voters prioritise responsive governance and accessibility as drivers for voting behaviour based on how well their candidates perform against delivery of basic services. On the other hand, politicians problematize accountability as a lack of financial transparency or "corruption" on the part of their opponents. The term "corruption" has become a politically salient phrase, which confuses 'waste due to inefficiency' with 'maladministration'. The state's current approach assumes waste as the cause of corruption. Further an empowered judiciary and politically active National Accountability Bureau have become prolific in targeting cases of 'corruption' (albeit disproportionately targets are the political opposition of the Government). The culture of accountability nevertheless engenders fear in public sector actors and the dynamic has had an adverse impact on the behaviour of service providers to the detriment of citizens. Because of the accountability drive Government departments and mandated citizen's bodies are afraid to spend the money allocated to them, particularly if it involves improvements in infrastructure of basic facilities.

Social Media

The penetration of mobile technologies across Pakistan, including remote and rural areas has created a disorganized yet organic and swift platform to raise grievances and amplify complaints for citizens. There are many examples of complaints first raised through social media (public platforms such as Twitter or Facebook as well as private platforms such as Whatsapp) finding a hearing with the Supreme Court (*via suo moto* notices) or soliciting a response from an elected representative or public official. On the one hand social media is a positive driver for citizens by providing an avenue for them to engage with state actors, to which many state actors have responded by enhancing their social media presence. Many district officials have set up Facebook pages for their district offices to push relevant information out to citizens. However, according to key informant interviews carried out for the

¹¹ Azeema Cheema, Johann Chacko, Shirin Gul "Mobilising Mass Anxieties: Fake News and the Amplification of Socio-Political Conflict in Pakistan", International Republican Institute. <https://asiacentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Fake-News-Conference-Proceeding.pdf>

research, social media also provides an avenue for public officials to develop a political profile, expand their networks, and exercise a political persona in the district.

How Citizen Engagement is Perceived and Understood

State

As signalled above, for many in government institutions across both KP and Punjab, citizen engagement is viewed through the lens of a benevolent state dispensing services to the population. The field research found that officials' attitudes mostly clustered around the following:

- » Most officials interviewed believed that citizens are entitled to raise grievances if they are genuinely not receiving services to which they are entitled, although some officials are wary that encouraging citizen engagement will create a burden of trivial, misinformed or vexatious complaints.
- » Linked to the above, some officials were resistant to the idea of citizen engagement as unnecessary, in that if the state is doing a good job, there is no need for citizens to be troubled with holding institutions to account. Rather than allocating resources to allow citizens to make complaints, these officials believe that efforts should be directed at supporting local government to do its job properly.
- » Officials and representatives are likely to be from the more privileged sectors of society and may be influenced by elitist social norms, such as disparaging views about poor people, women and people from the rural areas. Clearly, issues of social exclusion around poverty, gender, age, disability and religious minority status play a significant role here. By definition, those who rely on public services are already at a disadvantage compared to those who can buy private services and so the 'suppliant / benevolent' relationship is built in *ab initio*.
- » There are notable exceptions, where officials believe and put into practice that citizens are the *raison d'être* of their work, actively encouraging genuine engagement. Often, but not exclusively, this follows interventions by voice and accountability / citizen engagement programmes such as those run by DFID or GIZ.
- » Institutions where citizen engagement is written into their purpose (such as Ombudspersons offices or the Punjab Commission on the Status of Women) are, unsurprisingly, less inclined to the suppliant/ benevolent paradigm. These institutions view their role as providing an avenue for social accountability through complaints-based citizen engagement and for monitoring through research and initiatives triggered by their own motion or with support of international organisations. It is important, however, to bear in mind that even these institutions can regard the voice of marginalised citizens as less important or that they find it easier to engage with citizens who have more capacity and confidence.

Civil Society

Civil society organisations can act as effective intermediaries between citizens and the state – not only for holding the state to account but for raising and amplifying citizens' concerns on crucial human rights issues such as minority rights and violence against women. The latter are almost always through non-mandated mechanisms in the form of social movements. At the national and Provincial levels in Pakistan, organised civil society has sought to represent citizens' voices and to hold government to account with regard to legislation, policy and service delivery, while at the sub-provincial level, usually with support from CSOs, community-based organisations or coalitions act as the point of contact between district governance structures and communities. Most donor-supported civic engagement programming is implemented through national CSOs.

Civil society in Pakistan, as elsewhere, is varied and includes organisations focusing on a single issue, constituency-based organisations (e.g. women's rights or disabled people's organisations), local forums or committees set up to demand services and professional organisations. The research found that there is no single understanding or strategy across Pakistani civil society about the best way to ensure citizen engagement with the state or even its purpose. There is also no uniform commitment amongst civil society to engage citizens (particularly marginalised citizens) in determining the direction and modalities of their own work. As elsewhere, the larger and more established CSOs in Pakistan tend to be led by urban, educated, English-speaking men or women, some of whom view their role as representative, rather than engagement. This is not to deny the unwavering commitment of many CSOs to protecting and promoting the human rights of citizens, even at personal risk. Most of the gains regarding women's rights and tackling modern slavery, for instance, and the use of strategic litigation to challenge human rights abuses are pursued by these CSOs and their colleagues in the legal profession. Many CSOs have been particularly active in providing and fostering avenues for citizen engagement around specific issues or reform efforts, such as the KP government's development of the Provincial Health Policy, or the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act. In these instances, CSOs have grasped their role as mobilisers and amplifiers of citizen voice.

Regarding women's human rights organisations, the global picture is reflected in Pakistan. Evidence shows¹² that policy change in the most controversial area of violence against women depends on coalitions of women's human rights organisations mobilised on this specific issue, partnering with strong parliamentarians. These partnerships are most powerful when they are deliberately connected to women activists at the grass roots, whether in service delivery or advocacy. The South Asia Women's Alliance is a strong example where a regional partnership of women's human rights organisations, UN entities and donor-led programmes identified, mobilised and enabled women leaders from across Pakistan and other South Asian countries – from villages and slums as well as internationally-recognised leaders, to come together to influence the agenda of the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

The field research shows, however, that civil society space in Pakistan is shrinking. Activists report being silenced or self-censoring for fear of reprisal or drawing unwelcome attention. This is particularly so for human rights activists, feminists or peacebuilders, who are wary of being labelled 'Western'. In turn, this means that CSOs who want to engage with citizens and promote citizen's voice on human rights issues are turning to less controversial activities such as poverty relief, health or education. Some people interviewed for the research believe that gains made in the last 15 years such as the liberalisation of the media and the gains of the lawyers' movement are now being eroded and CSOs are retreating.

Citizens

Apart from those involved in CSOs, the media or professional organisations, citizens in Pakistan tend to view engagement with the state either as a matter of service provision and complaint (mandated) or of protest (non-mandated). The traditional approach of going through intermediaries - either 'influentials' or CSOs - subsists in both provinces. There continues to be a trust deficit between citizens and government or state institutions, except where the latter has proved itself to be listening and to take up issues without any agenda. A vicious circle is created, whereby citizens believe that the only purpose in engaging with government is to complain when services are not provided and then to do so through intermediaries. The idea of entitlement-based engagement has not taken hold as normal, despite attempts at awareness-raising, the legislation on Right to Information and Right to Services and the efforts of civil society. For marginalised citizens, this is compounded by a set of factors, including feudal arrangements (e.g. in areas dominated by the brick-making industry) and a preference for 'keeping your head down' rather than one of ownership, civic duty and entitlement.

The comments above on the shrinking of civil society space have implications here, also. Where CSOs are less likely or able to raise human rights issues with citizens, the citizens are less likely to identify their issues of concern as those of entitlement, true accountability or rights. It should be remembered that citizens' daily lives are determined by a range of issues, including basic services, (in)security, cultural and religious issues and simply 'getting by'. There is, therefore, no shortage of issues on which to engage with government or other service providers, meaning that if there is a choice between talking about the broken water pump with a district official or addressing fear relating to domestic violence, hate speech or security forces excesses, most citizens will opt for the least controversial and the one least likely to risk backlash, exposure or other risks.

Gender dynamics are prominent here. Some issues – particularly health – are considered legitimate for women to discuss, rather than concerning themselves with issues that threaten the status quo such as minority or women's rights. This has been seen most in areas that are particularly conservative such as some of the Newly-Merged Districts and other areas of KP, where women (especially) can be mobilised to discuss health issues, especially where there are Lady Health Workers present, but will be silent on issues that they (and men) consider out of their domain. This has implications for how CSOs and donors can work with communities to promote citizen engagement. For instance, in some KP districts under the Aawaz programme, it was necessary to have male as well as female 'Resource Persons' in the Aagahi Centres so that the community-based organisations supported by CSOs were able to function and to prevent backlash against the women Resource Persons and users of the Centres¹³. In Punjab, also, the passage of the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Bill into law faced obstacles from religious leaders who claimed to be concerned that it threatened the tenets of Islam. The message this gives to women (and men) citizens is that challenging the status quo regarding women's rights is to be avoided, further reinforcing the idea that engagement with the state is best left to asking for improved services or issuing complaints through mandated mechanisms, rather than engaging through non-mandated mechanisms on issues that are driven by citizens' own rights or needs.

¹² <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/feminist-mobilisation-and-progressive-policy-change-why-governments-take-action-295457>

¹³ Aawaz quarterly reports to DFID (unpublished).

Drivers of Citizen Engagement

This section addresses those factors that encourage citizens to engage and government institutions to seek citizens' engagement. These

Right to Information and Right to Services Legislation:

In addition to the legislation referred to above such as that regarding local government reform and laws relating to specific human rights issues such as gender-based violence and minority rights, some of the most notable and relevant bodies of legislation here are the Right to Information (RtI) and Right to Services (RtS) legislation at Federal and Provincial levels, with their associated government bodies.

While qualitatively different across the two provinces of Punjab and KP, both sets of legislation enshrine citizens' rights (already stated to be provided in the Constitution) to be provided with information about how governments are working, to raise questions about their experience of government institutions and to raise complaints when public services are not delivered in a timely fashion. In KP, the use of the RtI legislation is stated to be important for the disclosure of information about the administration of the NMDs, including development plans and budgets.

The RtI laws are progressive, moving from 'Freedom of Information' to 'Right to Information', carrying an ethos that information is a right, not a privilege. Moreover, the legislation requires government bodies proactively to make information available to the public, rather than wait for specific requests. In so doing, RtI should create a virtuous circle whereby citizens are more informed about government activities, leading to greater demands both through greater awareness and through a realisation that they are entitled to know.

The RtS legislation – passed in KP in 2014 and in Punjab in early 2019 – also locates services as a right, rather than a privilege or a dispensation. As with RtI, the RtS legislation creates an expectation that services will be provided without the need for pressure from citizens but that there are accountability mechanisms for when this duty is breached.

The take-up of both bodies of legislation by individual citizens is of course subject to limitations based on literacy, access to information that the legislation exists and that it is available for them. Attempts have been made, however, to make take-up easier, for instance by removing the need for special forms to be completed and by provision of the RtI Commissions in both provinces and in KP, there is an apparently comprehensive system of focal points at District level, feeding information up to the provincial Commissioners.

RtI legislation in conjunction with other, mandated accountability mechanisms, has provided an effective avenue for holding government to account, resulting in concrete changes. In a number of cases in Pakistan, the individuals or CSOs have complained to the Ombudsman about lack of response to requests for information on issues relating to government budgeting and service provision and allegations of corrupt practices¹⁴, while experience from other countries in South Asia demonstrates that the RtI legislation can be used to strengthen RtI legislation by issuing requests about how the legislation is being implemented.¹⁵ The same can also be said for the use of RtI legislation to strengthen RtS laws.

Civil Society

Despite restrictions as noted above, Pakistani civil society continues where it can to demand increased transparency, accountability and responsiveness from government institutions. Even where CSOs have changed their approach towards a more philanthropic or service-delivery focus, they remain an avenue through which awareness about rights can be channelled to citizens and citizens' expressed needs can be channelled to government.

Where CSOs work directly with communities, citizens can become more self-sufficient in organising themselves to make demands, seek information and hold government to account. This sustained impact links non-mandated and mandated mechanisms and has proven to be successful in Pakistan through DFID's programmes (EVA-BHN and Aawaz, particularly).

It is important to remember that civil society does not only include large, constituted organisations but can include community-based organisations, groups that meet around specific sectoral issues such as water user groups or groups that come together for one-off campaigns or issues. This is of course contextual, depending on the issues of concern and the ability of citizens to engage in collective action.

¹⁴ www.freedominfo.org

¹⁵ <https://asiafoundation.org/2016/03/30/four-lessons-for-improving-rti-in-south-asia/>

Improved Services

Citizens' experience of the state tends to be localised. The schools, health facilities, dispute resolution structures and infrastructure used by most citizens is in their own locality and so it is here that trust in the mandated mechanisms for citizen engagement (or just in the state) stands or falls. For instance, if people feel that their presence in a School Management Committee makes a difference to the education of their children, they will be motivated actively to participate. A study by the World Bank in Sindh in 2015 found that a combination of initiatives was necessary to ensure the communities' participation in schools management, whereby information technology (text messaging), village meetings and refreshing the membership of the committees (rather than waiting for the existing committee to call an election) were put in place at the same time. Teachers, parents and other community members supported the initiative, as (crucially) did the Reform Support Unit of the Sindh Education Department.

Evidence such as the above and from development programmes shows that citizen engagement that leads to improved services tends to be self-perpetuating. Citizens become convinced that their voice can be heard to good effect, while service-providers realise that the involvement of citizens leads to better management of services. This is apparent in water user committees where villages contribute labour to maintaining pumps and in some Parent Teacher Associations or School Management Boards where teachers and citizens appreciate the added value that parents can bring to school management. In the health sector, improved services have been shown to improve not just take-up but trust in the service-providers.

Improved Citizen/State Relationships

Citizen engagement on concrete issues helps to break down barriers between citizens and government officials or representatives. It is in the interests, then, of governments to create constructive mechanisms by which citizens can engage, reducing the likelihood of protests and other non-mandated engagement which can in turn lead to the closing down of opportunities for citizen engagement. It is apparent from citizen engagement work in different countries that the building of relationships between citizens and state can also cross sectors, creating means by which citizens and government can respond to humanitarian crises, for instance, or averting security threats. For this to be effective, however, it is important that these relationships are not restricted to a narrow group of people but take advantage of the knowledge, networks and capacities of women, female and male youth, minorities and people with disabilities.

Political Gain

Sometimes linked to the above, it is in the interests of political representatives and government officials to respond effectively to citizens and to be seen to be doing so. As noted above, improved services and greater transparency builds confidence and is – put bluntly – a vote winner, particularly when the media can show that the government is doing the right thing by its citizens.

Digital Mechanisms

At Federal and Provincial level, the government has established citizen portals. These have been successful in mobilising citizens to complain on a wide range of issues, from overdue salaries to road congestion; forced conversions to delayed public services such as health, education, justice and infrastructure. In the first month after the Citizens' Complaint Portal launch, an estimated 1,000 complaints were received, of which around 16% were addressed almost immediately. Utilising a mobile phone application, the Pakistan Citizens' Portal was established in 2018 by the Prime Minister's Performance Delivery Unit, as 'a tool to promote citizen-centric participatory governance'. The Portal is geared entirely towards complaints, connected to government departments covering all issues. There is also a means by which citizens can use the Portal at a government department office.

The Punjab government citizens' portal is also a mobile (android) application by which citizens can lodge complaints. It appears to be a private-public partnership, supported by corporate advertising. Reviews are variable. The Punjab Government website is more comprehensive, with a user-friendly interface geared towards transparency as well as eliciting complaints.

The KP government citizens' portal is also a mobile application, again geared towards complaints. The associated website is less well-functioning than the Punjab site, with broken links and out-dated information. Once registered, however, the app is also used by the government to share information, reinforcing the benefits of engagement and encouraging sustained use of the app.

Digital mechanisms are attractive, easy to use for people who are experienced with digital technology and can drive interest to issues other than complaints – as evidenced by the Punjab portal which also contains information about the budget and the structure of the provincial government.

There is a balance to be struck between concerns about the exclusive nature of digital complaints mechanisms and the potential benefits they can bring. Notably, the Pakistan Citizens' Portal has an option to raise a complaint about sexual harassment. Also, notably, over 90% of the 'early adopters' who downloaded the app within its first months were men.

Digital technology can also comprise non-mandated or hybrid (mandated/ non-mandated) mechanisms for citizen engagement. Through social media, for instance, citizens can raise issues quickly or on a concerted basis. The *Allif Ailaan* campaign for the right to education is a strong example of the use of social media (as well as print) to effect not just service delivery on an *ad hoc* basis but a shift in mind-set across government, politicians and society. Digital methods also give decision-makers and service providers an easy way to respond to comments, requests and demands, rather than having to go through more lengthy processes. It also removes the potential 'gatekeeper' function of the bureaucracy, in that elected representatives can know in a moment about an issue, without being dependent on a filter in a government department. Response time from elected representatives or government departments can act as a measure of how accountable they are to citizens, to which citizens and on which issues.

Digital technology has its downsides, as well as being a driver of engagement. These are covered below in the section on barriers.

Litigation

In Pakistan, there are a handful of law firms that undertake strategic litigation for the protection of human rights or other cases of public interest and policy. Strategic litigation can be 'class actions' taken on behalf of a group of people (e.g. against a pharmaceutical company), can be an individual case that has catalytic implications for a group of people or to raise an issue into the public domain. Some cases defy categorisation and what starts as an individual human rights case becomes one of national concern – as in the eventual acquittal of Aasia Bibi on grounds of blasphemy, which has illuminated the implications of blasphemy legislation and the fact that many people spend many years on death row.

The Supreme Court in Pakistan has the power of *suo moto* ('on its own motion') which means that it does not have to respond to a case brought by a litigant or appellant but may instigate and hear a case that comes to its attention through other means. In 2018, there was a proliferation of *suo moto* cases, of which the most prominent were initiated as a result of public mobilisation and uproar (such as the successful appeal by the son of a prominent lawyer against conviction for attempted murder of a young woman)¹⁶.

International Mechanisms

Pakistan is an elected member of the UN Human Rights Council and is a State Party to many of the major international human rights instruments, requiring it to submit periodic reports on its human rights compliance. In 2018, the Human Rights Council adopted the findings of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on Pakistan, noting significant progress regarding many of its previous recommendations and expressing concern about others, such as the continuation of the death penalty and the blasphemy laws. Amongst the 43 CSOs that made submissions to the UPR, many were Pakistani or had collaborated closely with Pakistani human rights organisations. These submissions are published along with the State Party's report and the treaty body's conclusions. While the treaty bodies and the Human Rights Council do not have any power of enforcement, many countries (particularly those that have pledged to maintain high standards of human rights when being elected to the Human Rights Council) wish to see their international profile on human rights regarded in a positive light.

Political Participation

Many of the issues affecting citizens' engagement through mandated (or non-mandated) mechanisms apply to participation in political structures. While it would be naïve to assume that having women or minority members in the National or Provincial Assemblies always leads to progress on the rights of women or minorities, respectively, the converse can be assumed. In the 2018 elections, eight women were elected to the National Assembly on general seats, with another 60 on seats reserved for women. Nine men and one woman was elected onto the National Assembly on seats reserved for non-Muslims. There are no reservations for people with disabilities.

In the Provincial Assemblies, there are 74 women and non-Muslim men in the Punjab Provincial Assembly. Of the 145 members of the KP Assembly, there are reserved seats for 26 women and four non-Muslims. Soon after the inauguration, the Women's Parliamentary Caucus was created, both to promote the interests of the women members and support their taking up of issues of concern to women constituents. The Women in Politics Support

¹⁶ Human Rights Commission of Pakistan – Annual Report 2018

Group supported by the Consolidating Democracy in Pakistan programme (*Tabeer*) is now addressing issues that prevent women from taking part in politics and advocating for change with male parliamentarian allies.

Programmes in Pakistan have demonstrated that mobilising for women or minorities' participation in political structures can be both positive in that it creates avenues for greater take-up of marginalised people's issues and can be catalytic in getting citizens to engage generally with public structures. Under the Aawaz programme, for instance, the trajectory from registration as a citizen then as a voter, then to stand for local government office and to be elected showed women and men in communities that they had a legitimate role to play and that this was attainable.

Barriers

The overriding barrier to effective citizen engagement in Pakistan, evidenced through the literature, field research, political economy analysis and evidence from implementation of programmes is that of a 'trust deficit'. Put simply, citizens have limited confidence that government will provide services to the extent and quality that citizens need; that there are genuine avenues for holding state institutions to account and that those in positions of power (at all levels) are able and committed to work for citizens. This is compounded for poor and marginalised people who see little evidence of sustained improvements, while for others, the investment is widely considered not worth the inconvenience.

Secondly (and connected to the above), the literature (globally and Pakistan-based) and field research shows that the theory of change commonly adopted across development organisations – that increased citizen awareness and access to duty-bearers will inevitably lead to more engagement which in turn will lead inexorably to improved services, greater transparency and more accountable governance – is flawed. Demand-side programmes that focus exclusively or even mainly on stimulating citizens to engage with the government have limited effectiveness, particularly over time. Taking a political economy approach to citizen engagement, by contrast, shows that it is government that needs to have the incentives as well as the capacity, structures and mechanisms in place to engage with citizens.

There is a difference between the barriers to mandated (invited) and non-mandated (non-invited) citizen engagement. While both types are of course contextual, barriers to mandated mechanisms cluster around access and capacity (of both citizens and government), whereas barriers to non-mandated mechanism include the capacity of citizens *and* factors relating to the environment in which civil society can operate.

The following section outlines the main factors that prevent citizen engagement from (a) taking place at all and (b) being effective in Pakistan. It first addresses those barriers experienced by citizens then those experienced by the state, although there is overlap between the two categories.

Citizens' Capacities

- » **Awareness:** To engage through mandated mechanisms with government processes, policies and service provision, citizens first must know that (a) services, policies and processes exist; (b) their entitlement; and (c) the governmental mechanisms through which they may engage. Many development programmes (DFID and others) have increased citizens' awareness. The most successful have done so in an iterative way – by finding out what priority issues citizens are concerned about and using these to build awareness of their rights and how to obtain them – then using this as a catalyst for raising awareness about other rights. This multi-sectoral approach is both better value for money and is more likely to work around the other barriers such as access, literacy or discrimination.
- » In many communities (particularly the most marginalised), citizens state that they are only interested in immediate service-provision issues, rather than underlying governance issues such as budgeting or planning. There is a number of reasons for this. In some cases, a conspiracy of silence exists around more controversial issues such as insecurity, violence against women and girls or intransigent issues such as bonded labour. The sense of futility mentioned above also plays a part here, where citizens may feel that there is no point in even becoming aware of issues that they 'can't do anything about' while power is held in the hands of others. Overcoming this (albeit passive) resistance requires concerted effort that goes further than 'awareness-raising'.
- » Conducting awareness-raising activities does not necessarily mean that awareness is raised. External factors can interfere. For example, mass legal awareness-raising activities conducted under the Enhancing Democratic Accountability and Civic Engagement (EDACE) programme in Pakistan were failing to improve the awareness of the many women who attended the sessions because they were sat at the back. A simple change in bringing the women forward (still segregated from the men) enabled them to hear, ask questions and in turn transmit the information to other women. In another example, the Aawaz Aagahi Centres included 'Resource Persons' whose role included raising awareness about rights and services. It was only after the Centres were relocated

to places where women and minorities could more easily access them and the male ‘Resource Persons’ were replaced with women that attendance reached acceptable levels.

- » Challenging power structures at all levels is crucial to making ‘awareness-raising’ transformative. This is covered in the section on making CE transformative below.
- » In the NMDs, where *jirgas* have functioned as the only source of information and service providers (particularly regarding dispute resolution) and there is poor mobile phone coverage, lack of awareness of the right to complain is significant.
- » Literacy: An illiterate person is almost inevitably excluded from formal citizen engagement mechanisms; she is dependent on others for information about her rights and certainly cannot learn about dimensions of governance such as public financial management. Pakistan’s enduring high levels of illiteracy amongst women and girls and in marginalised communities and sectors of communities constitutes a major obstacle to their engagement with the state. Not being able to read documents, being excluded from print media, even signage in government buildings or to take part in community meetings or workshops that use the written word means that those whose voices are the most in need of being heard are the least likely to be able to engage. Conversely, this also means that those whose voices may *not* represent the community are the ones most able both to engage and to choose what information they transmit back to community members. The UNDP Human Development Report has found that although the national literacy level for Pakistan stands at around 70%¹⁷, there is a significant difference between young people’s literacy in KP and Punjab, particularly taking into account the merger of FATA. The most recent, verified figures indicate that in FATA (as it then was), under 40% of young people could read a newspaper while in KP (without the NMDs) this figure stood at 63%, compared to 73% in Punjab. Girls and young women in low-literacy areas are particularly badly affected, with only 13% of female youth in (then) FATA able to read a newspaper (45.1% in KP without FATA). Even in Punjab, the gender difference remains significant with girls and young women’s literacy 10 percentage points behind that of their brothers. The literacy level of people with disabilities,
- » Illiteracy is not just a barrier to citizen engagement *per se*. The EVA-BHN programme, for example, raised awareness of the right to health through communication materials. An obstacle was faced when the most marginalised interpreted the written communication materials as signalling that health services were only available to the educated, a counter-productive result of efforts to raise awareness (which was eventually remedied).
- » Information: Linked to both literacy and awareness is the discrepancies in information that are available to citizens across the two provinces. As discussed above, despite the Rtl legislation, government structures appear to be slow to adopt any proactive information-dissemination activities. This means that, for instance, decisions about where (or whether) a health facility is to be established; whether there is budget for a wall around a girls’ school; or what local government officials are doing to prepare for conflict vectors such as religious holidays are not available to most citizens.
- » The level and quality of information available to citizens about mechanisms for engagement can vary across sectors and according to demographic factors. For instance, the language in which information is disseminated can be a defining factor. In DFID programmes in Pakistan have also demonstrated how important language is in determining the level of citizen engagement. Many people (particularly those without education) are not fluent in Urdu but speak either Punjabi or Pashto (or even just their own dialects and languages). When only Urdu is used to disseminate information, this both excludes many people directly and signals that the mechanisms for engagement are not really ‘for them’.
- » To receive – and use - information, citizens have to be already participating in public life in some way. A number of factors militate against this, especially for women and girls, people with disabilities and the very poor. Women and girls in more conservative areas are often not allowed out of the home without a male relative, even to meet with other women. Additionally, there is a converse relationship between the level of women’s participation in public life and the prevalence of domestic violence (including so-called honour-based violence). People with disabilities, particularly in rural areas and other areas underserved by government services may depend on family members for all interaction with the outside world, restricting their access to information that they can use independently or at all.
- » Access: Once a citizen has awareness, information, motivation, access can still be a barrier to engagement with the state on issues of accountability for service delivery, public financial management, planning or conflict management. Issues such as remoteness of institutions (particularly for rural citizens), whether a building has

¹⁷ This figure puts Pakistan behind other South Asian countries

disabled access or whether information is easily available about office hours can have an impact along with issues of discrimination and safeguarding (to be discussed below). The simple questions of ‘who do I talk to?’ and ‘will they listen to me?’ can shape the extent to which citizens engage and the likelihood of a citizen making repeat attempts to engage. Consultation with citizens and those that (genuinely) represent them is crucial here – particularly for marginalised people.

Convention and Tradition

As mentioned above, many citizens in Pakistan are accustomed to seeking support, advice, intervention or accountability through local ‘influentials’. In turn, these people are often not representative (particularly of women, minorities, people with disabilities or young people) and will filter the information flows up or down to citizens.

Linked to this, the ‘supplicant’ relationship that subsists in Pakistan shapes citizens’ expectations about the level of engagement that they should have. The idea that people in authority know best and can be relied upon to do what is necessary or that the best way to survive is to say nothing both subsist across both provinces, particularly in rural areas and particularly amongst people who are already marginalised.

Disengagement

Some citizens do not engage in mandated or non-mandated mechanisms, despite being literate and aware, having all the necessary information and facing no barriers to access. While it appears that the ‘inconvenience’ of engaging outweighs the benefits to these citizens, it is perhaps more helpful to frame the phenomenon as one of disengagement. Available literature recognises that, globally, people may feel that there is no point in engaging, as ‘all politicians are the same’ or because ‘nothing changes’, while others may feel that they only need to engage on issues that affect them personally, or for ideological reasons.

Another possibility is that middle-class people have a degree of confidence that their issues of concern will be addressed by the corresponding elites in politics, the media or the law. Interestingly, the Supreme Court in Pakistan has passed judgement on excessive fees for private education although it has not done so to compel the government to provide free education to all children in line with its international obligations.

Violence and Other Discrimination

The literature review found little in the mainstream published body of literature about the experiences of women, minorities or people with disabilities in Pakistan regarding mandated citizen engagement, although there is some guidance that exhorts development organisations to pay especial attention to women or to adopt a gendered approach. This is more likely to reflect the state of available information than to indicate that there are no particular issues facing these groups. Even the global literature is scant regarding women’s engagement and even more so regarding people with disabilities or minority groups.

From the field research, and from programming reports of DFID and other development programmes, however, it is apparent that women and other marginalised groups experience a set of barriers – some of which are specific to the group and some of which intersect. For instance, young people state that their opinion is hardly ever sought and if offered is frequently dismissed. People from religious minorities and the poor (categories which often overlap), are largely excluded from mandated mechanisms for engagement and have little opportunity for participating in non-mandated mechanisms. People with disabilities have reported that they are treated disrespectfully or in patronising ways, discouraging them from participating in either mandated or non-mandated mechanisms. Globally, women’s rights organisations point out that gender-based violence in public places, particularly on public transport or in the street, both deters women from participating in mandated engagement activities and reinforces the male view of what is important in terms of planning, budgeting and service provision¹⁸, even though women’s participation identifies priorities that benefit everyone – such as improved lighting in public places, safe and clean sanitation facilities and more responsive and professional policing.

Women, girls, young men, poor people and people from minority groups (especially where these overlap), are also discouraged from participating in engagement mechanisms by overt discrimination at the point of engagement in mandated mechanisms such as public meetings. This can take the form of harassment, derogatory name-calling or giving precedence to others out of turn, while some citizens can face the threat of violence, loss of livelihood or homes for trying to speak out¹⁹.

Regarding non-mandated mechanisms, direct and indirect discrimination can take place within civil society whereby even rights-based CSOs can ignore or dismiss the views of marginalised people. As stated earlier, many CSOs in Pakistan (as elsewhere - this is not peculiar to Pakistan) are led by people from elite groups who can struggle to

¹⁸ Action Aid 2017: Whose City – the Safer Cities for Women Project

¹⁹ This information comes mainly from the Aawaz, EDACE and *Alif Ailaan* programme documentation.

know how to involve people not in their own image – let alone to have the agenda set or led by people from marginalised groups. who are less used to being heard,

Digital Technologies

Pakistan, as in many other countries, is embracing the opportunities presented by the digital revolution. There is, for instance, an upsurge in data collection, the creation of on-line platforms for engagement and complaint. While these are positive in that they (a) reflect modernisation of Pakistan’s citizen engagement; (b) encourage young people to use engagement mechanisms; and (c) create more reliable and robust means of tracking information – in turn creating better accountability there are significant concerns. These cluster around the following:

- i. Amplification of inequalities: Even amongst young people, phone ownership (particularly internet-enabled) is both an indicator and a predictor of inequality and marginalisation. Significantly more boys than girls own or have access to phones and people living in rural areas (especially the poor, minorities and women) have even less. As access to accountability, to services and to participation becomes more digital, these people’s exclusion will be multiplied.
- ii. Malign uses of digital technology: There is a growing body of knowledge about how digital technology can be manipulated through misinformation, so-called ‘deep fake’ technology and issues such as ‘revenge porn’.
- iii. Safeguarding: Girls and women (and other groups such as transgender and people with disabilities) are increasingly vulnerable to sexual violence or other forms of exploitation. Without adequate protection, it is apparently relatively easy for an organisation or individual to target a user of social media platforms, gain access to personal information given for example through a citizen engagement exercise and use this for exploitative gains.
- iv. Data: As well as the above, the concerns about the collection of data across Pakistan are mainly regarding the use – whether and to what ends the data is being used. The field research found a widely-held belief that data is being collected as an end, rather than a means to improved governance and service delivery and that resources are being allocated to data collection as a relatively ‘easy-win’ rather than into substantive action.

State Capacity

In 2017, in the Voluntary National Review of the Sustainable Development Goals, local government representatives from across Pakistan noted that they needed increased resources (human and financial) and to be empowered politically and administratively to perform their functions, also expressing a commitment to working with communities and citizens to tackle inequalities.

The global literature repeatedly states that ‘demand side’ citizen engagement can only be effective if state institutions have the capacity to be accountable and responsive.

Capacity includes having enough people who are adequately trained and incentivised to put citizen engagement mechanisms into place as well as financial resources. The field research particularly found that in both provinces – with notable exceptions – state institutions (including designated citizen engagement mechanisms) often lack sufficient capacity, which in turn has a negative impact on their motivation to engage citizens. An under-resourced department is less likely to invest time in seeking the opinions of citizens, especially where the officials are not convinced that it is either necessary or important to do so.

Government bodies in both provinces also often lack knowledge and training about how to ensure that citizen engagement includes marginalised citizens. It is easier for an overstretched official who does not fully understand citizen engagement to connect with people in his/ her own image – educated, articulate men (and women) who are accustomed to dealing with bureaucrats than to seek out and pay attention to those further down the social order.

Elected representatives, as mentioned earlier, are also still in need of capacity-building about citizen engagement. As with government officials, those who have come from or are closely linked to civil society are more likely to see the value of citizen engagement compared to those who have been selected then elected by the usual means.

We keep doing the same thing with citizen engagement, yet it doesn’t stick. What can we do to stop repeating the same interventions?
DFID Pakistan staff member
(August 2019)

Financial Flows to Local Government

Public financial management at provincial level, despite efforts and Federal commitment to decentralisation, is still patchy. According to PILDAT²⁰, the devolution of powers and therefore fiscal flows to the local level remains

²⁰ <https://pildat.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/ComparativeAnalysisofLocalGovernmentLawsinPakistan.pdf?>

restricted, although it is at the local level where services are required and delivered and where accountability is needed. This ties the hands of local government officials and representatives and restricts the extent to which citizens can engage in public financial management or budget planning.

Political Issues

The political approach to citizen engagement seems to sit at odds with the purported commitment to make Pakistan more democratic and accountable to its citizens. For instance, the restrictions on civil society (national and international), disapproval of criticism of how Pakistan protects the human rights of its citizens and the apparently politically motivated frequent transfer of personnel from official positions means that public confidence in the government's commitment to effectively engage citizens in decision-making and to be held accountable is likely to continue to be low. It also means that government officials who want to progress up the hierarchy are less open to being accountable – both because it risks exposing failure and as it risks being seen to be aligned with dissenting voices.

Safeguarding

The concept of safeguarding (the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment) is relatively new in Pakistan (although the same cannot be said of the need for safeguarding). Legislation exists in relation to domestic violence and sexual harassment at work, as a result of persistent advocacy by civil society and some government bodies. In terms of safeguarding women, children and vulnerable adults in the course of citizen engagement, however, there are a limited number of options. Issues of sexual violence are considered the remit of the Provincial Commissions on the Status of Women (PCSW) or that of the Ombudsperson. The literature review found nothing written about safeguarding issues in Pakistan or indeed globally in terms of citizen engagement. DFID's own documentation and current emphasis on safeguarding focuses on the work of development practitioners, rather than government or other national organisations through which citizens seek to engage with the state.

From the field research and accepted knowledge across development programmes, however, it is clear that issues of safety – particularly from SEAH – are significant. Women, girls and transgender people have a well-founded fear of sexual violence, while families of women and girls may restrict their public engagement for fear of sexual violence, reputational risks or because they do not trust the girls or women to be away from (male) family members' control. In the Aawaz programme, for instance, getting male family members to accept that women would not lose their reputations (and therefore the family's honour) from being seen in public was a major achievement, particularly in villages where violence against women was highly prevalent. This also means that, for many women and girls, the fear of domestic violence as retribution for participating in citizen engagement is likely to outweigh any benefits.

Nevertheless, the Punjab PCSW has made significant progress despite all the political challenges, with a functioning Gender Management Information System and a women's hotline, established in 2014 with support from the UK-funded EDACE programme – both noted universally as successes. The number of calls to the hotline increases year on year, more likely indicating greater take-up than an increased prevalence in different forms of discrimination. The women's hotline receives an increasing number of calls, including about sexual harassment and other problems women have in accessing services. The Punjab hotline confidentiality provisions are stringent except where the case goes to court.

In KP, the previous PCSW tried to replicate these initiatives under the previous chairperson but there appear to be no plans yet to follow this up.

There is a newly appointed Ombudsman (sic) in KP with a background in the development sector. She has established a dedicated section for women and children, with allocated investigators, officials and consultants, which consider cases on a weekly basis. The Ombudsman is currently trying to establish relevant Anti-Sexual Harassment committees within the different government departments.

Additionally, to tackle sexual harassment at work, following the Protection Against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2010, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has formed four zonal Anti-Women Harassment Committees' in its provincial zones located in Karachi, Peshawar, Lahore, and Quetta. The Committees are comprised of three members, (management, employee and a woman) to help conduct the investigations. The law states that every public and private body is to set up these committees, yet there are very few to date.

The Federal level Citizen Portal app is an avenue by which people can report SEAH directly without having to encounter a bureaucrat or other gatekeeper. The categories of complaints includes 'sexual harassment'. The KP and Punjab portals do not appear to include sexual harassment in the category of cases.

The field research and contextual knowledge of the research team indicates that, apart from the Punjab PCSW hotline, these mechanisms are not yet fully trusted and that women are reluctant to report cases of SEAH. The

negative social norms are such that a woman or girl who reports SEAH is herself stigmatised if the matter becomes public knowledge. The digital portals require registration by CNIC (computerised national identify card) number, name and address, which means that there is no provision for anonymous reporting.

In a similar vein, there is currently no mandated protection for whistle blowers - people who raise issues about SEAH within their own government institution, such as a non-retribution policy or guaranteed anonymity. Global experience shows that whistle blowing is an important means by which sensitive issues such as SEAH can be surfaced, particularly when the victims are themselves reluctant or unable to report.

The law relating to sexual harassment is a major step forward yet has significant limitations. As well as the difficulties for employees to report (including risk of loss of livelihood, reputation and family honour), the law only covers employees. This is not to diminish the importance of tackling sexual harassment in government institutions. It is a violation of the rights and dignity of the affected employee, diminishes women's role in the workplace and perpetuates predatory behaviour. Moreover, a man who sexually harasses his colleagues cannot be trusted to deal professionally and appropriately with women who interact with him as citizens. The limitation does mean, however, that woman or girl who is sexually harassed by a government employee in the course of his business – for instance when lodging a complaint, has no recourse under the sexual harassment legislation but must pursue through the Ombudsman, PCSW (if in Punjab) or court.

Regarding non-mandated safeguarding issues, there are few mechanisms in place to protect women, children and others from SEAH perpetrated by intermediaries such as CSOs, religious leaders or traditional mechanisms. Much donor programming is implemented at the citizen level by CSOs, yet only DFID has yet put in place any rigorous compliance requirement for recipients of funding to adhere to safeguarding standards. USAID and the EC have policies in place that prohibit SEAH to a greater or lesser extent, but DFID is ahead of the others with regard to compliance requirements.

The recent report by DFID's Safeguarding Unit showed what many implementers know – that reporting remains one of the biggest hurdles to be faced in eliminating sexually predatory behaviour. Given the widespread prevalence of gender-based discrimination and the intense scrutiny which most women face on a daily basis in Pakistan (more so in some locations than others), it cannot be surprising that sexual harassment in public and in the workplace is mostly unreported. Despite DFID's spearheading safeguarding efforts, there remains much to be done on, for instance, preventing 'bystander' behaviour by CSOs or community-based organisations when women and girls are engaging with government officials or in ensuring that girls, women and their families know when and how to make complaints.

ENTRY POINTS

In selecting entry points for strengthening citizen engagement with government in Pakistan, there are a number of overriding considerations:

Firstly, it is important to identify those which are already functioning – even with limitations; that can be catalytic for citizen engagement outside of a narrow band of issues or can be replicated and that are not so beset with obstacles as to be unworkable or unsustainable. Sustainability, as referred to above, is perhaps more important now in Pakistan than before, with multiple pressures on citizens and civil society to retreat into service provision or philanthropic mode rather than a human rights-based approach. Increasing the capacity of citizens to engage with state institutions that accept the need to do so is more likely to guarantee longevity of success.

Paramount, also, is the need to ensure inclusivity and that these entry points support the global 'Leave no-one behind' agenda. Entry points that appear successful in a 'business as usual' manner are unlikely to be effective except for a privileged few.

A political economy approach is necessary to choosing entry points. There must be identifiable incentives as well as imperatives. The rhetoric of 'accountability' and citizen engagement is in the ascendancy and Pakistan is keen to demonstrate that it is working directly for citizens. It will be important to choose investments that align with political incentives.

Balancing these three considerations can involve some careful navigation – for instance to understand the incentives for provincial governments to engage citizens on an inclusive basis while protecting their own power bases. There is also a choice to be made in choosing investment for support to citizen engagement, between support to the 'benevolent / supplicant' model of governance or that of partnership between state and citizen. For this reason, it will be important to support those actors who are committed to an inclusive, human rights-based approach while finding entry points to working with those who believe more in top-down approaches.

The choice for development programming is whether to select entry points by sector or type of institution or to choose entry points by approach. In other words, whether to say ‘this institution, not that one’ or to take a more thematic approach into which targeted interventions can dock, according to what is most likely to be effective.

A reason for taking the latter approach is that there is a plethora of institutions with which citizens can and do engage in a multiplicity of ways. In KP alone, there are 38 Standing Committees, while at village level there are committees for issues from *zakat* to education. Pakistan is a bureaucratized country and trying to choose which specific institutions to focus investment risks resulting in a scattered approach across different sectors.

Mandated Citizen Engagement Mechanisms

Local Government

The PTI government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa embarked on an ambitious agenda of fiscal decentralization by promising transfers of as much as 30% of the provincial budget to district governments and devolving structures to the granularity of village-level councils, while PML-N’s strategy in Punjab remained unclear and volatile. In particular the amendment to the LGO in 2016 by the PML-N government gave rise to accusations of micro-management through administrative control of local bodies in an environment where there was virtually no political opposition. In KP, where there is more political competition tensions between political parties led to a rather acrimonious climate. A second layer of tension was created between the bureaucracies and elected representatives in local government, where the bureaucracy did not want to share or surrender control over the development funds. Neither did they trust the credibility or capability of the elected representatives.

In terms of alignment of development priorities in Punjab since there is very little funding directed to district-specific, district-executed development and most of the budget is tied to provincially controlled entities the trends in budget allocation and utilization at the district level are strongly aligned with provincial priorities. Punjab’s service delivery problems are a function of the fragmentation particularly vis-à-vis the role of municipal corporations and their interaction at the tehsil and district level, which is where the main tensions arise.

The Punjab Panchayat and Neighbourhood Councils Act, 2019, provides for village assemblies and Neighbourhood Assemblies to be notified. The assemblies will consist of every resident of the village or neighbourhood and will have the power to call for a meeting with the chair, to have oversight of financial matters, functions and audit. Further, the assemblies have responsibility for promoting ‘harmony and peace’ and to cooperate with the Panchayat or NC to further the purposes of the Act.

Chapter XXVII of the Punjab Local Government Act 2019 on Responsiveness to Citizens Needs sets out the principle of consultation and participation of residents. The minimum requirements are invitation to participation in biannually held general meetings, while public consultation on expenditure, land use planning and introduction of new local taxes is also mandatory.

In KP, elections for the Village and NCs in KP are direct, non-party and joint electorate. The disbursement of funds from provincial to local level stays at 30% and there is precedence in KP for participatory planning.

The entry points for both provinces, therefore (with adaptations as necessary), can be firstly to build the capacity of village and NCs to take the lead in local level planning and budgeting. Training for local people in participatory planning, in public financial management and in monitoring progress are all possible activities. At the same time, there are opportunities for building the capacities of local elected representatives and officials to both operate according to their mandate and to embrace the need for citizen-led planning and budgeting across the different sectors. Amongst the challenges here will be to drive inclusivity, to build the confidence and capacity of women, minorities and people with disabilities to participate; to help those who hold relative power in communities to accept the rights and benefits of inclusion and to build the capacity of local government to be responsive to groups that they are accustomed to ignoring. This will be particularly challenging in KP and so it is recommended to use a ‘progress’ or ‘scaled’ approach, rather than (for example) setting targets for ‘how many issues get resolved by local government’.

A related entry point for supporting local government to engage with citizens is to ensure that they have basic resources and capacities (e.g. human resource management, financial management). This both creates incentives for involvement in activities that engage with citizens and removes obstacles to participatory governance.

Public Hearings

A framework for public hearings exists under the mandate of Parliamentary and Senate Committees. Specifically, the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) is mandated to audit public spending. While there is an institutional mechanism and precedent for citizen participation in public hearings in Pakistan, the reality is that attendance is

strictly by invitation, which is not extended to ordinary citizens, making the hearings really closed events. An entry point here is to work with the Committees, in collaboration with other development programmes, to make the Committees more transparent and to train a cadre of women and men citizens from community levels (not only the provincial capital elite) to attend the meetings with constructive contributions.

This may also prompt more efficient submission of the Auditor General reports, making the proceedings more relevant to the citizen participants. The entry point can be the benefit (as described in the official handbook) to the proceedings of having ordinary citizens participate.

Ombudsmen

Ombudsmen offer perhaps the most obvious example of mandated citizen engagement in Pakistan through which citizens can hold public officials accountable. The “twelve independent Ombudsmen’s institutions at federal and provincial levels, covering issues such as taxation and workplace harassment” are the only set of institutions mandated exclusively for citizen grievance reporting and redress. They provide routes to accountability in two ways: by giving voice to individuals through a mechanism of registering complaints usually against service providers and maladministration, and by “influencing the compact between the state and the service providers.”²¹

However, Ombudsmen can be a fairly distant from citizen concerns and are more likely a last resort for complaint redressal. That only 11% of complaints come from women suggests normative patterns of engagement for marginalized groups such as women apply to this mechanism as well. The 2004 World Bank’s *World Development Report (WDR) 2004*, has also highlighted some of the concerns with the obstacles placed in the path of the Ombudsmen when it comes to the accountability and effectiveness of public service delivery. Noting that the institution in Pakistan is not parliamentary, and has managed to overcome some constraints due only to access to the country’s President and federal bureaucracy in Islamabad, it termed the Provincial Ombudsmen as “outliers” that “may or may not be owned by provincial leaders and have no levers of their own (except the compliance clause in the statutes) for moving the bureaucracy to help the ombudsman.” Thus, it has suggested that the Ombudsman might be working for the people but “without a place in the larger framework of accountability”, thus rendering it potentially a weak institution.

There is an opportunity here, therefore, particularly in KP where the Ombudsman is new, and reportedly keen to engage with citizens and may welcome support, for instance, with regard to women’s use of the mechanism. Adaptation of the model developed in Punjab of the women’s helpline and Gender MIS could be a useful entry point. It will require careful handling, of course, so that addressing ‘women’s concerns’ does not become perceived as Western-led or compromise the Ombudsman’s position.

Right to Information Commissions (Punjab and KP)

For Punjab, implementation of the Rtl and RtS legislation is hindered as reflected in the literature review: “[T]he Commission and other Rtl organizations are under-funded and under-staffed. Moreover, there are little resources to train officials, and to add capacity to government agencies to incorporate Rtl in their work, in addition to issues of poor record-keeping by departments and an overall “culture of official secrecy” that is suspicious of Rtl laws.²²

For KP the Commission has managed to resolve 95% of complaints received. In the case of KP the law covers not only Rtl but also RtS. The laws offer a departure from the prevalent concept of benevolence-oriented treatment of citizens by public bodies by articulating service as a function of rights. This provides an opportunity for organized civil society, outside of the resource and capacity strapped commissions, to use the law as an instrument of advocacy. Projects (such as EVA-BHN) connecting citizen groups with service providers have had some success in organizing advocacy and demand articulation around Rtl and RtS.

Health Care Commissions (Punjab and KP)

The Punjab and KP²³ governments have both passed Acts (in 2010 and 2015 respectively) to establish provincial Health Care Commissions to regulate private and public facilities, and to eliminate ‘quackery’. The Commissions issue licenses to facilities that pass initial stringent checks, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation exercises. They are empowered to carry out investigations of poorly administered facilities and to issue heavy fines, and they may work with other organisations, including community groups, to efficiently carry out their duties. Citizen engagement under the Health Care Commissions is anchored at the local level in Punjab’s Health Councils (PHCs) and KP’s Primary Care Management Committees (PCMCs) that are mandated with funding to monitor and improve the provision of health services.

²¹ <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/apcity/unpan047340.pdf>

²² “Annual Report, 2015-16.” *RTI Punjab*. https://rti.punjab.gov.pk/system/files/Annual%20Report%202015-16_0.pdf

²³ The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Health Care Commission Act 2015 (Act V of 2015). <http://www.hcc.gkp.pk/about.php>

Recent amendments to the law have removed mandated inclusion of citizen's groups in Punjab, so it will be necessary to find out what prompted that change and how to ensure that this is not interpreted as preventing inclusion.

Parent Teacher Committees (KP) And School Management Committees (Punjab)

Across both provinces, the opportunity exists for citizens to be involved in the management of education at the point of delivery (schools). Currently, however, they are ill-attended, dominated by local elites, exercise little or no control over spending and do not consult or involve school students. In KP, the PTCs do receive funds but inconsistently.

Both provinces have mandated citizen's bodies connected to the service delivery points. In KP the PTCs have been receiving funds, however there are no real accountability mechanisms attached to the monitoring of those funds. In addition, there are fears regarding accountability, so spending is inconsistent. Further there are considerable barriers to inclusion in the decision-making of bodies such as the PTCs and SMCs, where local elites have more representation and exercise greater influence. In KP there are also barriers to the inclusion of women and proper representation for girl's schools. An example from a young girl's testimony highlights these dynamics (from research conducted by Soufia Siddiqui for Alif Ailaan):



"In our school, corporal punishment is quite common. It is acceptable for the principal to allow this sort of thing to happen. We even tried to complain about it by calling the government hotline, but it never actually goes through. So, it just carries on. And the people in the PTC aren't like my parents or my friend's parents. They're always people who are...yes, they're from our village, but they are better off, they have more influence so people like my mother won't be allowed in and we have just one PTC for the girls and the boys. There's no separate PTC at the girls' school so how many issues can they even resolve? And I think some of our teachers get money from the PTC, but these funds are never spent on us. Like we really want cold water in the summers, but the water in our cooler is hot...nobody listens to us, even though we really do want to keep going to school happily."

Sub-provincial Institutions

As well as the above structures, both KP and Punjab have a long history of a multiplicity of structures where citizens can engage with local governance, from the village level to Union Councils. Indicatively, these include:

- » In Punjab at the village level: the zakat committees, Khidmat committees, Baitul Mall committees and the health councils (Lady Health Workers).
- » In KP at the village level: the village councils and Procurement committees
- » At Union Council level, the Mushalhtee Council (otherwise referred to as 'government jirgas' (see below))
- » At Punjab District level: The Disaster Management Committee, District Peace Committee, District Empowerment Committee and Prince Control Committee
- » At KP District level, the District Commissioner (DC) holds a weekly forum for 2-3 hours where citizens interact. This is a quasi-mandated mechanism as it is not subject to statute but rather to long-standing practice.

Jirgas

Government jirgas are primarily referred to the Dispute Resolution Committees [DRC] or previously called as Musalahtee Commissions; the body of influentials formed as a result of policy/law. They are formal mechanisms, more visible in KP and act independently as well i.e. beyond government boundaries. Many programs including Rule of Law programs and GBV projects have involved these "government jirgas" in their programs.

Jirgas are formal mechanisms also named the 'Dispute Resolution Committees' (previously *Musalahtee*), consisting of a body of influentials, mandated by law or policy. They are particularly present in KP - serving as a forum for tribal groups to resolve inter-tribe and intra-tribe disputes, local conflicts, and as a mechanism for interaction with the state that was institutionalized in the erstwhile FATA under the former Frontier Crimes Regulation. They also operate extra-governmentally.

Jirgas are organized at various levels (clan, tribe, and region) and have a formalized process of engagement where complainants must make a financial investment or leverage political and social capital within the community to call a Jirga and the decisions of jirgas are generally respected though not always satisfactory. Therefore, jirgas retain an integral position in dispute resolution and conflict management at the community level and are also the main interlocutors for citizens with the state in these districts. There are several conversations on the possibility of converting jirgas into "discussion forum within the parameters of the state using a rights-based (as opposed to an

incentive-based) approach". However, these are conceived externally and do not take into account the political economy of the system.

According to the political economy analysis for this assignment, the population of the Newly Merged Districts in KP are largely unaware of their right to complain. Jirgas have functioned as the only source of information in areas where cell phone service is suspended. While many residents admit dissatisfaction with the system or performance of local jirgas, approaching local jirgas (both at the clan and tribe level) for resolution of complaints remains the preferred channel. The reasons are expediency, tradition, and the informality of the process – but mainly because the system is responsive. Citizens of this region are deeply dissatisfied in their interactions with DC offices, and complained of nepotism, corruption, inaccessibility, and the time-consuming process of taking complaints to an unresponsive office. Certain political representatives are beginning to gain recognition on account of being accessible to the public and taking time to meet people. Most service delivery issues raised through jirgas do end up at formal channels - government or military. People are eager to contact the State and they recognise the political administration and the military as part of the State.

Jirgas can be closely aligned to state law enforcement or dispute resolutions. "There is a strong appetite for this system in KP as almost all the respondents agreed that a hybrid system of jirgas are needed where they are capacitated as well as mandated. Very recently, I met a DRC linked with police station in Swat, KP. The names of the DRC are shown in a poster in the police station and if the person coming to the police station wants, their case is referred to the DRC. Mostly small cases - day to day matters and issues related to women are referred to them. The names of 3-4 women are included in those DRCs but it can be token. Many programmes including Rule of Law programmes and GBV projects have involved these "government jirgas" in their programmes." - Field researcher.

Non-mandated Citizen Engagement Mechanisms

There is a grey area between what we have described as mandated and non-mandated forms of citizen engagement. Strictly speaking, state actors engage in a variety of non-mandated citizen engagement driven by political interests. In these scenarios, successful citizen engagement efforts are usually driven by innovative and powerful personalities. Examples of these efforts include: a) the Jhang-model of proactively soliciting citizen-feedback by a DC, which was eventually upscaled into the Citizen Feedback Monitoring Programme across Punjab; and b) efforts by several DCs/DCOs in both KP and Punjab to establish citizen awareness mechanisms such as Facebook pages for their offices to engage in awareness building and communication with citizens.

As far as non-mandated citizen engagement is concerned, for basic services, such as health, education, variation in successful and sustainable engagement occurs over two axes:

1. **Motivation of the bureaucracy:** Where DCs offer personal championship and have broad-based ties with the community, they will either take the initiative or be receptive to engagement attempts by citizen. The inclusive quality of engagement by DCs or local elected representatives both depends on diversity in their personal networks and links with the community. Reliance on local elites is mainstreamed into the training of the civil administration (whether for information, networking, or expanding functional capability). For instance, before a new police officer receives his first command posting the training includes a module on how to build relationships with identified key actors (local religious groups, traders' associations, bar associations, press clubs, and political 'elders').

In DI Khan District, the District Commissioner maintained work on conflict early warning conducted by local citizens despite lack of resources and continued support from donors.

Level of organization of civil society: As the main functional driver in the demand side, the level of organization of various group categories correlates to the level of interaction and negotiating strength of coalitions, networks, and alliances. Groups are organized around identity-based lines. Successful coalitions built on alignment of core socio-economic and political interests. Some of these include those indicated in Table 2.

Groups described in the matrix above will negotiate targeted interests and raise common concerns either in a coalition or separately through informal means for favourable adjudication by either the local administration, or the local political elite – depending on who has more influence vis-à-vis the issue.

As stated earlier, civil society space has been shrinking for some time. CSOs are tending to self-censor and to reframe themselves away from a 'rights-based' paradigm to one of service delivery or philanthropy. As international civil society (non-governmental organisations) face the threat of expulsion, they are also tending to offer less active support to Pakistani civil society to engage on a rights-based platform.

2.

Table 2 - Civil Society Groupings

Group	Organising Principle	
Traders/business/market associations	Profession/Market (underscored by ethnic lines in Punjab, and tribal lines in KP). Tend to be exclusive along gender, class lines and (in Punjab) religious lines.	Central to negotiation in all regions of Punjab and KP. Due to disruptions in trade and employment in KP, market associations have become chief interlocutors with political elites and Chambers of Commerce.
Religio-Political Groups	Religious Identity (underscored by ethnic divisions). Tend to be exclusive along religious and gender lines.	Have strong links to traders, bar, police, and district administration. Play a more central role in Punjab than in KP
Jirgas	Tribe / Clan / Religion. Exclusive along gender lines.	KP only. Particularly important in the NMDs.
Bar Associations	Profession (underscored by ethnic and religious affiliation in Punjab). Tend to be exclusive along gender and religious lines.	Connected to traders, local administration, police and strongly connected to political elites.
NGOs / Advocacy Groups	Mixed organization. Sometimes issue-based.	Strong ties to community hierarchy, and marginalized groups. Generally excluded from coalitions between religious groups, traders, bar associations, and police. Varied connection to the local administration and political parties.
Community Groups	Mixed organization depending on the level of influence of its core members. Exclusion on gender, class, ethnic and religious lines.	Projects and programmes typically help organize CGs at various levels and tie them in with local NGOs. Social accountability gains depend on the quality of representation and the quality of links with political elites and the local administration.

The implications of this for programming entry points are the following:

The need to be sensitive to national CSOs' assessment of their own situation; the risks they face and the way they can navigate the landscape. If CSOs need to describe their work as sectoral (e.g. if they need to focus on 'health provision' rather than governance), this needs to be trusted and the opportunity grasped to take a rights-based approach (e.g. addressing social determinants of health).

CSOs working at the very local level may be more likely to have the space to operate than those who are more prominent as provincial or national advocacy organisations. In turn, these organisations are more likely to be effective if they work with government structures or at least in support of 'supply' side capacity-building, rather than restricted to solely 'demand' side work. Operating at the local level, where communities and government officials already know each other and where trust is the most important (and easiest lost), is a more effective entry point than only operating legislative or policy reform.

Linked to the above, monitoring work by CSOs (e.g. on the implementation of law and policy) can take the form of working *with* mandated mechanisms, such as supporting School Management Committees to understand the education budget; or supporting communities to work with the local government on development plans.

CSOs can be receptive or indeed committed to the inclusion agenda, while lacking capacity to fully implement it in their own work. Capacity-building of CSOs to – for instance – be youth led or fully gender-sensitive can help them in their work with government mechanisms and contributes to greater sustainability.

Although many CSOs work in areas that are (or can become) affected by violent conflict, there is a remaining need for capacity-building in conflict sensitivity. As with the inclusion agenda, this would provide CSOs with an entry point for working with government mechanisms and communities and mitigate some of the risks entailed in working in more volatile areas.

MAKING CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT TRANSFORMATIVE – LESSONS FROM PROGRAMMES

To be transformative, citizen engagement should lead to sustained changes that can withstand shifts in the political context and that are either institutionalised or build irreversible capacity within civil society. A frequent frustration with development or donor-led programmes is that the impact of citizen engagement (and the engagement itself) can evaporate with the cessation of funding. The following outlines some lessons gathered from the research, illustrated through examples of positive practice in Pakistan and elsewhere. **These examples mostly relate to non-mandated mechanisms.** This is both in recognition that mandated mechanisms are subject to external influences such as shifting political imperatives and that it is the non-mandated mechanisms that are mostly subject to being ‘projectised’ and thus risk losing their effect over time.

Firstly, effective citizen engagement efforts are **designed** with the purpose of bringing about transformative change, rather than regarding engagement as an end in itself. This also requires moving away from the traditional ‘voice and accountability’ trajectory -whereby awareness leads to citizen action, resulting in government responsiveness and sustained change. The most transformative work has demonstrated the following characteristics:

- a. **Repeated and combined interventions over time:** Building citizens’ capacity takes more than a single intervention or exposure to new ideas. It requires repeated, layered capacity-building that is contextually driven (starting where people are at today) and adapted to changes. In DFID’s AAWAZ programme, for example, it became clear that building citizens’ capacities regarding women’s participation in public life required a series of timed, sequenced interventions. A social capacity-building and mobilisation initiative named ‘*Jamhoriyat angan se aiwan tak*’ (From the compound to democracy and back again’) consisted of intensive training on democracy, inclusion, gender-based violence, human rights and gender, conducted with and by women and men at the local levels. The training was conducted in two phases, separated in time to allow participants to absorb and apply their new knowledge which was then built on in the second phase. The training itself built on a foundation of confidence laid by the programme through the *Aagahi* Centres and AAWAZ Forums, which had created space for women’s participation in activities outside the home. Qualitative evaluations showed that the level of knowledge and attitudinal change amongst women and men was sustainable and would lead to women being more able to engage with government at the local level, to register as voters and to make decisions at all levels.

The Rural Support Programmes, AAWAZ, Transforming Education in Pakistan, EVA and the Consolidating Democracy in Pakistan (*Tabeer*) programmes all have relied up a combination of different non-mandated mechanisms for ensuring the sustainability of gains made through citizen engagement. This has meant, for instance, using existing (albeit flawed) government data-bases and data-sets to inform community targeting (*Alif Ailaan*); working with mandated as well as non-mandated structures to bring about policy and legislative change (AAWAZ) and setting up mechanisms for local activists to network with parliamentarians. Under the AAWAZ programme, it was notable that where one intervention had been successful (such as youth circles of influence), others were also more likely to be successful. This could be due to a strong district coordinator / leader, a receptive District official or a history of social activism in a particular district. The lesson here is for programmes to identify the positive factors for each intervention.

A recurring theme throughout the research is that for programmes’ achievements to be sustainable, they need to work with government institutions or mandated mechanisms as well as on the non-mandated, ‘demand side’. Thus, initiatives such as the Advocacy Forums of the EVA programme, the *Alif Ailaan* campaign and the *Aagahi* Centres under AAWAZ designed in connections with the government institutions or mandated mechanisms for engagement. This means adopting a consistent, political economy approach as done through the EVA, *Tabeer* and *Alif Ailaan* programme. The EVA programme used a strategic model of social accountability, whereby it replicated community group organisation around the hierarchy of local administration and built upwards links from service delivery points,

using a combination of different mechanisms. EVA also used Rtl and was able to demonstrate how citizen engagement had benefited the government.

- b. Challenge power structures:** Financial and political power tends to be held at the upper levels of government, whereas the need (and the potential for citizens' engagement) is mostly at the local levels. Programmes that explicitly operate at the local level are more likely, therefore, both to be effective in the immediate term and to have a sustained, transformative effect. A positive example here is the Bait-UI Mal-committee which channels funds down to the local (UC) level. Another is from Swat District. A woman UC councillor was informed by local women that insecurity was a major barrier to their take-up of health services, so she used her position to set up a private, secure area for women attending health facilities. This not only increased take-up (and therefore improved maternal and child health outcomes) but increased trust and confidence in the local governance structures.
- c. Establish entry points at policy / legislative level:** Non-mandated mechanisms such as CSO-led campaigns, social media interventions have had success where they have a clear end in sight and bring together marginalised citizens with academics, parliamentarians, international development partners and government officials. A positive example is the KP government Provincial Health Policy. The process was supervised by the Health Policy Advisory Council, which included representation from elected representatives and the academic sphere as well as civil society and government officials from the Health Services Academy and primary and secondary health providers.

"The opinions, views and concerns from all the quarters of life have been incorporated in this policy, therefore when it was presented to the cabinet it was approved without any hesitation",
Secretary of Health Reforms Unit
(August 2019).

In another example, DFID's 'Transforming Education in Pakistan' programme's *Alif Ailaan* campaign, was designed to bring about change at the policy level, through social mobilisation, with a combination of centralised and local-level interventions. The campaign's Islamabad headquarters focused primarily on the national, high-level discourse in the media and with politicians, while a network of 50 Regional Coordination Officers were responsible for amplifying the grassroots views, which fed into the national discussion.

- d. Design with and for the most marginalised:** This can be transformative not only for the group themselves but for others. For instance, initiatives to mobilise sanitary workers into trades unions both lifted this group (and their families) out of the deepest marginalisation, had a positive impact on the trades union movement and challenged power structures around caste, minority status and poverty. The Punjab Social Protection Authority (PSPA), in another example, has lifted up districts that are lagging behind by reducing the household poverty levels of citizens, in turn building their trust in governance and thus providing an incentive for engagement. The PSPA is also an example of repeated, layered intervention, as it has used the existing data available with BISP and consultations with vulnerable groups, drawing lessons from various other programmes, particularly those involved in the design of the Prime Minister's *Ehsaas* Programme. In the 'Consolidating Democracy in Pakistan' Programme (*Tabeer*), the low level of women's political participation has been addressed by bringing the mechanisms to the women. Recognising that the barriers to women getting their CNICs – let alone voter registration – were predominantly to do with the time and resources it took to get to the registration facilities, the Election Commission of Pakistan, with support from *Tabeer* has instituted a system of mobile registration vehicles, with appropriate staffing for the rural areas and NMDs.
- e. Design locally:** The Sarhad Rural Support Programme has empowered community groups in the form of small organisations (Local Support Organisations). These are self-sustained and are active within the UCs and Districts. now called as local support organizations (LSOs) are self-sustained and have an active presence within their Union Councils and Districts. According to the SRSP Governance lead: "Whenever a new project is conceived or executed, we engage with our old LSOs" to get support for systems, equipment and capacity-building. The GIZ has used a similar model in (then) FATA named the Four Step Leadership Model, that strengthens the capacities of the people, gives them opportunity by developing their linkages and motivates them by giving support through small initiatives/grants at the local level. The four steps are as follows:
 1. Community Mobilization – done by external facilitator
 2. Community Organization- a result of community mobilization
 3. Capacity Building – to formulate committees
 4. Linkages Developments

These models have worked well and have not only sustained themselves but have also provided a non-mandated mechanism for providing an interface between the state and citizen especially on services, as well as using the mandated mechanisms of Rtl and RtS.

Another example is the Early Warning System developed in DFID's AAWAZ programme for conflict pre-emption. In Dera Islameel Khan (DIK), participatory exercises at the local level – again building on the trust, confidence and capacity built by the Aawaz Forums and the Aagahi Centres and following earlier, comprehensive needs assessments were used to develop a District peace map. This map and the methodology for developing the map is still being used by the District Peace Committee to engage with the local police.

It is important to recognise, however, that local level interventions can have limited impact, unless they are linked through clear pathways to provincial or national level structures.

MEASURING SUCCESS IN CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

*'What works, for whom, in what respects, to what extent, in what contexts and how?'*²⁴

Whether or not citizen engagement has been successful – the question 'what does success look like?' depends on the objective of the engagement. This leads to the question 'What does citizen engagement want to achieve?', which in turn can have several answers including:

- » Improved services: In which case questions of attribution arise. Did the service improve as a result of the engagement or other factors?
- » Improved governance processes (e.g. planning and budgeting): This can be measured mechanistically ('Did the plan get delivered on time?') or equitably ('Did the plan promote the needs of women and people with disabilities? Was it conflict sensitive?') and in turn ask 'What difference was made by the involvement of citizens?'
- » Policy change: This is more straightforward (although still beset by questions of attribution) as it is usually clear what went before and after and the policies can be assessed against a set of criteria (preferably agreed with the citizens).

The answer can also be more to do with the process than the result. Were citizens (which citizens?) able to participate / use social accountability tools / strengthen their own organisations?

The literature on citizen engagement²⁵ refers to the need for broader expected outcomes. Logical frameworks are usually designed to define targets and outcomes in relation to baselines and assumptions that relate to the context. Thus, results frameworks must measure:

- » Changes that have occurred in outcome areas (service delivery, public financial management or citizen engagement per se)
- » Impact-level changes such as a reduction in poverty, slavery or exploitation prevalence
- » The means by which programmes have contributed (usually at output or even activity level) to these changes.

In Pakistan's different contexts, measuring success may require different parameters. In some areas, for instance, simply empowering women to leave the house and join a public event is a transformative step forward in citizen engagement, whereas in others success will be more easily measured by concrete improvements in services such as health workers' timekeeping or quality of education received by children.

The choice of baselines is likely to be different across the contexts, leading to a more flexible, 'scale' type of measurement than a target-based set of outcomes. Targets at given times will also need to be measurable against what can be found at any given time, again according to the context. Another way to do this is not to set a target, but, having conducted the baseline, accept that progress is positive and then focus on learning what facilitated that progress or held it back and therefore how it can be supported over the life of the particular programme or in others.

A set of approaches can be used for monitoring and evaluating citizen engagement approaches:

- » **Contribution analysis:** Helps to understand what the intervention / engagement has contributed to the outcome and to track the causal relationship along the results chain (activity right up to impact). This also tests assumptions.

²⁴ Pawson: 2013

²⁵ See for example: Lopez E; Shankland A: IDS 2018

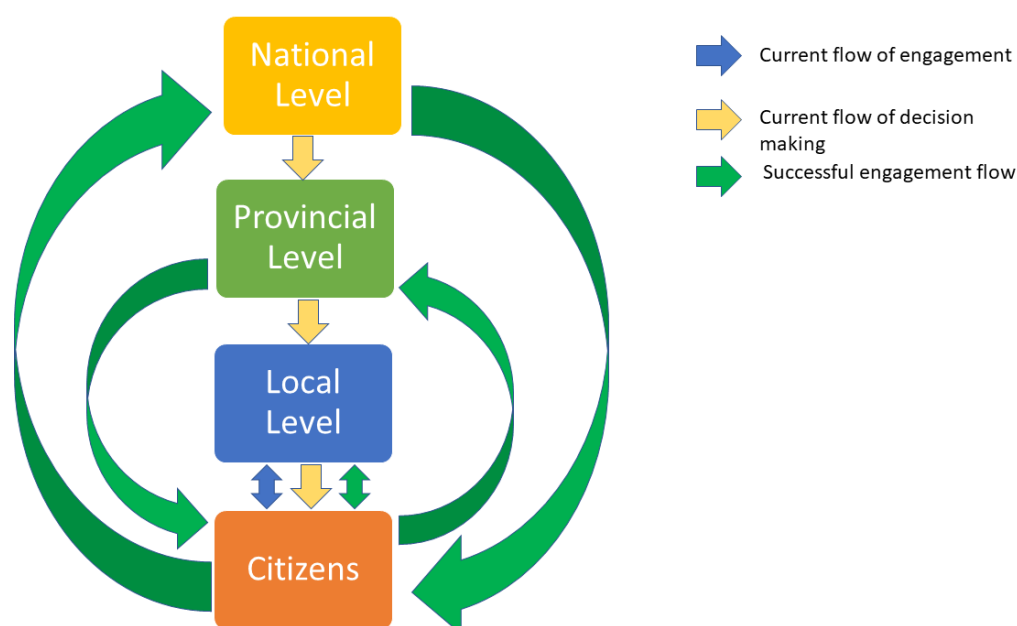
- » **Counter-factual:** Also addressing issues of attribution and contribution, by asking ‘What if this intervention / engagement had not happened?’ This method also tests assumptions by challenging how change has happened as well as who contributed.
- » **Outcome mapping:** A set of tools to monitor the results of a process of change (such as citizen engagement), measured in terms of behaviour change (either amongst the citizens or government institutions or both)
- » **Process tracing:** Explains the relationship between the intervention / engagement and the outcome. Findings can be applied to other interventions – depending on contextual adaptations.

In choosing which (or which combination) to adopt in citizen engagement programming, it is crucial to ask the ‘who’ question. Whose voice is being solicited? Whose voice is being heard? Who is being empowered? Who does the intervention aim to benefit? Who did benefit? The tools chosen for implementing any of the above approaches will be most effective and most sure to capture the ‘equity’ elements by going to the end beneficiaries to find out what changed and their perceptions of how this change happened. It is also important (both for the results and for the credibility of development programming) to survey people in the government institutions and to test results such as those kept as government data (budgets, number of people raising issues, issues resolved satisfactorily, number of visits by government to citizens).

In Pakistan, particularly in the two provinces of KP and Punjab, measurement of the effectiveness of citizen engagement needs to include both inclusivity and conflict sensitivity. In this regard, results frameworks should include specific indicators (both quantitative and qualitative) on the extent to which, for instance, women have been included in citizen engagement initiatives, whether they raised issues, whether those issues were picked up by the government or CSO and whether they were prioritised for attention and resolution. It will also mean measuring whether issues that affect marginalisation (rather than just ‘issues that affect marginalised people’) are raised, escalated and addressed. For example, a citizen engagement mechanism that addresses only local health and education service delivery or issues such as solid waste management may be missing the more pervasive problems of conflict management, insecurity and gender-based violence.

To measure progress in citizen engagement in Pakistan, it is necessary to start from the current position. The graphic below depicts the current state of citizen engagement, whereby engagement takes place at the very local level, but decisions are transmitted from above at provincial or even Federal levels. Even with the advent of digital tools for accountability, the paradigm is still that citizens make complaints about issues they face every day, that get resolved by the relevant institution, rather than effecting policy change.

Measurement of success, therefore, should be at the local level (finding out whether citizens engaged, what they engaged about and what happened) *and* at the levels above. The trust deficit referred to previously is reduced when citizens have evidence that their voices count, that they have influence and that things change as a result. Citizens’ experience of law, policy, budgets and plans is experienced at the local level, so it is here that they need to see the tangible results – but citizens know that decisions come from above and so the trust deficit is reduced further (I.e. engagement is successful) when changes happen at those levels as well as locally.



Citizen engagement interventions – as in the quote above – tend to repeat a certain orthodoxy. While some methods are tried and tested (the schematic of participatory planning, for example), it is also useful to have innovations. This is particularly so in cases such as both KP and Punjab, where both government and citizens' capacity can be very variable. For citizen engagement to be truly effective, it needs to both be innovative and to stimulate innovation. Risk-taking by government institutions (e.g. by prioritising the engagement of youth, or rural women) can be an indicator of successful citizen engagement. It needs to be measured.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This section contains three, overriding recommendations under which sits a set of recommended principles for programming. In turn, these flow down into sub-sets of detailed recommendations. All are referable back to the overriding recommendations.

Overriding Recommendations

1. Shift the Paradigm:

The first overriding recommendation for DFID in how to support citizen engagement in its programming in Pakistan is to shift the paradigm from 'how citizens engage with government' to 'how government engages with citizens'. This immediately moves the discourse away from complaints-based, take-up centred engagement to supporting government and citizens to consider engagement as a partnership. The supplicant / beneficiary – provider / benevolent relationship that subsists across Pakistan and is demonstrated across both KP and Punjab in different ways, only shores up existing power structures and does not lead to sustainable changes in governance.

Taking this approach means (a) being deliberate about citizen engagement across all programmes and (b) finding coherent approaches wherever possible. Breaking away from a 'service delivery' model to a 'governance' and systems approach for citizen engagement means that DFID's sectoral programming can slot dimensions of engagement such as take-up and satisfaction with individual services into a system-wide approach.

This approach also means integrating other approaches, namely (a) political economy; (b) gender and social inclusion; and (c) conflict sensitivity.

2. Focus on The Engagement of The Marginalised

Reflecting the global emphasis on leaving no-one behind and recognising that those who are most marginalised are the ones with most to gain from engagement with government (and therefore the ones who will bring most benefit to government), the second, overriding recommendation is to focus on the engagement of the marginalised. The Pakistani context means that this should focus on the engagement of young people – and within this an emphasis on girls, youth with disabilities, minority youth and youth from poor and migrant communities.

3. Support Civil Society

Global evidence shows that change only happens when explicit, human rights defenders are supported to engage with legislative and policy reform and those responsible for implementing those reforms. The third, overriding recommendation, therefore, is to support civil society, particularly those that are focused on defending women's human rights and the rights of other marginalised groups such as disabled people's organisations and youth-led organisations.

Programming Principles

Invest in Knowing the Context

It is necessary to invest sufficient time and resources to conduct rigorous and detailed contextual analyses, taking into account the differences between (and within) each province. Citizens in the NMDs, for instance, have a different experience of engagement with state bodies from others in KP. In Punjab, also, the barriers to citizen engagement differ between the different parts of the province.

It is recommended that the contextual analysis should be tailored around a three-dimensional matrix of (a) sectors (health, education, public financial management and justice); (b) geographies; and (c) social determinants such as gender, ethno-linguistic group, age and disability.

The contextual analyses should include understanding the incentives, barriers, capacity gaps and bottlenecks faced by officials and elected representatives at all levels.

Gender, conflict and political economy analyses should be conducted at the beginning of each programme, at strategic intervals and should inform continuous programming adaptation.

Gender analysis: This means identifying the gendered incentives and blockages to citizen engagement. Across the two provinces, public engagement, decision-making or debate is often considered to be a male domain, to the exclusion of women and girls. It is essential, therefore, to consult with women, girls, boys and men about what constraints or opportunities they face on a daily basis, which in turn will inform entry points for engagement – and possible intermediaries - that take into account gendered differences. The political economy analysis should be gendered, to understand the gendered perspectives of government office-holders and decision-makers.

Conflict analysis involves understanding the conflict context in which the communities live; including the actors, their incentives and drivers both to conflict and to stability. This will enable programming interventions to take account of the conflict-related factors that may prevent citizens from engaging such a fear of going outside the house; young people’s meetings being targeted by security forces; general withdrawal from public life in a situation of uncertainty and violence. It also ensures that programming does not exacerbate or cause violent conflict.

Political economy analysis of citizen engagement will entail conducting in-depth power and stakeholder and influence analysis to identify the key players (including elites and ‘informal’ power-brokers and gate-keepers) at all levels from Federal to District. Given the strength of the bureaucracy in Pakistan, it is particularly necessary to include technical staff and other officials in the political economy analysis.

Sectoral: Using programming sectors as an organising tool for contextual understanding can help to understand how people prioritise issues and what mechanisms they currently use (or do not use) and can identify programming entry points. Enquiring about sectoral issues also surfaces blockages or bottlenecks to citizen engagement. For instance, where the men in a village show lack of interest around maternal health provision, this can be either because they are disengaged from their wives’ welfare or that they do not want to expose the fact that they are too poor to pay the health worker’s demands.

Theories of Change

Programmes should use the above investment in contextual knowledge to shape programmes’ theories of change – whether they are geared towards ‘voice and accountability’ or ‘citizen engagement’ *per se* or towards a particular sector. In either case, it will be important to thoroughly interrogate the ‘so what’ moment to ensure causality between citizen engagement, accountability and the overall objectives (be they improvements in service delivery, governance or stability).

To do this, the theory of change will need to articulate and test underlying assumptions. For instance, a programme may have an assumption that strengthening citizens’ awareness of their legal rights leads to greater take-up of formal justice mechanisms; or that convening ‘town-hall’-level *khuli katcheries* will lead, through increased communication, to improved relevant services. The reality in these and other cases is likely to be that these assumptions only hold true if supported by interventions aimed at behaviour change amongst state institutions; and/or that those who most need the services (justice or otherwise) are in fact those least likely to use them, for reasons of marginalisation and poverty, rather than awareness or voice.

Demand and Supply

Linked to the above, it is recommended that each citizen engagement, social accountability or voice and empowerment initiative is mirrored or matched by initiatives to build public confidence in the supply of services, governance structures or processes. Specifically to Pakistan:

- I. Focus on the local level suppliers and duty-bearers: Citizens’ experience of the state at every day, local level, determines their trust in government at all levels. If they perceive services to be out of their reach or state agents to be discriminatory, corrupt or heavy-handed, their level of engagement with the government on any issue will be compromised.
- II. Transparency is key: To ensure that citizens are prepared to engage; that they consider it worth the cost (particularly for the marginalised who have less disposable time and money), state institutions need to be supported to be transparent about changes, and to make sure that communication is accessible to all, including the illiterate, extremely poor or rural populations.

Mainstreaming

Linked to the above recommendation on supply and demand, it is recommended that DFID considers mainstreaming citizen engagement across programmes in the health, education and justice sectors, as well as those in public financial management, legislative strengthening or peacebuilding. In Pakistan, this will entail investing programme resources into building and supporting social accountability mechanisms ‘as standard’. Mainstreaming citizen engagement across DFID programmes could build synergies, maximising read-across and value for money by, for instance, using civil society organisations that are trusted in (and accessible to) communities

and – importantly – marginalised members of those communities to learn what different citizen engagement mechanisms can be replicated or borrowed across sectors or development issues.

It is further recommended that DFID strengthens sectoral programmes and teams by docking components of its citizen engagement programmes. This also means that even stand-alone engagement programmes have a sectoral ‘home’ to achieve and sustain concrete objectives. It is also recommended that DFID programmes publicise ‘quick wins’ so that the benefits of citizen engagement can be recognised by governments and communities.

It is recommended that DFID programmes conduct strategic, non-mandated citizen engagement interventions in order to address contentious issues such as gender-based violence, conflict prevention or youth participation. Events such as *peace melas*, women’s festivals or youth talent shows, to which decision-makers and service-providers are invited, can put these issues on the agenda ready for more policy-level activism or use of mandated citizen engagement mechanisms²⁶.

To support the mainstreaming of citizen engagement and its potential for synergies across DFID programmes, it is recommended that a **citizen engagement reference group** be established across DFID (and BE) Pakistan.

In order to create a coherent approach to citizen engagement across DFID, it is recommended that programme teams identify **joint indicators** for results frameworks (across sectors, thematic areas and geographies). A shared indicator for programmes would underscore the need for citizens to be engaged by government across all sectors.

Evidence and Learning

It is recommended that DFID considers innovative ways of gathering evidence on citizen engagement. This could include extrapolating from small samples²⁷ or using peer research which takes advantage of the access that marginalised people have within their own communities to in collecting data about citizen engagement across different mechanisms and sectors²⁸.

Ensuring that programmes, government, civil society and citizens can learn from the practice of citizen engagement requires specific expertise, both on how to collect and use evidence for learning and on the Pakistani context.

Focus on Particular Groups - Especially Young People

It is recommended, that DFID Pakistan citizen engagement efforts be focused on – and measured by – the engagement of young women and men, girls and boys, from design to evaluation and adaptation. Within this, the focus should be on youth from marginalised groups, to ensure the best representation and to reflect the leave no-one behind agenda.

Focusing on youth is inclusive, not exclusive. Young people are female as well as male, have disabilities, are from minority groups, are transgender, poor, migrant, rural, illiterate and share every other marginalised category of adults. It does not mean that adults from marginalised groups are excluded, as when mechanisms are effective for engaging young people from marginalised groups, adults also benefit. Making decisions at programme design and development stages to prioritise the engagement of youth, is therefore not only an imperative (the ‘right thing to do’) but also as an instrumental means of achieving objectives.

Consultations should continue to be held with other groups, especially those who have experiences that the youth will not yet have faced (such as being the parent of children at school or having multiple health problems as a result of poor maternal health provision).

Citizen engagement programmes, sectoral and governance programmes should focus on identifying the barriers to government engaging youth from all communities and take deliberate steps to overcome these barriers.

This focus will entail:

- » Bringing in specific expertise on youth – and specifically marginalised youth - to programmes at the earliest possible stages
- » Ensuring the capacity of the programme team and its down-stream partners to effectively address the barriers to youth’s engagement with government
- » Targeted advocacy with government personnel (politicians and technical staff) on the benefits of engaging with youth

²⁶ Laurel Weldon, S and Htun, M: Feminist Mobilisation and progressive policy change: why governments take action to combat violence against women. *Gender and Development* 2013

²⁷ Holz S, 2019 Everyday negotiations and choices of formal and informal dispute resolution and settlement in Pakistan

²⁸ Unpublished reports from Building Resilience in Civil Society in East Africa (Foreign and Commonwealth Office)

- » Including the engagement of youth in results frameworks (going beyond simple disaggregation at output level by measuring along lines of marginalisation at outcome level)
- » Consulting with marginalised citizens on all issues. For instance, not ‘ghettoising’ people with disabilities or youth into consultations about ‘disabled issues’ or ‘youth problems. People who are marginalised hold information and opinions about all aspects of life and can contribute perspectives that are more illuminating than those of their more privileged counterparts.

Safeguarding

The following recommendations will take DFID and its suppliers beyond minimum compliance and set standards for government and civil society counterparts in preventing and responding to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH).

- » Ensure that each programme, implementing organisation and downstream partner has adequate capacity to address safeguarding issues. This should include training of all teams and a dedicated, safeguarding point-person with sufficient standing to raise issues and make representations on safeguarding issues. Implementing organisations should be required to demonstrate that they are (at least) working towards a culture of safeguarding.
- » Ensure that all contractors, CSOs and down-stream partners know what to report and record, how to investigate (or refer for investigation) and how to protect the identity of victims / survivors.
- » Provide adequate resourcing for safeguarding, in line with the recommendation from the International Development Committee that DFID provide resourcing for safeguarding in all programmes where there is a safeguarding risk.
- » Require each DFID contractor to have policies and procedures in place for anonymous, accessible reporting of SEAH. Ensure that the reporting mechanisms are accessible to citizens and officials in rural as well as urban areas, in appropriate languages.
- » Incorporate safeguarding into the results framework.
- » Incorporate SEAH into risk management, with stringent mechanisms for escalation and reporting
- » Ensure a no-retribution policy and protection of whistle-blowers. This is particularly challenging where communities are close; measures need to be in place to encouraging reporting or the raising of concerns. A system of ‘after-action reporting’ helps to ensure that victims/ survivors and whistle-blowers are protected

Research Needs

Gaps remain in the evidence – particularly at the sub-Provincial level and particularly regarding marginalised groups. It is recommended, therefore, that DFID commission or conduct research into the following areas:

Women and Girls

Barriers to women and girls’ engagement are deeply gendered, but existing literature seems, by and large, to be ‘gender -blind’ or even indifferent to exclusion of women from citizen engagement – whether mandated or non-mandated. Little information exists particularly at the granular level about the specific barriers that women and girls face, or the mechanisms (mandated or non-mandated) that they do use²⁹. There is a need for particular research what is effective in mobilising and empowering women to engage both with mandated and non-mandated mechanisms. In conducting such research and in mobilising government institutions to engage with women and girls. This research needs to reach women who are multiply marginalised such as women from minority groups or women with disabilities.

Other areas of interest could include the relationship between women’s engagement and prevalence of violence (particularly domestic violence) or the relationship between women’s marginalisation and exclusion from public participation and conflict indicators.

²⁹ In Afghanistan, research has shown that women are more likely to engage with Islamic dispute resolution than tribal structures as the former are more likely to view them as individuals compared to merely a vessel of the family’s (male) honour as in traditional fora. (Ladbury, 2010, unpublished)

Youth Engagement

There remains a need for youth-centred, positive research on how young people do and could engage as citizens. Some research was done by the Rapid Response Fund under the Aawaz programme and there are organisations who are well-placed to conduct this research. It is recommended, therefore, that specific research is conducted to understand the barriers faced by young people and the mechanisms that they use and to understand how government institutions (and civil society as intermediaries) can engage more effectively with young people.

In order to meet the additional imperative of capacity-building, it is recommended that DFID commission research that supports a cadre of young women and men from different groups (including those who are multiply marginalised) in designing and conducting research into youth engagement and the effect this has on services and governance.

Safeguarding

As is apparent from the literature review and the field research, there is a dearth of literature or research about how government institutions do (or could) protect those seeking to engage from SEAH or other forms of violence or harassment (e.g. on racial / religious grounds). It is recommended that an in-depth research is conducted across both provinces to identify opportunities and barriers to safeguarding associated with citizen engagement.

Digital Technology

Technology is often hailed (especially in Pakistan) as the solution to citizen engagement issues. Portals, e-government initiatives and the use of social media as a non-mandated mechanism are widely celebrated as facilitating quick, cheap and accessible means for citizens to engage with government. On the other hand, global research explains that digital technology can be a means by which marginalisation is amplified, discrimination is embedded and social control consolidated. It can even be harmful, such as through the use of misinformation through digital means – especially those with limited means of triangulating information.

It is recommended that research is conducted into the positive and negative effects of digital technology. To be useful, it will need to be highly contextualised across the two provinces and according to different social groups.

Annex 1

Key Informant Interview List

FIELD RESEARCH

ANNEX 1

Key Informant Interview List - Redacted

Annex 2

Literature Review

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TECHNICAL SUPPORT – SARAH MAGUIRE

ANNEX 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Executive summary

This literature review provides oversight of key findings from international and regional work on citizen engagement, as well as Pakistan specific evidence. The review avails a diverse set of sources, including reports by development agencies and governments; journal articles; blogs and newspaper articles; and project websites. Sources were identified using online searching techniques, snowballing methods, and obtaining recommendations from experts. The search led to a preliminary assessment of over 100 sources, of which nearly 90 were considered relevant. Of these, 66 were ranked as strong, medium or weak based on their capacity to respond to the research questions.

Conceptual Framework

What is meant by citizen engagement: The literature on citizen engagement as a concept shows that it has evolved as part of a series of ideas that seek to foster and enhance the participation of local communities in development projects, from their planning and inception, to their implementation, and beyond. The assumption behind this practice, as discussed in the literature, is that local knowledge and activism can enable development practitioners and governments to have a better idea of what works in different contexts, and thus create effective implementation strategies and structures of accountability, as well as engendering sustainability through an involved citizenry. There are a number of definitions of citizen engagement, depending on the sector to which the discussion applies, and the type of engagement being sought. The core concept, however, remains the same: involvement of the beneficiaries of projects or activities, in designing projects, implementing them, creating accountability, and providing feedback.

Types of citizen engagement: Citizen engagement can take many forms including public meetings, surveys, feedback mechanisms, community-based projects, citizen committees or digital engagement. The several methods for incorporating citizen engagement processes in a project or activity depend on the expected outcomes and intents. If the aim is to enhance “deliberative democracy” and hone political processes, then for instance “public deliberations” are regarded as effective platforms as they can enable a discourse of politics responsive to the needs of citizens at local and national levels. If the aim is to create structures of accountability, the process of citizen engagement has to be more complex. A key distinction in types of citizen engagement is between mandated and non-mandated systems, where the former refers to forms of engagement or institutions set up mostly by government, specifically to promote consultation with citizens, or to address grievances; and the latter refers to systems that have come about through customs and traditions, or simply because people found that they work. Much of what is discussed in the literature is the mandated form – institutions or processes set up for the purpose.

What makes citizen engagement effective: Successful citizen engagement requires initiatives at different levels – including legal structures, community programs, and local governments. Among other things, the literature argues that engaging with communities and individuals is more effective if done at local levels. The World Bank’s Global Partnership for Social Accountability (GPSA) highlights a need to harness local political and social contexts into interventions that seek to engage citizens in policies and activities regarding their development. Similarly, Goetz and Jenkins argue, citizen engagement is considered to be “the cornerstone of local government.” In a 3IE systematic review on participation and accountability, the authors found that even “short route” initiatives that bring together service providers and users lead to improvements in access to and quality of services and direct engagement is what causes changes to the benefit of citizens.

Challenges and Obstacles: Some of the challenges to effective citizen engagement identified in the literature include the lack of an enabling environment, as well as demand and supply side issues such as citizens’ lack of awareness of rights and information about services, opportunity costs and lack of incentives for participants, capacity issues of governments, hostile reactions from authorities, perceptions of authority being compromised, and elite capture of services and development initiatives from amongst citizens. A major concern is timing, in that planning for effective projects and service delivery programs needs to allow for sufficient time to accommodate and then incorporate citizen inputs, which need to be sought at the very start of the process.

Where citizen engagement has not worked: The literature addresses instances where citizen engagement has not worked. Some key lessons from these experiences relate to the finding that providing information and raising awareness among citizens is not enough without changing power structures; bottom-up monitoring is often not incisive enough; and local elites often end up taking over community-driven development programs. Other studies find that lower tiers of government have such little capacity that more innovative ideas are needed for citizen engagement, which are best implemented by NGOs. Thus, building the right community and intermediary organizations is what is needed.

Citizen engagement and inclusion: Unless inclusivity is pursued by those organising engagement, there is a strong possibility of elite capture taking place of consultations, which can skew the whole engagement process. Women's inclusion, for example, is important because as a UNDP and UNIFEM study states, women need basic services more than men, and face discrimination since childhood when it comes to availing opportunities. Similarly, a World Bank report points out that if women are elected to policy-making positions, the subsequent decisions are more likely to reflect the priorities of women, children, and marginalized groups. The literature on citizen engagement on the part of marginalised groups such as ethnic or religious minorities is limited, but studies suggest that states should encourage representation of minorities, if necessary by legislative action; and set up institutions to ensure that their voices are heard.

Citizen Engagement in Pakistan

Citizen engagement is not very significant or widespread in Pakistan. However, some studies highlight reasons for optimism, including constitutional developments that bring governance structures to local communities, and political movements and the role of media that heighten public engagement with matters of social change. Some government-initiated mechanisms for citizen engagement in Pakistan include hotlines for service complaints or to report incidents of abuse; Ombudsmen's offices which deal with complaints against government functionaries; and the formation of Right to Information Commissions, as well as a Right to Services Commission, to help citizens gain access to government documents.

Donor funded programmes have also attempted to establish interfaces for citizen engagement. The DFID funded AAWAZ, for example, facilitated meetings between citizens and district and government officials, which helped to engender trust and confidence in government institutions. Some key lessons from the programme with regard to citizen engagement included the need for governance systems that have the capacity to engage citizens; and the finding that ordinary people will interact with government agencies, if they are given the right platforms, information, and capacity. Another DFID funded project on citizen engagement through devolution found that the participation of women and marginalised groups has to be a special focus of citizen engagement programmes and yields dividends as these groups often raise pertinent issues which would otherwise be lost. The Sub-National Governance programme, also funded by DFID, found that citizen engagement works best when public officials are fully on board. Similarly, Alif Ailaan's experience indicates that a strong research base provides a good basis for engagement with the government. There is relatively little information on non-mandated systems of citizen engagement in donor funded programmes, but the UNDP's Rule of Law project was unique in that it served to strengthen institutions such as Bar Associations and trained para-legals embedded in communities, thus supporting non-mandated citizen engagement systems.

Although more avenues for citizen engagement are now available in Pakistan, the exclusion of women and marginalised groups from such processes remains an issue. For other traditionally excluded groups, such as youth, trends are changing as youth are now politically aware, volunteering, participating in politics as candidates, and being part of political, economic, and social decisions. In general, some of the typical challenges to citizen engagement in general are more pronounced in the case of Pakistan, including state resistance, lack of capacity of state institutions, and participating local elites being unrepresentative. There are also specific challenges of marginalized communities not reached out to, women's voices remaining side-lined, and a lack of trust preventing citizens from working with public officials. Even though several laws and structures in Pakistan seem to support citizen engagement – such as anti-corruption bodies and right to information acts – they are often unclear and there is not enough information available for people to make use of them. Moreover, internal security is a huge challenge to social accountability, and cultural and social norms and volatile law and order situations also pose challenges.

Conclusion

The key takeaways from the literature review include the following.

Engagement should be context specific to be effective: Strategies for citizen engagement should be contextualised and realistic, and should aim to solve specific policy problems.

Engagement should be an ongoing process and should begin when investment or service provision is conceived: If citizen engagement systems are in place for a variety of interventions, it is easier to put them into play when new initiatives are being planned. Also, getting marginalised groups involved at the initial stages can yield dividends.

Providing a legal and policy framework is crucial: Citizen engagement works best when there is a legal, institutional and policy framework to support it.

Technology offers a range of possibilities: However, for the potential of technological developments to be harnessed, their use should not be limited to feedback and grievance redress alone. Rather, the opportunity to create more inclusive engagement structures through digital technologies needs to be explored.

The engagement of women, minority groups and youth has not yet been given the attention it deserves – either in citizen engagement initiatives or in the available literature: In Pakistan, as in other countries, although the effective participation of women and other marginalised groups is broadly accepted as (at least) a benign social good, there has been little emphasis on making this a reality.

INTRODUCTION

The UK Department for International Development (DFID) defines citizen engagement as mechanisms for voice and accountability “that lead to public-involving, citizen centred collaborative public management.”³⁰ This literature review provides oversight of key findings from international and regional work on citizen engagement, as well as Pakistan specific evidence. As required, it assesses findings from the literature in conjunction with key DFID programme documents, particularly for programs on health, education, public financial management, and conflict resolution or peace building, where such documents are readily available. It also highlights the gaps in literature that need to be addressed, and provides a deeper focus on certain key and emerging aspects of citizen engagement. Finally, it offers some conclusions based on the review of the literature. Since the purpose of the exercise is to develop an understanding of citizen engagement that can lead to more informed and effective practices of engaging communities in Pakistan, the sources used are mostly relatively recent.

Methodology

This review avails a diverse set of sources, including (i) reports by development agencies; (ii) reports by governments; (iii) journal articles; (iv) blogs and newspaper articles; and (v) project websites. It retrieved sources and data using the following approach:

- **Online search** through the Google database;
- Searching for relevant **journal articles**;
- **Snowballing method**, using the existing literature;
- **Meta-assessments**;
- Reaching out and obtaining **recommendations from experts** and practitioners in the development sector.

Given the breadth of the subject, it was decided to structure the online search to reflect the two broad themes covered in the review, i.e. conceptual understanding of citizen engagement (using mainly global and regional sources); and citizen engagement in Pakistan. In order to address the questions, the following phrases were used to search for the available literature on the topic and retrieve relevant sources:

- Citizen engagement;
- Social accountability;
- Voice and accountability;
- Community participation.

The same phrases were also used to search for Pakistan-specific material. Based on the search, general studies on the subject and specific studies for Pakistan were read and assessed for their relevance. Studies that provided an understanding, historical trends, and overview of challenges and potential of citizen engagement were used for the section on conceptual understanding of citizen engagement. Many of these were not focused on Pakistan, and some were only interested in the concept of citizen engagement rather than its experiences. Some important studies provided references that added further sources for the review. In addition, the websites of some donors and development organizations (such as the World Bank and DFID) and government departments (such as the Ombudsman’s office) were used to obtain relevant information for different aspects of citizen engagement. Given the paucity of literature on Pakistan specific citizen engagement, this snowballing method was useful. In addition, the reviewers reached out to experts in the field to further inquire about any important sources that may have been missed. The names of these experts are listed in Annex A. Their recommendations added to the literature on Pakistan, especially on issues of youth engagement and social accountability in government projects.

Rating of the Literature

Following an extensive search that led to a preliminary assessment of over 110 sources, a total of 86 sources were selected based on their relevance for the review. Of these, most of the 20 sources that include newspaper articles, project websites, and World Bank and other blog posts, were considered strong because they were in line with the aims of the literature review and offered key insights into citizen engagement activities in Pakistan. These have not been ranked. The remaining 66 sources, including journal articles and research reports, were ranked (as weak, medium, or strong) based on their relevance to the purpose of the literature review, and the breadth of details they provided to respond to the research question. Studies that offered little beyond discussing aspects of the history of citizen engagement, for instance, are rated ‘weak’ for the purpose of this review, even if they have been influential.

³⁰ DFID Terms of Reference: Citizen Engagement in Pakistan.

The ranking is listed in Annex B. The table below shows the nature (i.e. type of source), scope (focused on conceptual/international or Pakistan-specific material), and rating (strong, medium, or weak) of the literature.

Table 1: Rating of sources

Source Type	No. of sources	Scope		Strength of source		
		International	Pakistani	Weak	Medium	Strong
Book	1	1			1	
Journal Article	13	7	6	6	5	2
Research report by NGO/Think Tank/Government	45	30	15	6	16	23
Project/Government Websites	14	2	12	1	4	1
Newspaper Articles/Blogs	13	2	11			

Section 2 of this review looks at what the literature says about the context of citizen engagement, and gives a brief history, as detailed in the literature, of how citizen engagement has evolved in international development. Section 3 focuses on the literature on citizen engagement in Pakistan and relates it to citizen engagement in government institutions as well as how engagement has been affected through selected voice and accountability and service delivery programmes. The last section lays out the broad conclusions from the literature.

Identification of Gaps in the Literature

The subjectivity in understanding and implementing citizen engagement, and indeed the multiple names it continues to be known by, leads to disparate studies that tend to focus on particular aspects, for instance, the use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT), or digital technologies as they are now known. Moreover, a focus on what *has* been done as part of citizen engagement, means that critical studies of what is *not* achieved under the domain of engagement are few and far between.³¹ As a result, there are noticeable gaps in the literature when it comes to the inclusion of women or marginalized groups. Broader studies on the other hand are more abstract and attempt to define concepts and practices for the purposes of a donor's or a government's activities in a country. Partly this is a natural result of (i) the absence of neat models for citizen engagement that can be translated in different regions and for different kinds of projects; and (ii) the different types of citizen engagement processes that are required for different forms of service provision.

CONTEXT AND CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW

The literature on citizen engagement as a concept shows that it has evolved as part of a series of ideas that seek to foster and enhance the participation of local communities in development projects, from their planning and inception, to their implementation, and beyond. The assumption behind this practice, as discussed in the literature, is that local knowledge and activism can enable development practitioners and governments to have a better idea of what works in different contexts, and thus create effective implementation strategies and structures of accountability, as well as engendering sustainability through an involved citizenry. Moreover, this can, in principle, lead to efficiency and reduced wastage of resources. It is noteworthy that much citizen engagement (in its various forms) in developing countries has come about almost exclusively as a result of development interventions means that the bulk of the literature is concerned with donor-led initiatives. Much of the documented evidence, therefore, focuses on how successful development projects have been in stimulating citizen engagement with their own work as well as with government.

Definitions

Early literature from the 1990s on what is now known as citizen engagement focused on the use of participatory rural appraisal (PRA) techniques to consult with communities on development interventions.³² Subsequently, citizen

³¹ An important exception is Gaventa and Barrett (2010) which is discussed later in this review.

³² Robert Chambers, "The Origins and Practice of Participatory Rural Appraisal", *World Development*, Vol. 22, No. 7 (1994), pp. 953-969.

engagement has been defined in broader terms – going beyond grassroots development processes. Transparency International, for example, defines citizen engagement as “the activities of private citizens that seek to influence public decision-making processes which affect their lives and their communities.”³³ In another report, the same organisation notes that it is an essential aspect of open and inclusive governance, and that different formats and names, including citizen participation and social accountability, all broadly refer to the same overall notion of citizen engagement.³⁴

Using the alternative nomenclature of ‘social accountability’, Jonathan Fox explains the concept of engagement as strategies that “try to improve institutional performance by bolstering both citizen engagement and the public responsiveness of states and corporations.” Highlighting that this includes multiple interventions and practices, Fox argues that it is especially important in societies with weak or unresponsive representative governments. As an umbrella concept, social accountability in this regard includes interventions such as citizen monitoring, public complaint and grievance redress mechanisms, and the inclusion of citizens in decision-making such as in participatory budgeting.³⁵

Arguing that most social service delivery issues in developing countries come from governance-related problems, Seema Thomas and Ghazia Aslam note that citizen engagement and participatory approaches to development offer means to empower citizens to hold governments responsible. They also highlight several terms that denote the concept of citizen engagement, including citizen participation, civic engagement, or community driven development, and primarily use the World Bank’s definition of the concept as “the two-way interaction between citizens and governments or the private sector ... that gives citizens a stake in decision-making with the objective of improving the intermediate and final development outcomes of the intervention.” This, they continue, includes consultations and collaborations, and mechanisms such as focus groups and satisfaction surveys; community scorecards and participatory budgeting; and social audits, citizen report cards, information commissions, and ombudsmen.³⁶

As the range of definitions show, how citizen engagement is defined and implemented depends on the sector and the sort of engagement being sought. The United Nations has defined citizen engagement in the context of public administration as the “involvement of citizens in decision-making process of the State – through measures and/or institutional arrangements - so as to increase their influence on public policies and programmes ensuring a more positive impact on their social and economic lives.”³⁷ Other definitions will vary accordingly, even as the core concept remains the same: involvement of the beneficiaries of projects or activities, in designing projects, implementing them, creating accountability, and providing feedback.

While all the major multilateral organizations in the field of development have incorporated citizen engagement in their own processes, the World Bank (WB) has arguably emphasized it most actively and it is worthwhile to briefly discuss its approach to the concept, given the Bank’s influence on borrower governments who tend to follow its example in implementing public investment works and the role of the WB as a funding source for governments’ own work. One of the most important documents in the backdrop of current interest in citizen engagement is the World Development Report 2004, which has provided the theoretical framework for the WB’s extensive work on engaging communities in its projects since, and in its efforts to enhance accountability.³⁸ The World Bank in fact, has committed to integrating citizen engagement in all its projects in forms such as through beneficiary feedback, wherever beneficiaries can be clearly identified. In its 2013 and 2014 strategies, it sought to track progress in projects through a “citizen-oriented design,” i.e. with at least one citizen engagement mechanism in the activities.³⁹ The categories on which the Bank evaluates the success of citizen engagement in its projects include: consultation, collaborative decision-making, obtaining and reporting on citizen inputs, grievance redress mechanisms, citizen monitoring, and citizen capacity building.⁴⁰ Recognizing that there can be no one-size-fits all model for citizen

³³ José María Marín, “Evidence of citizen engagement impact in promoting good governance and anti-corruption efforts,” *Transparency International, U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre*, January 2016.

³⁴ Marín, “Evidence of citizen engagement impact,” January 2016.

³⁵ Jonathan Fox, “Social Accountability: What does the evidence really say?” World Bank GPSA Working Paper No. 1, September 2014.

³⁶ Seema Thomas and Ghazia Aslam, *Citizen Engagement in the Water Sector – A Guidance Note*, Global Partnership for Social Accountability, January 9, 2018. https://www.thegpsa.org/Data/gpsa/files/field/documents/ce_in_water_sector_-_note_full.pdf

³⁷ “Working definition for the United Nations Public Administration Country Studies: Citizen Engagement Research And Content Development Methodology,” *UNPACS [DATE]*.

³⁸ Tom Kirk, “Citizen-led Accountability and Inclusivity in Pakistan,” *Justice and Security Research Programme Paper 20* (Theories in Practice Series), December 2014.

³⁹ “Engaging Citizens for Better Development,” *Independent Evaluation Group, World Bank* (2018).

⁴⁰ Anjali Sah and Rachel Nadelman, “World Bank Operationalization of Citizen Engagement in Project Design: A Pilot Assessment of the Pakistan Portfolio,” *Accountability Research Center (ARC) at American University*, January 2, 2018.

engagement, the World Bank has also emphasized that mainstreaming the idea in its work will be context-specific, gradual, and continuous.⁴¹

Types of Citizen Engagement

The literature on citizen engagement shows that the scope of the concept is quite broad. It is operationalized in multiple ways, and depending on the context and programme, has various aims. It can include participation of communities during design processes, implementation, feedback, accountability, and sustainability of projects. Or it can be built into projects or processes through collaborating with communities. In the case of government government-led engagement, for example by communities supplying labour or providing materials, it can simply be through platforms where complaints are registered or where elected representatives happen to come into contact with constituents. There are also social media interactions between public figures and citizens, as well as other digital platforms where citizen engagement is being encouraged, for instance as the focus on digital engagement will show below. Thus, the modes in which these activities are carried out can be either formal or informal. In most scenarios, the government office or the kind of development project determines the means of citizen engagement, since investments need to be made to develop these activities. Citizen engagement can thus take many forms including public meetings, surveys, feedback mechanisms, community-based projects, citizen committees or digital engagement. Finally, while engagement can also occur through social movements and protests by people, such cases are missing from the literature review as the focus is on opportunities for citizen engagement provided by governments or civil society.

As noted above, the World Bank seeks to engage people in six broad categories of activities, all of which can have multiple types of mechanisms. For instance, feedback mechanisms will be considered in a different way from consultations over project design, and both have various approaches. The several methods for incorporating citizen engagement processes in a project or activity depend on the expected outcomes and intents. If the aim is to enhance “deliberative democracy” and hone political processes, then for instance “public deliberations” are regarded as effective platforms as they can enable a discourse of politics responsive to the needs of citizens at local and national levels. The purpose in this particular case is to collect and understand the perspectives of people given their specific contexts.⁴²

However, in other cases, if for example the aim is to create structures of accountability, as Tom Kirk argues, the process of citizen engagement has to be more complex since “[citizens’] voice and the state’s responsiveness...are necessary but not sufficient conditions for accountability.” In fact, Kirk notes, effective accountability through citizen participation requires citizens to have correct and relevant information in the first place, and for transgressors to be legally sanctioned.⁴³ Thus, it is evident that citizen engagement is part of a process of structural and institutional re-working, where it benefits from and leads to legislation, right to information, and awareness about rights, responsibilities, and state accountability. And without these prerequisites, the impact of engagement suffers.

When it comes to the role of citizens in public administration, again the intent of engagement is somewhat limited, Tina Nabatchi notes that citizen participation broadly means “the processes by which public concerns, needs, and values are incorporated into decision-making.” This can be direct (people’s immediate engagement) or indirect (through representatives). Some of the goals of those in public administration designing CE systems include: informing the public, transforming a conflict, obtaining feedback, collecting data, providing feedback, and making decisions. However, while the engagement itself seems straightforward, since in its simplest form it entails recording feedback, Nabatchi highlights some key factors in assessing the success of this process, including the number of participants, the goals of the process, the process of participant recruitment, and the extent of connection to eventual policy making.⁴⁴ As a result, even the relatively simpler engagement processes that do not require trainings or information provision, require clear and sometimes long-term exercises.

Participatory budgeting, i.e. citizen involvement in the spending of public funds, has been regarded as a successful mechanism of citizen engagement in the last few decades, that has been translated in different ways across the world, such as citizen juries, deliberative polls, neighborhood funds, and community development projects.⁴⁵ However, without a clear definition of what it entails, participatory budgeting, much like citizen engagement in

⁴¹ “Strategic framework for mainstreaming citizen engagement in World Bank Group operations: Engaging with Citizens for Improved Results,” *The World Bank* (2014).

⁴² Delli Carpini, M. X., Cook, F. L., & Jacobs, L. R. “Public Deliberations, Discursive Participation and Citizen Engagement: A Review of the Empirical Literature,” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 7, 1 (2004): 315-344. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.7.121003.091630>

⁴³ Kirk, “Citizen-led Accountability”, December 2014.

⁴⁴ Tina Nabatchi, “A Manager’s Guide to Evaluating Citizen Participation,” *IBM Center for the Business of Government*, Syracuse University, 2011.

⁴⁵ Yves Sintomer; Herzberg, Carsten; Röcke, Anja; and Allegretti, Giovanni, “Transnational Models of Citizen Participation: The Case of Participatory Budgeting,” *Journal of Public Deliberation*, Vol. 8, Iss. 2 (2012). Available at: <https://www.publicdeliberation.net/jpd/vol8/iss2/art9>

general, remains an amorphous concept, meaning different things in different contexts. In its simplest form, participatory budgeting may simply be a budget transparency exercise, making public budgets accessible and comprehensible. In such cases, it is likely that engagement is also similarly straightforward.

Alina Rocha Menocal notes that there has been significant development in people using political voices all over the world. She writes that this is an “extraordinarily diverse and complex landscape, with people everywhere grabbing opportunities to express their views in a multitude of ways to influence policy and decision-making processes”. Some of the forms of political voice – and hence some of the forms of citizen engagement through which people can hold officials to account – include elections, the use of media and social media and other digital technologies tools, and advocacy for right to information laws.⁴⁶

Mandated and Non-Mandated Citizen Engagement

A key distinction in types of citizen engagement is between mandated and non-mandated systems, where the former refers to forms of engagement or institutions set up mostly by government, specifically to promote consultation with citizens, or to address grievances; and the latter refers to systems that have come about through customs and traditions, or simply because people found that they work. Much of what is discussed in the literature is the mandated form – institutions or processes set up for the purpose. However, much of what is found on the ground when communities are consulted, or project sites visited are informal or non-mandated forms of engagement, ranging from complaints filed with elected representatives (at any tier of representation, but most often with local government representatives) to representations to government functionaries made by associations of persons including trade and labour unions, Bar Associations, consumer groups or other organised bodies. There is very little academic discussion of these latter forms of citizen engagement.

Rural Support Programmes and other Community Based Organisations

A form of non-mandated citizen engagement that has gained currency in Pakistan in recent years is of engagement brokered, facilitated or officiated by community development organisations. The most prominent example of this is the model adopted by the Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN), a group of ten community development organisations that base their interventions on a social mobilisation strategy. The RSPNs work by organising communities into a series of tiered groups, beginning at the village level, and providing technical and financial assistance to the organised communities to implement income generation activities or develop basic services. The RSPs cover a population of almost 50 million,⁴⁷ and maintain close contacts with public service providers with a view to connecting community organisations with government officials to improve provision of services. This approach has resulted in strong linkages of the RSPs with government at all levels, as evidenced by the fact that five of the ten RSPs have received public funds to carry out their social mobilisation activities and implement programmes.

While the RSPs have institutionalised non-mandated citizen engagement so to speak, other development interventions, mainly donor funded voice and accountability programmes, have tried to institute engagement systems at least as long as projects are operational. Examples of these are the *khuli katcheries* (or open forums) instituted in the DFID funded AAWAZ project, and the consultations with elected officials instituted through the *Alif Ailaan* campaign in DFID’s Transforming Education in Pakistan programme

What Does Citizen Engagement Seek to Achieve?

Involving citizens in the implementation and monitoring of government service provision is said to enable transparency, capacity, and accountability.

The literature on citizen engagement generally argues that where governments, civil society or and development organizations invest in it, they do so because it is seen as benefitting the process of development and public work, and all the stakeholders involved, including beneficiaries, donors, implementers, and service providers (whether governments or non-state organizations). Incorporating citizen perspectives has the potential to develop cost-effective solutions to issues that are regarded as important by the community, and thus to the extent possible, it is suggested by the literature that citizens be brought on board from the very beginning of project design.

One reason for focusing on citizen engagement is to ensure voice of people and accountability of powerful actors. However, these are not ends in themselves. As Goetz and Jenkins argue, accountability refers to a structure of “answerability” or “the obligation of power-holders to justify their decisions and actions,” and thus is more than simply providing voice to people, even if voice and accountability are concepts that are “inseparable in practice.”⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Alina Rocha Menocal, What is political voice, why does it matter, and how can it bring about change?, ODI, A Development Progress Discussion Paper, May 2014. <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8950.pdf>

⁴⁷ See <http://www.rspn.org/index.php/about-us/who-we-are/>

⁴⁸ Anne Marie Goetz and Rob Jenkins, “Voice, Accountability and Human Development: The Emergence of a New Agenda,” *UNDP Background paper for Human Development Report, 2002.*

A UNDP study argues that citizen engagement is an instrument for strengthening the service delivery process and highlights the role of public officials in this regard. Going through the characteristics of engagement – its size, time commitment, formal and informal nature – the study emphasizes the conventional wisdom that projects with participatory approaches are likely to lead to better service provision. However, it cautions against simply assuming that incorporating some aspect of citizen engagement models will automatically lead to expected results, since they need to be tailored for different contexts, participants, type of project, and expected outcomes. Thus, the report highlights that there is no blueprint for effective participatory approaches.⁴⁹

The UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) notes that “creating feedback mechanisms for citizens is critical for successful engagement and public discourse on important development strategies, and the improvement of public services,” especially when the voices of the disadvantaged are also captured. Discussing different forms of accountability, the Committee highlights “social accountability,” where citizens hold governments to account through formal and informal mechanisms including human rights organizations, movements, and advocacy for issues such as right to information. Some such mechanisms, it continues, include: “citizens’ report card system at the local government level in India, participatory budgeting in Brazil, citizen audits in Argentina, citizen monitoring of public bids in Colombia, or budget monitoring in Mexico, Brazil, Uganda, and India.”⁵⁰ All these are examples of successful engagements between states and citizens, but in different contexts, and thus following varied approaches, at the level of the local community.

Finally, as an Asian Development Bank Governance Brief argues, citizen engagement is simply a good government strategy, given that it plays a part in lowering corruption, utilizing budgets efficiently, and providing public services effectively. This however is only when methods of engagement are contextualized in every aspect. The encouraging sign, the Brief continues, is that governments and development agencies have understood this as beneficial as well, and are thus increasingly making investments in opening up platforms for citizen engagement, including through providing relevant information, consultations, making collaborative decisions, enabling citizen-led monitoring, and providing mechanisms for grievance redress.⁵¹

What Makes Citizen Engagement Effective

Effective citizen engagement consists of a series of steps, from contact with citizens (including the marginalized) through to oversight of policies and practices that governments put in place. It is a direct and natural progression of the process of empowering people and connecting the state to citizens. Successful citizen engagement requires initiatives at different levels – including legal structures, community programs, and local governments. Consider for instance the following examples from India. The right to information law in India has been much lauded, but there is little work on whether citizens’ requests have been addressed by bureaucrats. However, one way to overcome this challenge is to tie officials’ professional advancements with their compliance to the information laws, or subject them to nominal fines for ignoring requests. Similarly, there are federal laws in India about rural right-to-employment at grassroots rural levels for employment initiatives. However, these laws face resistance from local politicians such as in the state of Rajasthan. However, social audit hearings such as in Andhra Pradesh attempted to bypass such obstacles by availing the more disciplined bureaucracy in the state in order to implement the rural employment program. Resultantly, States with such social audit processes were more successful in running these programs.⁵²

The World Bank’s Global Partnership for Social Accountability (GPSA) in a six-part series titled “Are We Ready for Strategic Social Accountability?” highlights some of its learning from the field. These include a need to harness local political and social contexts into interventions that seek to engage citizens in policies and activities regarding their development. Thus, as the GPSA notes, the expectation is for its civil society partners to propose “contextualized, realistic strategies to contribute to solving a concrete policy problem”. This means that more than producing citizen information, the intervention needs to incorporate engagement with authority figures so that reforms build on existing political resource and the intent is to accumulate influence inside the system that is being attempted to change. Such approaches to social accountability, the GPSA series argues, do not often exist.⁵³

If citizen engagement is sought at every stage of service delivery, it is only then that actual problems and needs can be highlighted, and practical solutions sought. Also, the literature argues that engaging with communities and individuals is more effective if done at local levels. Subsequently, political structures can also be more or less

⁴⁹ “Citizen Engagement in Public Service Delivery: The Critical Role of Public Officials,” *Global Centre for Public Service Excellence and UNDP* (2016).

⁵⁰ “Formal/Informal Institutions for Citizen Engagement for implementing the Post 2015 Development Agenda,” *United Nations Expert Group Meeting*, October 21-22, 2014.

⁵¹ Vinay Bhargava, “Engaging Citizens and Civil Society to Promote Good Governance and Development Effectiveness,” *ADB Governance Brief*, Issue 23, 2015.

⁵² Fox, “Social Accountability”, 2014.

⁵³ Florencia Guerzovich and Maria Poli, “Are We Ready for Strategic Social Accountability?” *Global Partnership for Social Accountability*, World Bank, October 2015. <https://www.thegpsa.org/related-resource/are-we-ready-strategic-social-accountability>

conducive to better citizen participation. For instance, as Goetz and Jenkins argue, citizen engagement is considered to be “the cornerstone of local government” as at that level of decision-making, the right and relevant services, issues and solutions can be decided upon in collaboration.⁵⁴ They continue that it is also essential in setting the agenda of development policies and objectives at the local level that “citizens are full participants in the policy process, and that their input has truly been given meaningful weight.” This in turn is essential since, “Conducting citizen engagement at the beginning of policy or program development can, among many things, increase citizens’ sense of responsibility, lead decision-makers to make better decisions by enabling them to understand social implications of their decisions, and increase the legitimacy of public decisions.”⁵⁵ In effect then, citizen engagement benefits not just the people by engendering a better sense of their priorities and problems, but also authorities, since it can contribute to trust in them.⁵⁶ It is no surprise then that governments and politicians increasingly use social media to communicate with citizens, as it is a quick and visible way of being (or appearing to be) transparent and accountable and therefore more trustworthy. .

One pertinent question to ask when one considers the benefits of engaging citizens is about *why* people decide to take action, for instance against corruption, and how to make taking action more feasible and attractive. Evidence backs up the assumption that an informed and empowered public can highlight and address issues of corruption. Thus, the process of engaging citizens also involves preparing the groundwork so that people are made aware of the potential benefits. This is why, it is argued, organizations such as Transparency International invest in legal aid provision, awareness raising, and citizen-centred mechanisms in order to educate and empower citizens against corruption.⁵⁷

While it has been acknowledged by practitioners such as Soren Gigler that citizen engagement is not a new concept given its origins in PRAs and other similar approaches that sought to gather and act on citizen feedback, he also notes that some things have changed over time. For Gigler, what is different is, firstly, the attitudes of both citizens and governments, with both calling for citizens’ voices to be amplified in public decision-making, and secondly, technological advancements that have enabled better government-citizen interactions. For more effective citizen engagement, Gigler recommends moving beyond “traditional models of governance” in which inputs are received sporadically if at all, to consistent, regular citizen inputs, including from marginalized groups. He also notes that for meaningful citizen engagement, “governments and citizen groups need to work together to develop *institutionalized* methods” of receiving citizen inputs and acting on them. Finally, he goes beyond mechanisms and urges governments to consider why people want to participate in the first place, since this will enable better resource allocation for citizen engagement and questions the assumption that citizens and governments are inherently distrustful of each other.⁵⁸

In a 3IE systematic review on participation and accountability, the authors address the question of whether citizen engagement initiatives improve development outcomes, by using evidence from 35 citizen engagement programs. Some of their findings show the reasons why citizen engagement is emphasized. For instance, even “short route” initiatives that bring together service providers and users, they conclude, lead to improvements in access to and quality of services. On the other hand, they argue, there is evidence that service delivery is not usually influenced by improving governance through increasing citizen pressures on politicians to hold service providers to account. In effect, direct engagement is what causes changes to the benefit of citizens.⁵⁹

While much of the literature posits that citizen engagement can lead to more effective development interventions, some academics have pointed out that there is little actual evidence of positive outcomes.⁶⁰ As John Gaventa and Gregory Barrett (2010) record in their meta-analysis of the Citizenship DRC research project studies, the World Bank’s \$7 billion investment in community driven projects has not resulted in a single study establishing a causal relationship between community participation and better development outcomes. Similarly, as the meta analysis documents, an evaluation of 90 donor funded projects by Menocal and Sharma could not establish a link between voice and accountability interventions and broader development outcomes, although some contributions to intermediate outcomes were identified. In another more specific example cited in the same meta analysis, a randomised evaluation of three public education service interventions in India found no positive effects of parental

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Andrew Bucci, Lucy Hulford, Alison Macdonald, and James Rothwell, “Citizen Engagement: A Catalyst for Effective Local Government,” *Dalhousie Journal of Interdisciplinary Management*, Volume 11 (Spring 2015). doi: 10.5931/djim.v11.1.5528

⁵⁶ “Public Participation and Citizen Engagement: Effective Advising in Statebuilding and Peacebuilding Contexts – How,” *Interpeace*, (2015).

⁵⁷ Jorge Florez, Florencia Guertzovich, Linnea Mills, Johannes Tonn, “From grievance to engagement: How people decide to act against corruption,” *Global Integrity* (June 2018).

⁵⁸ Soren Gigler, “From citizen feedback to inclusive institutions: 10 lessons,” *World Bank Blogs*, December 29, 2015. <http://blogs.worldbank.org/governance/citizen-feedback-inclusive-institutions-10-lessons>

⁵⁹ Hugh Waddington, Ada Sonnenfeld, Juliette Finetti, Marie Gaarder, and Jennifer Stevenson, “Does incorporating participation and accountability improve development outcomes? Meta-analysis and framework synthesis,” *3IE*, Systematic Review 43, May 2019. <https://www.3ieimpact.org/sites/default/files/2019-06/SR43-PITA-report.pdf>

⁶⁰ As detailed in John Gaventa and Gregory Barrett, “So What Difference Does it Make? Mapping the Outcomes of Citizen Engagement,” IDS Working Paper 347, October 2010.

involvement on quality of teaching. On the other hand, community monitoring of services has been shown to be effective as detailed through a study of citizen scorecard use and healthcare in Uganda. According to Gaventa and Barrett, such differences in the assessment of outcomes, often within projects in the same country, depend largely on how the meaningfulness of change is determined and whose perspective is privileged.

Broadly, Gaventa and Barrett's meta-analysis found that the "construction of citizenship appears to be a fairly strong outcome of citizen engagements through associations, social movements and formal participatory governance spaces, although social movements also produce particularly strong effects for the construction of accountable and responsive governance." The examples of social movements cited included movements for the right to information in India, for land reform in the Philippines and on environmental issues in Brazil. They also find that intermediate outcomes, such as strengthening a sense of citizenship, are found to result when engagement occurs.

Challenges and Obstacles in Citizen Engagement

Despite variations of citizen engagement processes being recognized as beneficial, and despite their continued and long-term presence in the government and development discourses, the literature is clear that engagement faces several challenges and obstacles in both design and implementation. The former includes the idea that governments simply incorporate citizens' voices to fulfil requirements and thus pay lip service to the concept. And the latter encompasses several challenges, including the lack of an enabling environment, as well as demand and supply side issues such as citizens' lack of awareness of rights and information about services, opportunity costs and lack of incentives for participants, capacity issues of governments, hostile reactions from authorities, perceptions of authority being compromised, and elite capture of services and development initiatives from amongst citizens.⁶¹

Moreover, even if distrust of the government is not inherent, studies show that citizens' perceptions about government services are often negative. A report based on a survey on citizen satisfaction with government services in the United States by the Partnership for Public Service, for instance, concluded that in every sector and industry, the federal government fared worse than the private sector in terms of customer satisfaction. This is partly explained by rising citizen expectations due to private sector experiences due to which "Americans increasingly expect federal agencies to deliver fast and streamlined digital services like those they receive from companies such as Amazon and Google—companies which provide their customers with 24-hour access, high levels of personalization and self-service capabilities". However, as the report notes, these companies have budgets for digital engagement budgets exceeding most government agencies.⁶²

Given the failure of the US government, and governments in general, to reach the standard of citizen engagement and complaint registration systems set by the private sector, the Partnership for Public Service report offers some strategies for governments to enhance citizen engagement. One, it recommends governments to create a consistent and connected experience for citizens, integrating digital platforms across agencies in order to implement a "no wrong door" policy since "the average citizen does not understand how government is organized, and does not want to be passed around to multiple websites or call centres when completing a task." This includes developing knowledge databases that are consistent and can easily be shared across different government departments. Two, the report recommends governments to develop an integrated view of the customer/citizen, cautioning however that using citizen data can lead to issues of privacy. However, in cases such as departments of education and student aid, such data sharing can be very useful to accommodate citizens. Finally, the report recommends personalizing services through customized processes to ease access to government services. This, it argues, will create trust, raise the profile of governments, and enable better citizen engagement.⁶³

Thus, the challenges are both inherent in the context of the citizens who need to be made part of the process, and the agencies and governments providing services and solutions. As one study on local governments and citizen engagement suggests in this regard, a major concern is timing, in that planning for effective projects and service delivery programs needs to allow for sufficient time to accommodate and then incorporate citizen inputs, which need to be sought at the very start of the process. Indeed, it is not always possible to invest in pre-project assessments. Moreover, another challenge to overcome is the mistaken perception that the authority of governments and donors is reduced if citizens are given an enhanced role.⁶⁴ Citizen engagement programs have also not always been successful and have faced resistance since people can also lack interest, understanding, or time, and the engagement can be expensive. Moreover, processing and understanding participants' views can be difficult, thus meaning that effective engagement is not certain even if the intent and the formalities of setting up activities are taken care of.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² "Serving Citizens: Strategies for Customer-Centered Government in the Digital Age," *Partnership for Public Service and Accenture*, September 2014.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Bucci, et. al., "Citizen Engagement," Spring 2015.

⁶⁵ "Public Participation and Citizen Engagement," *Interpeace*, (2015).

Where Citizen Engagement Has Not Worked

In order to understand the challenges to citizen engagement, there is a need to see where such initiatives have not worked. Fox notes for instance that while social accountability is regarded as inherently good, there have been several cases where little or no tangible development has occurred as the result of involving citizens. The key lessons from these experiences and thus challenges to overcome, he continues, are that: (i) providing information and raising awareness among citizens is not enough without changing power structures; (ii) bottom-up monitoring is often not incisive enough, and for instance, has not proven to always curb local corruption; and (iii) local elites often end up taking over community-driven development programs, where the presence of diverse groups of people is needed.⁶⁶

Fox describes a field experiment on village education committees in Uttar Pradesh which studied approaches on providing information about schooling outcomes to parents and village education committees. The study concluded that there was attendance of parents but no learning outcomes and attributed it to weaknesses in official channels for community participation, unrepresentative Village Education Committees that were selected by officials and village heads, and the lack of a “concrete course of action” that villagers could avail. All of this was despite recognition that parents in fact did have interest in their children’s education and their outcomes, but failed to collectively hold schools accountable, despite interventions, because of these structural and procedural issues.⁶⁷

Fox continues that while the practices of providing information, encouraging local governments, and interventions bringing the socially excluded to participate are all useful, it is also important to be more nuanced when designing such strategies. For instance, information provided needs to be actionable and people’s legitimate fears of reprisals have to be accounted for. Moreover, democratic institutions at local levels are required for local governments to become more responsive to people’s voices when utilizing funds. Finally, an enabling environment that actively encourages the marginalized needs to be developed before simply counting the otherwise excluded as participants. In effect, Fox notes that information-led demand-side interventions can be based on unrealistic assumptions.⁶⁸

There is also a suggestion that service delivery from the state is so weak, especially in large cities such as those in South Asia, and the government departments have so little capacity that more innovative ideas are needed for citizen engagement. These include incorporating NGOs, with their experience of grassroots engagement and innovative approaches, within state programs so that they can provide the skills, trainings, and methodologies to connect the government with the citizens.⁶⁹ Moreover, the basic assumptions of successful citizen engagement also change when it comes to engendering positive development beyond simply incorporating citizen engagement methodologies and counting participants as a successful initiative. This is a major challenge to overcome. Much as information is not enough to lead to effective voice, voice alone is not sufficient for development or change – for this, Menocal argues, it is essential to have collective organization among people. This is since, she continues, in order to influence policies and engage effectively with the state, the interaction is mediated through organizations and not individuals. Thus, building the right community and intermediary organizations is what is needed since these can “help harness participation and transform street protests into viable action.” Moreover, this assumes that states will also be receptive to people’s voices, and thus the need to develop a responsive and truly democratic government, which is often not the case in developing countries.⁷⁰ An Oxfam report on women’s inclusion in citizen engagement also argues that simply enhancing voice and participation is not enough. Rather, “basic political rights are a precondition for effective accountability”, and efforts in citizen engagement programs need to be about changing laws and practices.⁷¹

In the aforementioned 3IE systematic review on citizen engagement, the authors also note that there are challenges in driving change despite apparent successes in engagement. For instance, while interventions can be successful in improving participation numbers and adding finances to community funds or raising awareness, these do not in themselves translate into better quality of services or better access to services. For this to happen, interventions also need to target service providers, and advocacy for structural changes. There has to be, the review finds, a “strong local buy-in from front-line service providers for the intervention”, while the interventions have to be designed in local contexts, understanding the barriers to participation and the limits of local civil society.⁷²

⁶⁶ Fox, “Social Accountability,” 2014.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Vaqar Ahmed, “Extending Service Delivery through Community Engagement and Mobilization: Preliminary Findings from Interdisciplinary Policy Research across Dhaka, Karachi and Mumbai,” *SDPI*.

⁷⁰ Alina Rocha Menocal, What is political voice, why does it matter, and how can it bring about change?, ODI, A Development Progress Discussion Paper, May 2014. <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8950.pdf>

⁷¹ Bradshaw, et. al., “Gender and Social Accountability,” 2016.

⁷² Hugh Waddington, Ada Sonnenfeld, Juliette Finetti, Marie Gaarder, and Jennifer Stevenson, “Does incorporating participation and accountability improve development outcomes? Meta-analysis and framework synthesis,” *3IE, Systematic Review 43*, May 2019. <https://www.3ieimpact.org/sites/default/files/2019-06/SR43-PITA-report.pdf>

Finally, while the discussion on digital engagement will follow later in this review, it is worthwhile to mention here that using digital technology may lead to a false impression of citizen engagement given the likelihood of high participant numbers. . However, incorporating digital technology including digital tools for citizen engagement, also requires a deep understanding of how people use such tools. As a study on human-centred design (focusing on a Guatemala case, but with lessons that can be extrapolated generally) for instance argues, “designing for users, and not with them, leads to incorrect assumptions about technology access, usage, and cultural norms among the target population”. For successful incorporation of digital technology, the study recommends adopting human-centred design (HCD), which requires extensive planning, time, and cost. After all, this is seen as an elaborate approach with multiple phases: Inspiration (including consultations with administration, rapid assessment of communities through open-ended question guides rather than surveys, developing specifications with stakeholders), Ideation, and Implementation. This is meant, in the end, to ensure that the digital technologies that any intervention seeks to utilize to engage citizens, are actually accessible, understood, and in use by people. Otherwise, the concern is either elite capture of the initiative, or ineffective programs that appear to have engaged citizens.⁷³

Implementing strategies for effective citizen engagement require governments to now invest in digital technologies. Indeed, these were regarded as important for citizen engagement as early as 2003, with an OECD report highlighting technology as an enabler, not the solution, and arguing that it needs to be integrated with other traditional tools of public participation. Moreover, the report highlighted the need to raise awareness to ensure that the use of digital technology spreads to different parts of a society and is not limited to elite centres. The 2003 report in fact gives several early examples of the use of digital technologies by different countries, including Mexico’s e-government for information, consultation and participation, which enabled citizens to receive information, provide inputs, and evaluate government services. It also, however, required extensive training for government officials. Through such cases, the report highlights challenges for the future, primarily including socio-economic rather than technological issues. These refer to problems of scale, such as ensuring that individual citizen voices are given importance in an online space with potentially millions, the need to build capacity and educate citizens on new and different ways of working, and ensuring commitment.⁷⁴

There are further concerns with emphasizing digital technologies in citizen engagement specially in certain realms, such as political activity. A 2009 Pew Internet study, based on a survey of internet usage and citizen engagement with government, highlights that in both offline and online spaces, “the well-to-do and well-educated are more likely than those less well-off to participate in online political activities such as emailing a government official, signing an online petition or making a political contribution”. The report suggests that since less advantaged groups may have lower access to DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES, their marginalisation may in fact be exacerbated, while online political engagement can also sideline older age groups. However, there is still optimism in the way that ICTs bring new people into interactions with politics and the government, and social media offers novel ways of engagement that can improve citizen engagement processes.⁷⁵ Some of these will be discussed in a later section in this review.

Citizen Engagement and Inclusion

Citizen engagement should ideally be inclusive of women and marginalised groups. In fact, unless inclusivity is pursued by those organising engagement, there is a strong possibility of elite capture taking place of consultations, which can skew the whole engagement process. This section explores how the literature on citizen engagement sees inclusion of different groups.

Women and Citizen Engagement

Lynn Yeakel, founder of the Vision 2020 nationwide coalition advocating for women’s rights in the US, lists citizen engagement as one of four major goals for equal rights for women. As she explains it, citizen engagement can mean participating in communities, providing leadership, becoming informed citizens to raise a voice including in social media, and voting in elections. As a result, Yeakel notes, civic engagement means “giving up being a spectator to what’s happening” and participating actively in bringing change, finding solutions, and organizing support for change.⁷⁶

A 2016 report by Oxfam on women’s roles in social accountability programs affirms that there is a lack of literature on gender dimensions. What is clear, however, is that there are political dimensions to citizen engagement where women are excluded; they may be engaged in informal political processes such as community groups, but not in

⁷³ Adam Fivenson and Kristen Roggemann, “Lean HCD: A Case Study in Human-Centered Design in the Highlands of Guatemala,” DAI, November 2017. <https://www.dai.com/hcd.pdf>

⁷⁴ “Promise and Problems of E-Democracy: Challenges of Online Citizen Engagement,” OECD, 2003.

⁷⁵ Aaron Smith, Kay Lehman Schlozman, Sidney Verba, and Henry Brady, “The Internet and Civic Engagement,” *Pew Internet and American Life Project*, September 2009. <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2009/15--The-Internet-and-Civic-Engagement.aspx>

⁷⁶ Lynn Yeakel, “Is Civic Engagement an On-Ramp to the Women’s Equality Expressway?” *Huffington Post*, Jul 29, 2016. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/is-civic-engagement-an-on_b_7896018

formal political roles. This is despite evidence that even at low levels, women's inclusion in political offices and decision-making can bring positive changes in women's rights. Pointing to patriarchal structures, access to education and resources, and cultural norms as barriers to women's political participation, the report continues that there is a need to have an "intersectional approach to power analysis" when developing social accountability programming. This means that multiple identities of women (in terms of age, class, marital status, for instance) need to be considered when accounting for the rights of women and their engagement with government programs.⁷⁷

A 2009 UNDP and UNIFEM study on gender-sensitive basic service delivery notes that a strong women's voice needs to be present at every stage of service delivery, i.e. from design and budgeting to implementation and delivery. The study highlights "political voice" of women, and points to several factors due to which it is lacking – including structural reasons such as the lack of political experience and role models, lack of access to information, and lack of access to networks for fundraising. The important issue raised by the study is that women need to be part of decision-making processes if they are to truly have a voice that leads to rights; however, in reality "participatory processes sometimes appear to be token gestures that provide little opportunity for the views and priorities of the public to change the major decisions that have already made elsewhere", with the inclusion of women even more tokenized.⁷⁸

Why is women's inclusion so important? As the UNDP and UNIFEM study continues, women need basic services more than men, and face discrimination since childhood when it comes to availing opportunities. It is with a gender-sensitive approach to basic services delivery that their demands and needs can be met. The report recognizes participatory budgeting as one way to enhance women's engagement in the decision-making and service delivery process, pointing to examples of the many advantages of including women in this budgeting approach from all over the world.⁷⁹

A comprehensive World Bank study from 2014 on women empowerment similarly notes that little or no education leads to several negative indicators in women's development, including domestic violence, early marriages, and lack of a voice. The report highlights that women and girls lack opportunities and resources – in the context of this literature review, for instance, it is relevant to note that all over the world, compared to men, women are likely to have less access to, use of, and ownership of digital technologies. In South Asia, 25 million fewer women than men have access to such technologies. On the other hand, the World Bank report also points out that if women are elected to policy-making positions, the subsequent decisions are more likely to reflect the priorities of women, children, and marginalized groups.⁸⁰

In order to include women in such positions, however, there is a need to understand why women find it difficult or challenging to gain a voice and become politically active. In addition to some of the more general reasons noted above, Jessica Gottlieb gives evidence from Mali for why women participate less in civic activity compared to men, including social issues such as explicit threats and larger structural issues such as lack of political information and access to such information. Given the particular case of the society where her research is conducted, she recommends providing different interventions to men and women separately to ensure that social costs do not become insurmountable hurdles to women's active engagement.⁸¹ Similarly Fatima Eid's study from Bahrain argues that high educational levels have not translated into economic and political roles for women due to social systems, as she calls for structural changes and education focused on citizenship at all levels in order for women to be gain their rights.⁸² In some more economically advanced countries, efforts also need to be made to include and enhance the role of women in leadership positions across the private and public spectrum, as has been highlighted by The White House Council on Women and Girls in the US.⁸³

⁷⁷ Sarah Bradshaw, Brian Linneker and Lisa Overton, "Gender and Social Accountability: Ensuring women's inclusion in citizen-led accountability programming relating to extractive industries," *Oxfam America Research Backgrounder*, 2016. https://www.oxfamamerica.org/static/media/files/Research_Backgrounder_Gender_and_Social_Accountability_Final.pdf

⁷⁸ Lorraine Corner and Sarah Repucci, "A User's Guide to Measuring Gender-Sensitive Basic Service Delivery," *UNDP and UNIFEM*, March 2009. https://www.undp.org/content/dam/aplaws/publication/en/publications/democratic-governance/dg-publications-for-website/a-users-guide-to-measuring-gender-sensitive-basic-service-delivery-/users_guide_measuring_gender.pdf

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Jeni Klugman, Lucia Hanmer, Sarah Twigg, Tazeen Hasan, Jennifer McCleary-Sills, and Julieth Santamaria, "Voice and Agency : Empowering Women and Girls for Shared Prosperity," *World Bank*, 2014.

⁸¹ Jessica Gottlieb, "Why Women Participate Less than Men in Civic Activity: Evidence from Mali," *APSA 2014 Annual Meeting Paper*, August 14, 2014.

⁸² Fatima H. Eid, "Young Women's Civic Awareness and Public Engagement: A Challenge in a Bahraini Context," *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 19, 2 (2018), 197-214. <http://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol19/iss2/13>

⁸³ "Civic Engagement, Leadership, and Visibility Accomplishments," *The White House Council on Women and Girls*, June 2016.

https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/documents/Women%20and%20Girls_Civic%20Leadership%20Engagement%20and%20Visibility.pdf

The literature on citizen engagement on the part of marginalised groups such as ethnic or religious minorities is limited, but there are some interesting insights from what is available. In a report on public participation and minorities, Yash Ghai discusses how different views on the participation of minorities in public life are presented.⁸⁴ One view is that special provisions should be made in the legislative framework or in executive bodies for representation of minorities. Another view is that the participation of minorities in existing bodies can be facilitated and political integration encouraged, but that specific affirmative action is not desirable. Ghai finds that the approach used should depend on a range of factors including the size of the minority community and their socioeconomic status. Ghai's recommendations are fairly general – that states should encourage representation of minorities, if necessary by legislative action, move to establish territorial autonomy if minorities are concentrated in particular areas; and set up institutions such as minority ombudspersons to ensure that their voices are heard.

CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT IN PAKISTAN

Fayyaz Yaseen claims that the “realization that promoting social accountability in Pakistan can be a catalyst to good governance came rather late to Pakistan” but that this has become the norm in the last decade or so and is evident in both state and non-state activities in the country. These include legislation to empower local governments and communities. The government has also sought to obtain feedback mechanisms over time, which together with attempts to promote local governments has, in principle, created opportunities for deeper citizen engagement. Donors and NGOs have also mainstreamed citizen engagement in their work in Pakistan, and projects have included awareness raising activities, advocacy, developing citizen groups etc. and their role has been more apparent on occasions such as after natural disasters or before elections.⁸⁵

Despite this increasing recognition of, and attention to, citizen engagement activities in government and development circles, it is not yet considered to be especially significant or widespread in Pakistan. In the World Bank's World Governance Indicators (WGIs), for instance, the country scores poorly on indicators of voice and accountability, and in fact its position had been declining until a few years ago.⁸⁶ Yaseen argues as well that Pakistan's socio-economic and political contexts caused the principles of civic engagement to be adopted rather slowly. He notes regarding the local government process that there has been a failure to capture citizen responses in the initial stages, as the formal system of gathering citizens' views ignored some of the most marginalized, leading eventually to social audits designed and implemented by UNDP and others at district levels. There is no mention, in the literature we found, of higher tiers of government. The government, he suggests, lacked capacity, and also the will to work towards effective social accountability, since its initiatives to that end are not rooted in community demands but simply exist to fulfil requirements of foreign donors.⁸⁷

Thus, there is a long way to go before citizen engagement is truly mainstreamed, with its importance recognized both among the communities and the government and non-state organizations. The process has begun, however, and others are not as critical of the government's desire to seek citizen approval and engagement. Tom Kirk, for instance, highlights steps that give a reason for optimism, including constitutional developments that bring governance structures to local communities, and political movements and the role of media that heighten public engagement with matters of social change.⁸⁸

Government Institutions for Citizen Engagement in Pakistan

Some forms of citizen engagement involve platforms established by the government through which citizens can make complaints and reach legal channels for their rights. Thus these mechanisms are somewhat different from those in which citizen engagement refers to people holding the state accountable, as they are the means to involve and reach out to marginalized communities, and assist them in reaching the right government bodies. However, there is also a strong element of accountability, with the caveat that an independent, semi-government, or government body plays the conduit in this regard.

Hotlines

One such mechanism is hotlines for specific groups or concerns. For instance, the Punjab Women Helpline, established in 2014 by the Punjab Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) seeks to “empower women across Punjab by providing a platform to women for support on economic, social and legal issues through information, referrals to relevant departments and opportunities within the Government.” Taking the examples of SAFE, a national domestic violence hotline in the US, and helplines catering to women in India involving both private and

⁸⁴ Ghai, Yash. (2001). *Public Participation and Minorities*. Minority Rights Group International.

⁸⁵ Fayyaz Yaseen, “Social Accountability in Pakistan: Challenges, Gaps, Opportunities and the Way Forward,” Working Paper # 133, *Sustainable Development Policy Institute*, May 2013.

⁸⁶ Kirk, “Citizen-led Accountability and Inclusivity in Pakistan,” 2014.

⁸⁷ Yaseen, “Social Accountability in Pakistan,” May 2013.

⁸⁸ Kirk, “Citizen-led Accountability and Inclusivity in Pakistan,” 2014.

public sectors, the Punjab Women Helpline follows a one-window approach that enables women to, inter alia, obtain legal advice and information about their rights, and make complaints about domestic violence and harassment. Between August 2014 and June 2018, it has received over 75,000 inquiries, over 330,000 awareness calls, and 1,775 complaints of which 937 have been resolved, as reported by the PCSW. However, there are several challenges, which reflect the challenges in government-citizen interactions in general: it has a limited mandate, other government departments take a long time to respond to its queries and referrals, it is understaffed and overworked with limited resources, and faces several prank and test calls.⁸⁹

The PCSW has also set up a comprehensive Gender Management Information System that is in principle to be used to develop the right policies and budgeting based on evidence of the situation of women in the province. Institutions such as the helpline are essential in this regard to get as accurate a picture as possible of the challenges faced by women, thus reflecting the need for women to be actively engaged with the government. It is also this engagement that can help law-makers come up with relevant laws and policies to support the cause of women's rights.⁹⁰

Ombudsmen

The institution of the Ombudsman is perhaps the most well-known among such channels of access to government institutions in order to hold public officials and departments responsible. An OECD report notes that almost 30 percent of governments have institutions such as Ombudsmen though their mandates and objectives differ. Among other things, Ombudsmen institutions deal with citizens' complaints against public administration and can have specific mandates such as access to information, human rights, child rights, and anti-discrimination. As the OECD report also argues, there is space for improving the institutions' work, such as by their enhanced presence and usage of social media, their use of public surveys to consider people's awareness of their work and role, and their regular information-sharing, consultation, and collaboration with citizens and other stakeholders.⁹¹

In Pakistan, there are twelve independent Ombudsmen's institutions at federal and provincial levels, covering issues such as taxation and workplace harassment. The Federal Ombudsman, in the three decades of its existence, has processed over 1.07 million complaints. These are mostly about government agencies, though there is concern that only 11 percent come from women. The ombudsmen institutions, however, lack capacity and resources, and among the efforts to make the system more effective is the development of the Forum of Pakistan Ombudsmen (FPO) through which its different institutions are integrated.⁹²

The FPO comprises different Ombudsmen institutions, such as the Federal Tax Ombudsman, federal and provincial Ombudsman Secretariat for Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace, Provincial Ombudsmen, Federal Insurance Ombudsman, and Banking Ombudsman. Established in 2011, the FPO is a network that seeks to improve the operations and service delivery of the ombudsman institution and enhance the capacity of government officials to facilitate citizens.⁹³

The Federal Ombudsman, or Wafaqi Mohtasib, which is perhaps the most well-known such body, is mandated to resolve complaints and carry out investigations about federal government agencies. Other independent institutions at the federal level exist for matters of taxation, insurance, banking, and harassment. Citizens can lodge complaints through multiple means – in person, by post, by email, online, or through fax – and in both English and Urdu, and the institution aims to resolve complaints within three to six months.⁹⁴ The Punjab Ombudsman is empowered to receive and resolve complaints against provincial departments and offices, though as with the federal Ombudsman, there are limits to the mandate of provincial ombudsmen as they lack authority regarding matters of military agencies and superior courts of law, etc.⁹⁵ In the 21 years of its existence, the Punjab Ombudsman has received over 284,000 complaints, and in 2017 alone, almost 16,000 complaints were received.⁹⁶ The KP Ombudsman was only established in 2011, being the last province in the country to open the institution. Defining its role as “[a] watchdog for the people's rights because it has the powers to identify the cases of maladministration and can ask the

⁸⁹ “Best Practices: Punjab's Women Helpline,” *Punjab Commission on the Status of Women, Government of Punjab*.

⁹⁰ “PCSW Helpline gives voice back to women,” *The Nation*, August 23, 2017. <https://nation.com.pk/23-Aug-2017/pcsw-helpline-gives-voice-back-to-women>

⁹¹ “The Role of Ombudsman Institutions in Open Government,” *OECD, Working Paper on Public Governance No. 29, 2018*. <https://www.oecd.org/gov/the-role-of-ombudsman-institutions-in-open-government.pdf>

⁹² “Pakistan's Ombudsmen: Untapped Potential to Strengthen Good Governance,” *World Bank*, May 20, 2014. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2014/05/20/pakistans-ombudsmen-untapped-potential-to-strengthen-good-governance>

⁹³ <http://www.fpo.org.pk/>

⁹⁴ <http://www.mohtasib.gov.pk/>

⁹⁵ <http://www.ombudsmanpunjab.gov.pk/introduction>

⁹⁶ “Annual Report 2017,” Punjab Ombudsman. http://ombudsmanpunjab.gov.pk/system/files/Ombudsman%20Punjab%20Annual%20Report%202017.pdf#overlay-context=annual_reports

concerned bodies to rectify the situation,” in 2013 the KP institution received 764 complaints, of which 333 were admitted for further investigation.⁹⁷

Right to Information Commissions (Punjab and KP)

The Punjab Information Commission, an independent enforcement body for the right to information (RTI), is mandated to raise public awareness, set required mechanisms for RTI, train officials and monitor their performance, decide on complaints by citizens, and take action against government agencies failing to comply by its regulations. The Commission has the authority to take action against government bodies if they wrongfully deny access to information and can impose penalties in such cases.⁹⁸ In its annual report from 2015-16, the Commission notes that over 1,330 complaints were received and over 750 were decided. It points out among challenges that public bodies are often not serious about engaging citizens, and that the Commission and other RTI organizations are under-funded and under-staffed. Moreover, there are few resources to train officials, and to add capacity to government agencies to incorporate RTI in their work, in addition to issues of poor record-keeping by departments and an overall “culture of official secrecy” that is suspicious of RTI laws.⁹⁹

The RTI Commission in KP was the result of the KP Right to Information Act 2013 and seeks to ensure that citizen requests are processed in time and effectively by provincial bodies. Similar to the Punjab Commission, it is mandated to punish departments, train officials, and raise public awareness of RTI laws. Since its inception, the Commission has received over 13,700 requests, of which 5,885 have been complaints against public bodies. Of these, 95% have been decided by the Commission.¹⁰⁰

Examples of Programmes Connecting the Government with Citizens in Pakistan

A review of some completed DFID programmes in Pakistan shows the intent, outputs, and lessons about citizen engagement activities connecting people with governments. The projects briefly reviewed in this section that show the sort of initiatives taken to enhance citizen engagement with the government, include (i) AAWAZ – Voice and Accountability Programme Pakistan, (ii) Education Sector Voice and Accountability Project, (iii) Improve Citizen's Engagement through Devolution, and (iv) Sub National Governance (SNG) - Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab. Reports from these programmes, by definition, go up to programme completion and so do not examine the post-programme sustainability of citizen engagement initiatives.

AAWAZ - Voice and Accountability Programme

The £39.1 million AAWAZ program, which ran from 2012 to 2018, aimed to “provide poor women, men and minority groups in 4,500 villages in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab with tools to (i) help them resolve local disputes peacefully (an objective that was later changed to conflict pre-emption), (ii) work with local government to improve service delivery and (iii) get more poor women involved in decision making at local, district and provincial levels”. As the largest demand-side voice and accountability program by DFID in Pakistan, AAWAZ sought, among other objectives, to increase “the accountability and responsiveness of the state to citizens’ demands for improved service delivery”. Interventions to achieve these objectives included trainings, political awareness, town-hall meetings, accessibility to government decision-makers, and community meeting places.¹⁰¹ In its 2017 annual report, its recommendations included deepening linkages between local government and community structures in order to ensure marginalized groups and women were not excluded, and investing in capacity building of female resource persons.¹⁰² The project completion review highlighted successes such as expanding public spaces for marginalized citizens, creating inclusive structures for communities, raising awareness about rights, facilitating meetings between citizens and district and government officials, and developing direct contact between citizen groups and district levels of government. These were said to have engendered trust and confidence in government institutions, and to have played a part in contributing “significantly to women’s interest and participation in both formal and informal decision making”. It was estimated that over eight million people directly benefitted from improved state service delivery as a result of AAWAZ activities.¹⁰³

Some key lessons regarding citizen engagement from the AAWAZ program in its completion report include the following:¹⁰⁴

⁹⁷ “Annual Report 2013,” KP Ombudsman. <https://www.ombudsmankp.gov.pk/Annual%20Reports/report13.pdf>

⁹⁸ <https://rti.punjab.gov.pk/>

⁹⁹ “Annual Report, 2015-16.” RTI Punjab. https://rti.punjab.gov.pk/system/files/Annual%20Report%202015-16_0.pdf

¹⁰⁰ <http://www.kprti.gov.pk/index.php>

¹⁰¹ <https://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/projects/GB-1-114433>

¹⁰² http://iati.dfid.gov.uk/iati_documents/6772526.odt

¹⁰³ http://iati.dfid.gov.uk/iati_documents/34328231.odt

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

- A government responsive to citizen demands for better services requires a conducive governance system that has the capacity to engage citizens adequately.
- Inclusive processes of democracy require changing social norms, which cannot be done through quick fixes.
- Ordinary people will avail spaces and interact with government agencies to voice their rights, if they are given the right platforms, information, and capacity.
- The relationship between governments and citizens is complex and influenced by a range of issues, including custom, emotion, norms, economic power and control over labour.

Education Sector Voice and Accountability Project

The £11 million Education Sector Voice and Accountability Project sought to enrol and retain 4 million children in schools by, among other ways, establishing models to enhance the voices of children and their parents at local levels.¹⁰⁵ The Project Completion Review notes among the achievements that models for voice and accountability were developed to enable citizens to have a voice and hold officials accountable in the delivery of quality education. Some of the recommendations made as a result of this process were made to government departments, and subsequently, relevant decisions were taken by policy-makers. Overall, the project was lauded for achieving results beyond expectations. Enhancing citizen engagement in the public education sector in order to improve the quality of education, raise awareness among citizens, and hold officials accountable, were thus essential components of the project.¹⁰⁶

Improve Citizen's Engagement Through Devolution

The project aimed to increase citizen participation and improve the utilization of development funds allocated for districts in the local governments.¹⁰⁷ The Project Completion Review noted that the aforementioned outcomes were to be achieved by registering citizen community boards, making them and their projects accessible to vulnerable groups, increasing citizen participation in other citizen engagement forums, and disbursing district development budgets for the community boards. The notion was to develop these institutions within the context of the local government ordinance of 2001 that sought to enhance the authority of District, Tehsil and Union Council elected members. For this, citizens were supported in different platforms such as community groups, while public safety committees were activated, complaint commissions formed, and *khuli kacheries* (open community forums) organized to discuss the issues faced by people. Issues raised and resolved in these meetings ranged from drugs, robberies, thefts, kidnappings and gambling to police corruption, law and order, and inefficiency of government agencies. While the participation of women and other socially excluded groups was only a quarter of the total citizen participation, efforts were made to engage women, and the issues raised by women were of particular interest to them, indicating the need for a more inclusive and diverse citizen body to engage with governments.¹⁰⁸

Sub National Governance (SNG) - Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab

The £38.1 million SNG program, which also ran from 2012 to 2018, supported public financial management, planning, and local government reform across twelve districts in Punjab and KP. The program focused on building the capacity of government systems for improving health and education outcomes and sought to consolidate and embed key reforms in this regard. Key outputs included, improving public financial management and planning systems, and devolving systems and processes to focus on service delivery. Overall, the project was rated successful in both provinces, and seen as consistently meeting and exceeding expectations, especially in its final year.¹⁰⁹

Some of the lessons learnt in the SNG program, in the context of enhancing citizen engagement between the government and people, include the following:¹¹⁰

- .
- Citizen engagement processes are more effective when programs such as SNG liaise with governments and officials, as the ownership of public officials is essential.
- Demand and supply side interventions need closer coordination when it comes to creating forums for citizen engagement with the government.

¹⁰⁵ <https://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/projects/GB-1-202233>

¹⁰⁶ http://iati.dfid.gov.uk/iati_documents/5234748.odt

¹⁰⁷ <https://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/projects/GB-1-108750>

¹⁰⁸ http://iati.dfid.gov.uk/iati_documents/3667754.odt

¹⁰⁹ <https://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/projects/GB-1-202367>

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

Alif Ailaan

Alif Ailaan was a campaign launched in February 2013, which was aimed at putting education front and centre in the public discourse in Pakistan, mainly through a programme of political advocacy targeted at the highest echelons of government and at elected representatives. The campaign also included an extensive research and data compilation programme to inform the discourse on education, and published a range of reports, infographics and fact sheets.

DFID's 2015 Annual Report¹¹¹ on the project found that since Alif Ailaan's analysis was grounded in reliable data and strong analysis, it had received a positive response in federal and provincial governments. Nevertheless, DFID recommended that the project articulate a clear local engagement strategy. It also recommended that the campaign do more to build awareness of parents and move beyond influencing politicians. Alif Ailaan was an example of a project effecting engagement, albeit primarily with elected representatives and only later with ordinary citizens (parents). Its outreach to politicians was largely considered successful, largely on account of its strong research base and effective communication strategy.

In addition to the DFID programmes, this review also assessed the key features of other donor-funded programmes aiming to strengthen citizen engagement with the state:

UNDP – Strengthening Rule of Law Programme

The objective of the programme was to strengthen institutions dealing in law and justice and to enhance efforts to secure peace and stability in two provinces, KP and Balochistan. In terms of citizen engagement, the project worked to form two community based paralegal networks in KP, including trainings for lawyers and members of the lower judiciary. The project also set up Dispute Resolution Councils (DRCs) and legal aid desks. As per the evaluation of the project,¹¹² the project helped to bolster trust in the police and the formal judicial system, while also strengthening systems of Alternative Dispute Resolution. The community based paralegal system was found to be a particularly successful initiative, as paralegals understood the local context, and could direct potential litigants to the legal aid centres accordingly.

The project was unique in that it served to strengthen non-mandated forms of citizen engagement, including the system of paralegals, provision of legal aid, and strengthening of Bar Associations, and the project evaluation found that these were indeed the most successful aspects of implementation. This strengthens the case for supporting non-mandated citizen engagement, particularly in the context of countries like Pakistan where formal systems of engagement are often dysfunctional or only exist on paper.

The World Bank, following its commitment to include citizen engagement mechanisms in every project in 2013, carried out an assessment of its Pakistan portfolio some years later to see the state of engagement in its projects. This is included in the review as the issues highlighted are of relevance to programmes that seek to increase citizen engagement with the state. The evaluation found that its 22 projects in Pakistan had varying levels of success in incorporating its citizen engagement agenda. Of the indicators in the agenda, collecting citizen feedback was the strongest aspect in the country, with every project having some mechanism for feedback. Almost every project also contained some grievance redress mechanism. In contrast, citizen monitoring and capacity building were weak.¹¹³ Sumedh Rao also discusses a World Bank funded project in which grievance redress was used in the aftermath of the 2010 floods in Pakistan. Given the sort of issues faced by people in the affected regions, this allowed for a sense of the extent and kind of support that was needed. The grievance redress mechanism highlighted issues such as incorrect personal data, eligibility, payment, that may not have been deemed as important otherwise. And it was due to this feedback that facilitation centres staffed by NADRA personnel, information campaigns through media and NGOs, and trainings were then provided, while in order to counter issues of mobility, mobile phones were also used as a means to submit complaints.¹¹⁴

Grievance redress mechanisms (GRMs) have been evident in quite a few areas. Rao for instance lists other GRM activities, including communication campaigns that bring together civil societies and citizens, management information systems that collect relevant information for officials, and the use of mobile phones. As one example, he highlights the UNDP-funded Strengthening Public Grievance Redress Mechanism (SPGRM) project that sought to strengthen the Federal Ombudsman institution in Pakistan. This included enhancing public engagement through developing better communications with visitors and complainants, developing citizen report cards to obtain feedback, and then using these for training staff and developing procedures to improve the service.¹¹⁵

Kirk explains the citizen engagement process in the Supporting Transparency, Accountability, and Electoral Process in Pakistan (STAEP) project, to promote accountable democracy through informing citizens and enabling them to

¹¹¹ DFID Annual Review Summary Sheet. Transforming Education in Pakistan. 8th June 2015.

¹¹² Sustainable Development Policy Institute. 2019. Impact Evaluation of Strengthening Rule of Law Programme (SRLP) in Selected Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. February.

¹¹³ Sah and Nadelman, "World Bank Operationalization," 2018.

¹¹⁴ Sumedh Rao, "Grievance Redress Mechanisms in Pakistan," *GSDRC Applied Knowledge Services*, July 2014.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

participate in political processes. In addition to training constituency relations groups, the demands and complaints of citizens were brought to the notice of relevant authorities through this program, and while the success of addressing these complaints is unclear, the program overall is seen as successful in developing inclusive and informed citizen groups. Kirk notes that STAEP also recognized Pakistan's local contexts, and thus initially recruited people with local influence. And while this shows a recognition of different contexts, this approach was changed later to include marginalized individuals in larger number, so that while it "originally sought to acknowledge and, to some extent, engage existing power structures, it now positioned itself to challenge them." In this sense, Kirk argues that this was a radical program by attempting to also dislocate local power structures by bringing voice to the underrepresented and marginalized. This however did not come without challenges but is still conceptually a model for the sort of citizen engagement that has clear goals and aims, but also understands local contexts.¹¹⁶

The USAID-funded Citizens' Voice Project in Pakistan focused entirely on raising and developing citizen engagement by providing voice to people for engagement with the state, with the final goal of enhancing good governance. This had an in-built mechanism for citizen-led approaches as it offered grants to local organizations working on prioritized thematic areas that could develop trust in the government, create engagement between people and the state, and improve public accountability. To this end, it also included trainings of citizen groups to enhance their engagement with tiers of the state.¹¹⁷ In theory, if not in practice, this covers the practical domain of citizen engagement since the purpose, as one analyst puts it, is to develop a two-way horizontal process between the state and the citizens, in which the state both informs the public about its activities and rationales, and accepts feedback,¹¹⁸ which is what the USAID project sought to achieve.

Citizen Engagement and Youth in Pakistan

More specialized studies of citizen engagement, beyond sectors and themes, also look at demographics and regions, and enable us to better understand more nuanced challenges in engaging certain segments of the population. For instance, in a study of civic engagement of the youth in Azad Kashmir, the authors argue that while indicators of political interests in the region (awareness of citizenship rights and responsibility to hold state bodies accountable, for instance) are similar to the rest of Pakistan, there are also interesting trends such as the fact that the youth surveyed in Azad Kashmir do not use social media for any form of citizen engagement, activism, or collective action.¹¹⁹ Such studies can go a long way towards providing the local context for a key demographic.

At a larger level, the 2017 Pakistan National Human Development Report, focusing on the youth of the country, points to engagement as an essential area to harness the potential of young people. The report highlights political awareness of the youth, in movements to restore the judiciary in 2007 under conditions of a military regime, and their increasing participation in the democratic process. Describing civic engagement as "individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern", the UNDP report argues that youth engagement has been "tumultuous" in Pakistan, but that the youth are now politically aware, volunteering, participating in politics as candidates, and being part of political, economic, and social decisions.¹²⁰ This also shows the increasing importance of citizen engagement that requires supply side effectiveness too, since communities are willing and ready to participate.

Citizen Engagement in Governance Systems

One way in which such engagement can occur is through strengthening relations between elected representatives and their constituents. Democracy Reporting International (DRI) suggests some mechanisms in this regard, arguing that this requires some legal frameworks to be enacted in order to be a sustained engagement. DRI's report points to the responsibility of communities, and to Pakistan's international commitments to engage citizens in policy making, such as in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. It lists some platforms for effective citizen engagement and outreach, including public hearings, petitions, site visits, and social media. In all this, the report concludes, all stakeholders find benefits – the state and its representatives get a human face, the people are heard, and the right decisions made.¹²¹

Finally, citizen engagement is said to be more effective if government authority is devolved to more local levels. While local governments have been lately encouraged in Pakistan, Muhammad Ali notes that the process of

¹¹⁶ Kirk, "Citizen-led Accountability and Inclusivity in Pakistan," 2014.

¹¹⁷ Citizens' Voice Project; <https://cvpa-tdea.org/v3/about-us/>

¹¹⁸ Altafullah Khan, "Ensuring public participation in decision making through info," *Daily Times*, June 12, 2017.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/7276/ensuring-public-participation-in-decision-making-through-info/>

¹¹⁹ Zain Rafique, Muhammad Waqas Idrees, and Suet Leng Khoo, "Civic engagement among the youth: empirical evidence from Kashmir, Pakistan," *Humanomics* Vol. 32 No. 3 (2016): 376-388.

¹²⁰ "Pakistan National Human Development Report 2017: Unleashing the Potential of a Young Pakistan," UNDP, 2017.

¹²¹ "Tools for Engagement: A Guide to Strengthening Relations between Parliamentarians and Citizens," *Democracy Reporting International*, 2016. http://democracy-reporting.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/guide_engagement_citizens_parliament_tools.pdf

devolution in the country's four provinces has been varied and inconsistent. The common thread is that provincial governments have control over policies and operations, while local governments are “struggling, to varying degrees, to secure adequate political, fiscal, and administrative power needed to fulfill their functions”. Even in KP, where Ali writes that the process of devolution has brought the government closest to the people through village and NCs, there is no direct engagement with the municipal system, for instance. Subsequently, without the right structures of government at the local level and institutionalized bodies at the community level, citizen engagement remains weak.¹²²

Citizen Engagement and Inclusion in Pakistan

One of the biggest challenges for Pakistan when it comes to citizen engagement is the exclusion or marginalization of women from the process. This is both evident in, and the result of, the relatively poor political participation of women – both as voters and as electable candidates. As one study from Lahore emphasizes, there is a gender gap in electoral participation and the engagement of political parties with women, in addition to a perception about lack of autonomy when women do vote. The study asks why women lack this autonomy and why parties fail to reach out to them, and concludes through surveys that in fact the assumption about women following men of the household when it comes to voting is somewhat overstated. Rather, the study concludes, women's voices and votes matter, and are likely to be based on issues of importance to them. The concern however is that political campaigns are designed to appeal to men, with such strategies entrenched in the election process of Pakistan.¹²³

Recent poor trends in women's political engagement have been attributed to the unstable security climate during which elections took place. However, as a policy brief from the International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) highlights, women have become increasingly active as leaders in politics and civil society as democratic and electoral political process become the norm. The brief continues that elite women in the country were the first to fight for women's rights through civil society organisations and recommends that such organisations increase their engagement with local and national-level government officials and reach out specifically to female politicians in order to enhance women's roles.¹²⁴

Finally, in a 2014 report by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute, (SDPI), Afsheen Naz emphasizes the paucity of literature on social accountability and women in Pakistan and argues that women and specially those who are among the poor are in no position to demand accountability of authority figures given their positions in society. Based on a survey in the city of Sialkot, she further concludes that women face much greater obstacles in entering politics, in part due to the “low respect” of female politicians, so that taking active part in politics is practically impossible for many women. This in turn means that there are great challenges in enabling women to become part of accountability mechanisms in the country.¹²⁵

Citizen Engagement - Challenges and Obstacles in Pakistan

Some of the typical challenges to citizen engagement in general are more pronounced in the case of Pakistan, including state resistance, lack of capacity of state institutions, and participating local elites being unrepresentative. There are also specific challenges of marginalized communities not reached out to, women's voices remaining sidelined, and a lack of trust preventing citizens from working with public officials. As Abbas and Ahmed list them, some of the major challenges to practicing social accountability in Pakistan include “the state's resistance to service delivery reforms, overlapping layers of accountability, vested interests in important social sectors like education and health, implementation flaws in RTI [right to information] legislation, decentralization of fiscal powers to the provincial governments, and absence of enabling environment for social mobilization due to security issues”.¹²⁶

A study conducted by the SDPI suggests that even though several laws and structures in Pakistan seem to support citizen engagement – such as anti-corruption bodies and right to information acts – they are often unclear and there is not enough information available for people to make use of them. Moreover, internal security is a huge challenge to social accountability, and cultural and social norms and volatile law and order situations also pose challenges.¹²⁷

¹²² Syed Mohammad Ali, “Devolution of Power in Pakistan,” *United States Institute of Peace*, Special Report 422, March 2018.

¹²³ Ali Cheema, Asad Liaqat and Shandana Khan Mohmand, “Women's votes matter: unpacking gender politics in a Pakistani,” *Making All Voices Count*, July 20, 2017. <https://www.makingallvoicescount.org/blog/womens-votes-matter-unpacking-gender-politics-pakistani-mega-city/>

¹²⁴ “What the Women Say: Reclaiming the Progressive Past: Pakistani women's struggle against violence & extremism,” *International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN)*, Brief 10, Winter 2014. <http://www.icanpeacework.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/What-the-Women-Say-Pakistan-Brief-Winter-2014.pdf>

¹²⁵ Afsheen Naz, “Social Accountability of Women in Pakistan: A case study of Sialkot,” *SDPI*, Working Paper No: 144, June 2014. [https://www.sdpi.org/publications/files/Social%20Accountability%20of%20Women%20in%20Pakistan%20\(W-144\).pdf](https://www.sdpi.org/publications/files/Social%20Accountability%20of%20Women%20in%20Pakistan%20(W-144).pdf)

¹²⁶ Muhammad Hamza Abbas and Vaqar Ahmed, “Challenges to Social Accountability And Service Delivery in Pakistan,” Working Paper # 145, *Sustainable Development Policy Institute* (2014).

¹²⁷ Ibid.

Yaseen also lists some key challenges in promoting and implementing social accountability in Pakistan, including state resistance, powerful lobbies and interest groups, weak Right to Information Acts and lack of implementation, lack of awareness and social mobilization, and an overall absence of an enabling environment. He argues that such programs often ignore women's voices and fail to encourage supply side capacity or reforms, focusing only on creating citizen groups. The need, he recommends, is to change working systems and laws to oblige government officials to address people's grievances, and enable citizens to lodge complaints and track progress, citing the example of PEMRA in this regard.¹²⁸

Faisal Bari notes that for a country like Pakistan with its traditionally weak governance, institutions like elections are too infrequent to enable citizens to develop voices adequately for their needs. What is needed, he suggests, are "more frequently available feedback loops between the governors and the governed," such as through the media.¹²⁹ A household level survey conducted by the SDPI in 2014 on social accountability also concluded that there was much trust deficit between citizens and the state, and that people needed extensive training in accountability tools and their rights in order to be engaged. Without this, it is unlikely that communities can hold states accountable and demand good governance.¹³⁰

There are valid concerns that incorporating citizens in public institutions is simply eyewash, and concepts such as "citizens' budgets" do not involve citizen's voices. As the Center for Peace and Development Initiatives has concluded in this regard, in the case of budget making processes at the district level in KP in 2016-17, citizen engagement was completely missing. There are several districts where no consultation took place before the budget was prepared, and where consultations did take place, they were with officials, thus not following the Budget Rules. Moreover, the report continues, there was no information provision, websites were missing or outdated, and there was no mechanism to explain the citizens' budget to the citizens.¹³¹

One prerequisite of citizen engagement is to educate citizens on their rights and responsibilities. As Murtaza Haider shows, Pakistan's school systems do not invest in civic education, and even the most educated citizens show significant gaps in awareness about citizen rights, responsibilities, and the laws that can enable them to participate in the social and legal accountability of organizations and governments alike.¹³² Studies show that secondary schools lack both the resources and the intent to develop civic education in their curricula.¹³³ As a result, as one educationist laments, Pakistani youth do not grow up with the right knowledge and awareness, and thus recommends the inclusion of civic education at school level.¹³⁴ While there have been efforts such as by the Aga Khan University, Institute for Educational Development (AKUIED) in 2002 for a Citizenship Rights and Responsibilities Pakistan (CRRP) project to improve citizenship education in schools and train teachers in this regard,¹³⁵ these activities have not been given enough importance. There are arguments that the media needs to play a bigger role in such education and has failed in this responsibility so far.¹³⁶

CASE STUDIES

The Case of Citizen Engagement in Community Policing

Community policing has been sporadically introduced in Pakistan in different regions. In Islamabad in 2018 for instance, a programme began with the declaration that "Islamabad police are very much committed to serving the people and enhancing liaison with community through inculcating various friendly measures in order to win public support." This was to be achieved by creating community centres at police stations where decisions and strategies for policing and maintaining peace and order were, theoretically, to be jointly discussed.¹³⁷ Thus community engagement in this case was seen as both a means and an end.

¹²⁸ Yaseen, "Social Accountability in Pakistan," 2013.

¹²⁹ Faisal Bari, "An Unresponsive System," Pakistan Today, October 10, 2011.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2011/10/10/an-unresponsive-system/>

¹³⁰ Abbas and Ahmed, "Challenges to Social Accountability," 2014.

¹³¹ "Study of Budget Making Process at District Level in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 2016-2017," *Citizens' Network for Budget Accountability and Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives*, 2017.

¹³² Murtaza Haider, "Pakistan's need for Civic Education," *Dawn*, April 2, 2014

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1097292>

¹³³ Ishtiaq Ahmad Choudhry, Muhammad Muzaffar, and Muhammad Arshad Javaid, "School Environment and Political Awareness at Secondary Level: A Case Study of Pakistan," *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences (PJSS)* Vol. 36, No. 2 (2016), pp. 991-1000.

¹³⁴ Shagufta Gul, "The youth needs civic engagement," *Daily Times*, August 22, 2018

¹³⁵ Dean, B. L. "Citizenship education in Pakistani schools: Problems and possibilities," *International Journal of Citizenship and Teacher Education*, 1, 2 (2005), 35-55. http://ecommons.aku.edu/pakistan_ied_pdck/30

¹³⁶ Ifra Mushtaq, Muhammad Abiodullah, and Razaqat Ali Akber, "Political Participation of the Educated in Pakistan," *Journal of Elementary Education*, Vol.21, No. 1, pp. 25-42

¹³⁷ "Community Policing Reintroduced," *Dawn*, Feb 7, 2018. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1387867>

A 2017 report on policing in Lahore focuses on people's perceptions about institutions ostensibly providing security, and notes that citizen engagement is lacking in this important sector that necessitates communication between people and officials. As a result, the authors recommend approaches for how to improve citizen engagement by restructuring police stations and incorporating technology. Arguing that effective collaboration between citizens and the police is needed for mega cities and to control crime rates, they emphasize institutional reforms that can build the requisite trust – thus one form of citizen engagement – before formal patrolling and policing collaborations can take place, i.e. another form of citizen engagement.¹³⁸

Institutions and platforms for community engagement with public bodies such as the police require a different format and perspective on citizen engagement. And while there have been efforts at this, these tend to be temporary and without sustainable or even effective collaboration, which cannot be attributed simply to impracticality of the concept of community policing. The Center for Peace and Development Initiatives developed a “practical guide” for police officers in Pakistan, based on previous experiences of community policing in the country, in its internally different contexts, with the idea that these have to be learnt from, and – rightly – that indigenous knowledge is required for such initiatives to work in Pakistan. In doing so, it comes up with stages of community policing, in which the very first step – preparation and design of the process – relies heavily on citizen engagement, i.e. bringing on board representative and diverse people to help develop effective policies for community policing and building trust with the law and order institutions.¹³⁹

Models of Citizen Engagement and Potential of Digital Technologies

In Pakistan and elsewhere, the sources suggest that there have been successful examples of different approaches of citizen engagement. These include mechanisms for feedback regarding service provision, reporting corruption, and encouraging citizen activism to hold local public officials to account. However, the context varies, and is not translated simply to another culture or region. In all these different kinds of projects, however, the literature shows that the potential and role of digital technologies are of much interest for bringing radical changes to how engagement works or can work. These include the use of mobile phones for short message service (SMS) messages and phone calls, websites, as well as applications for smartphones.

Digital technologies are arguably among the most useful sources for citizen engagement given the ease of access and the possibility of quick and remote participation. Providing several examples of citizen engagement, a Transparency International report highlights that citizen engagement has benefitted countries by raising awareness, accountability structures, and satisfaction of services. It takes different forms, and increasingly uses digital means to involve citizens. Examples of successful endeavours include websites such as “I Paid a Bribe” in India to reduce corruption in public offices, and a mobile phone-based citizen feedback system in Pakistan (discussed later in this review). In both instances, reported complaints, active users, and actions taken to reduce corruption depicted high numbers in the tens of thousands and have been deemed successes.¹⁴⁰

A 2017 Corsham Institute and RAND report on the use of technologies for citizen engagement, emphasizes the horizontal and vertical nature of online communications and the important role of social media in providing voice to citizens. It notes that simple technologies can also engage remote communities. By allowing greater communication between the state and citizens, the expectation is that digital technology can lead to “demand-led, user-driven public services” such as in passport applications or voter registrations, as has been the case in the UK, increasing public satisfaction as a result. Overall, the report argues, digital technologies can help create a “citizen-powered democracy” by lowering barriers and causing “transformative disruption” in political processes. An important point of caution however is that national governments may own and regulate online activity, which can be counter-productive and restrictive to the intent of citizen engagement.¹⁴¹ Indeed the successes of incorporating digital technologies into the process can lead to exuberance and exaggerated portrayals of engagement, and thus highlighting the challenges in this regard is also an important part of this discourse.

Unsurprisingly then, digital technologies have emerged as the single most important approach for citizen engagement given that they enable participation of previously marginalized people and make quantifying and tracking feedback and complaints easier. In fact, such is the expected potential, if not current reality, of digital technologies in bringing people to the centre of the development paradigm, that the term “liberation technology” has been coined (a play on the influential term ‘liberation theology’) to point to their impact. The idea pushed here is that technology can and does “enhance access to information, participation, collaboration, and empowerment,” with the

¹³⁸ Ali Cheema, Zulfiqar Hameed, Jacob Shapiro, “Victimization, Citizen Engagement, and Policing in Lahore.” *Institute of Development and Economic Alternatives* (2017)

¹³⁹ “Handbook on Community Policing: A practical guide for police officers of Police Service of Pakistan,” *Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives*, November 2015.

¹⁴⁰ Marín, “Evidence of citizen engagement impact,” January 2016.

¹⁴¹ Talitha Dubow, “Civic engagement: How can digital technologies underpin citizen-powered democracy?” *Corsham Institute, RAND Europe* (2017).

outcome of speeding progress on closing the “accountability gap” that exists between government services’ supply and demand of citizens.¹⁴²

However, beyond concerns of state regulation of online spaces, there are also challenges of penetration to remote areas, elite capture of digital technologies systems, and literacy challenges that prevent the participation of the most marginalized. There is also a concern in the literature that this could lead to perceptions of success and effective citizen engagement simply due to higher numbers of participants rather than effective solutions due to that engagement – in effect making lip service to and evidence of reaching beneficiaries much easier. Despite these issues, investments in digital technologies make strategic and practical sense, as long as the challenges are recognized and accounted for in every project. The Indian government, for instance, has sought to avail opportunities to engage ordinary people in government projects by using technology, and making itself appear more accessible and accountable. The idea is that citizen engagement is “an interactive two-way process that encourages participation, exchange of ideas and flow of conversation. It reflects willingness on part of government to share information and make citizens a partner in decision making.” However, the country’s Ministry of Communications and Information Technology also admits to facing hurdles inherent in the process: low levels of literacy, low outreach to rural areas, issues of language, problems in raising awareness and information, etc. are just a few of the concerns highlighted in this regard.¹⁴³

That said, the very challenges faced in the use of digital technologies, such as outreach to marginalized groups, can also be overcome through digital technologies in other contexts. As a 2014 World Bank study notes, digital technologies can help to overcome inaccessible channels of participation and need to be accompanied by investments in literacy and training. It emphasizes the three-tiered “feedback loop” – providing information to people, collecting their views, and taking action based on those views – as a process that necessitates effective citizen engagement, and can benefit from digital technologies. However, the study also argues that this requires changing mindsets so that people’s involvement in projects goes beyond simply fulfilling requirements of participation numbers. To do this, citizens must be participants in the development cycle from the very beginning, at the stage of project preparation as well; this of course is more relevant and doable for sub-projects or activities at local levels, with the World Bank giving the example of the Tamil Nadu Empowerment and Poverty Reduction Project in this regard.¹⁴⁴ Other projects with citizen engagement where the intent is primarily to collect information, are simpler and do not require consistent collaboration apart from basic digital technologies use. These cannot be dismissed as inadequate, as one study argues, since they fulfil the requirements of the project. These include the Kenyan platform Ushahidi, that was launched during the 2007 election violence, through which citizens could report violence that was then mapped online; or the work of the NGO Daraja that used mobile phones to enable citizens to report on government water provisioning in rural Tanzania.¹⁴⁵

Renee Wittemyer et. al. note the challenges and potentials of citizen engagement programs of different types, highlighting traditional feedback mechanisms of scorecards and public hearings etc. as technology can “shorten the accountability route further”. They give an example of FixMyStreet and SeeClickFix, which are digital technology-led platforms in the UK and North America respectively, which allow citizens to visually and textually report problems to local agencies.¹⁴⁶ Similar projects and movements by citizens in Pakistan have also come up, though with the intent to publicly shame the relevant organizations, which is another form of citizen engagement, though one that at times seeks to work against the state than collaborate with it.¹⁴⁷ In India, similarly, websites with coloured-flag systems have been used to give feedback on politicians’ performance by constituents, and the information is said to have been crucial in succeeding voting cycles. Of course, here as well there are weaknesses such as political opponents taking advantage, or some politicians not having their work tracked online and thus benefitting from the absence of accountability.¹⁴⁸

The point thus is that digital technologies provide platforms to engage citizens, and while there are challenges since these can simply be used to provide a façade of engagement, there are also obvious benefits if these are availed with the right intent. In Pakistan, the government has for instance created and advertised an application for customer feedback on public services of various kinds, though much more work needs to be done on its use and the outcomes

¹⁴² Savita Bailur and Björn-Sören Gigler, “Introduction: The Potential for Empowerment through ICTs,” in Björn-Sören Gigler and Savita Bailur, ed. *Can Technology Bridge the Accountability Gap?*, World Bank, 2014.

¹⁴³ “Department of Electronics and Information Technology Framework for Citizen Engagement in e-Governance, Department of Electronics & Information Technology,” *Ministry of Communications & Information Technology, Government of India* (April 2012).

¹⁴⁴ Björn-Sören Gigler, Samantha Custer, Savita Bailur, Elizabeth Dodds, and Saher Asad with Elena Gagieva, “Closing the Feedback Loop: Can Technology Amplify Citizen Voices,” *The World Bank*, 2014.

¹⁴⁵ Bailur and Gigler, “Introduction: The Potential for Empowerment through ICTs,” 2014.

¹⁴⁶ Renee Wittemyer, Savita Bailur, Nicole Anand, Kyung-Ryul Park, and Björn-Sören Gigler, “New Routes to Governance: A Review of Cases in Participation, Transparency, and Accountability,” in Björn-Sören Gigler and Savita Bailur, ed. *Can Technology Bridge the Accountability Gap?*, World Bank, 2014.

¹⁴⁷ See: www.tribune.com.pk/fixit/

¹⁴⁸ Wittemyer, et. al., “New Routes to Governance,” 2014.

of citizen responses. The current government in Pakistan in its initial three months, also developed an online tracker of its activities, to provide information, as a purported first step towards engaging people.¹⁴⁹ The next section deals with the Pakistani context in further detail.

Role and Potential Of Digital Technologies In Pakistan

There are significant examples of the use of digital technologies in citizen engagement processes, with the case of Punjab highlighted, especially in gathering feedback and providing platforms for reporting corruption. Despite the emphasis on digital technologies, studies that compare developments in Pakistan with other countries – such as Singapore – are naturally sceptical of the short-term potential of technology. As the authors argue, even as the Pakistani government attempts to embrace technology, it does not have the resources or skills to bring about radical changes in monitoring, engagement, and service provision. An even bigger concern, they continue, is about the demand-side, in that the citizens are also under-educated and lack interest in the potential of digital technologies.¹⁵⁰

While these are cautious, if not outright pessimistic views about the role of technology in promoting citizen engagement and good governance, the more popular opinion is that technology has the potential to transform public offices and their engagement with ordinary Pakistanis. The Punjab government is praised for modernizing its operations through governance reforms and using online systems to improve access of citizens and encourage employees as well such as through Punjab Public Management Reform Program (PPMRP). Together with a Right to Information Act in 2013, this has led to improved citizen perceptions about the government as they are able to access details of services and public institutions, enquire about procedures and processes through a Citizens' Contact Centre, avail over 150 citizen facilitation centres in the province, and use websites to apply for jobs as well as documents such as registrations of vehicles. In addition, smartphone apps have helped to track the work of government departments and create systems of feedback. A sharp rise in immunization rates is attributed to these steps of the Punjab government to engage citizens. Moreover, the PPMRP has also helped to digitize maps and ownership records in order to improve tax collection, and thus seen a 115 percent rise in urban property tax receipts since 2013.¹⁵¹

An important initiative of the Punjab government is the phone and message feedback mechanism to citizens who visit a government office for any service. Establishing a clear connection with the Chief Minister (whose voice message they hear on the phone), this has been seen as one of the most effective ways to reduce corruption by government officials. This Citizen Feedback Model (later the Citizen Feedback Monitoring Program or CFMP) directly sought out service users and enquired about their experience, with millions of citizens contacted and several thousand incidents of corruption reported as a result.¹⁵² The program was deemed an early success with one seemingly minor tweak to the traditional grievance redress approach as rather than waiting for citizens to approach the state with feedback, it “actively seeks feedback from citizens through calls and text messages”, leading to a higher rate of replies and thus monitoring. At least in its early years, there were actions taken against corrupt officials as well.¹⁵³

The project itself was acclaimed since its initial days in Jhang district that developed into the CFMP which was regarded as a “dialogue between senior administrators and citizens” and has since been attempted in all districts of Punjab. The aim is to bridge trust gaps, curb corruption, monitor public service delivery and enhance the role of citizens. It is regarded to have been a resounding success due to its impact on the government work, with timely updates of how many people have been contacted and what complaints have been registered. Overall, it has been praised for engaging people, displaying strong political commitment, and having a clear policy framework, while having measurable outcomes.¹⁵⁴ With its “main aim... to identify problematic areas, curb petty corruption in service delivery and facilitate government officials in taking evidence-based corrective measures” the CFMP is regarded as leading to successful outcomes, such as in the dispensation of medicines at government hospitals and overall health services delivery.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁹ See: www.pm100days.pmo.gov.pk

¹⁵⁰ Zulfiqar Haider, Chen Shuwen, and Sajjad Hyder, “Citizens’ participation in e-government services: A Comparative Study of Pakistan & Singapore,” *IOSR Journal of Electronics and Communication Engineering* Volume 9, Issue 6, Ver. I (Nov - Dec. 2014), pp. 35-48.

¹⁵¹ Irum Touqeer and Clelia Rontoyanni, “Technology is transforming governance in Pakistan,” *World Bank Blog*, April 2, 2019, <https://blogs.worldbank.org/endpovertyinsouthasia/technology-transforming-governance-pakistan>

¹⁵² Mabruk Kabir, “Improving Service Delivery in Pakistan, One Text Message at a Time,” *World Bank Blog*, February 12, 2014, <https://blogs.worldbank.org/endpovertyinsouthasia/improving-service-delivery-pakistan-one-text-message-time>

¹⁵³ Ana Bellver Vazquez-Dodero and Zubair Bhatti, “M-government? – Innovations from Punjab,” *World Bank Blog*, June 25, 2013. <http://blogs.worldbank.org/governance/m-government-innovations-punjab>

¹⁵⁴ “The Citizen Feedback Monitoring Programme in Punjab Province,” *Center for Public Impact*, April 4, 2016.

<https://www.centreforpublicimpact.org/case-study/calling-citizens-improving-state-pakistans-feedback-monitoring-system/>

¹⁵⁵ “Citizen Feedback Monitoring Program (CFMP)”

<https://www.pitb.gov.pk/cfmp>

Zubair Bhatti and Ana Bellver emphasize that beyond citizen engagement, mobile technology has become paramount in the way the Punjab government is conducting several activities. Dengue monitoring, “monitoring the monitors” projects, and tracking attendances of employees, are all possible through customized apps that can radically change efficiency in the government sector.¹⁵⁶ However, as the literature on the diversity of factors affecting citizen engagement practices have argued, replicating apparent successes in other areas is not advisable. Thus the success of digital technologies and programs like the CFMP in Punjab, with a more informed citizen body, more urban areas, and better functioning government departments, means that simply taking these models to other regions is unlikely to lead to similar results unless the requisite trainings, outreach, and engagement projects are worked on before.

Finally, the potential and successes of technology, despite apparent citizen engagement mechanisms, need to be addressed with consistent and committed narrow studies before they are seen as successful in every outcome. For instance, the Pakistan Citizens’ Portal app was launched in November 2018 by the current government with the same intent: to enable citizens to connect with multiple government offices (approximately 4,000) at federal and provincial levels, and track responses to complaints. While the intent is lauded, analysts caution against being too optimistic with such initiatives given past experiences of engaging citizens by the state. This includes the citizen monitoring feedback mechanism noted above, where it is suggested by one analyst that while users of government services (in this case hospitals) were contacted, there was limited access, little accountability, and lack of knowledge shown by beneficiaries. Thus even as the intent and potential of the Pakistan Citizens’ Portal is noted, it is also suggested that “the absence of a strategy document or roadmap for the Pakistan Citizens’ Portal raises important questions regarding accessibility, knowledge dissemination to a technologically-disenfranchised populace, inclusivity, and the legal frameworks of the initiative.”¹⁵⁷ That said, the Citizens’ Portal was introduced with emphasis on policy-making from the state occurring only after “hearing the voice of the people,” a sentiment that came from the highest office in the country, reflecting at least an awareness of the need for citizen engagement.¹⁵⁸ Recognizing that need is the first step; working towards successful engagement, however, takes time, effort, and investments, as this review has shown.

¹⁵⁶ Vazquez-Dodero and Bhatti, “M-government?,” June 25, 2013. <http://blogs.worldbank.org/governance/m-government-innovations-punjab>

¹⁵⁷ “Citizens, Health and Governance,” *The News*, November 27, 2018. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/398678-citizens-health-and-governance>

¹⁵⁸ “‘Every Pakistani now has a voice’: PM Khan inaugurates complaint portal for citizens,” *Dawn*, October 28, 2018. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1441947>

CONCLUSION

The literature seems to indicate that citizen engagement is effective when service providers (usually state institutions) “buy into” the process, and use culturally appropriate mechanisms to ensure that marginalised groups are included in the consultations. In Pakistan, citizen engagement has been catalysed by NGOs for some decades – the Rural Support Programmes, who work with communities on income generation and livelihoods, connect the village organisations that they help form with local service providers as an integral part of their community organisation ethos. More recently, the concept has also caught on in government institutions– as manifested for example, in legislation to empower local governments and create forums for citizen feedback at the grassroots level. Most of the initiatives have, however, tended to focus on grievance redress, with relatively little emphasis on consultation at planning stages. There is also a tendency to limit outreach to the more prominent members of society, at the expense of women and marginalized groups. Nevertheless, the fact that citizen engagement systems have been instituted to varying degrees across most public investment initiatives, and that technology has been used effectively for the purpose, gives rise to optimism that the process will get stronger.

Some of the key takeaways from the literature review include the following:

Engagement should be context specific to be effective: Strategies for citizen engagement should, as the GPSA notes (see details in the review), be contextualised and realistic, and should aim to solve specific policy problems. A good example from Pakistan is the Alif Ailaan campaign, which focused on a particular sector (education), and specified a target audience (legislators, educators, parents) rather than working in a generalised mode.

Engagement should be an ongoing process and should begin when investment or service provision is conceived: If citizen engagement systems are in place for a variety of interventions, it is easier to put them into play when new initiatives are being planned. Also, getting marginalised groups involved at the initial stages can yield dividends, as evidenced in the international literature. In Pakistan, the emphasis is more on grievance redress than initial consultation, and this may explain why implementation of development projects tends to run into snags. The lack of engagement at initial stages means that socio-political obstacles tend to remain unforeseen. This is particularly true for small-scale community level initiatives, which are best implemented by local governments, whose representatives are aware of the local conditions.

Providing a legal and policy framework is crucial: Citizen engagement works best when there is a legal, institutional and policy framework to support it. In Pakistan, the local government legislation of 2001 provided a range of fora for citizen engagement, and although not all of them were operationalised, they did provide a blueprint for consultations with communities, as well as underlining the importance of instituting feedback mechanisms. More recent initiatives such as the RTI Commissions set up in the provinces, and the systems of departmental helplines and robo calls have followed from the emphasis on better service delivery, the legal basis for which was the local government legislation.

Technology offers a range of possibilities, not all of which have been fully explored in Pakistan: Technology (through social media, mobile apps and online communication systems) offers a range of possibilities when it comes to engaging citizens and are thus attractive due to the apparent ease with which they can help fulfill project requirements. For the potential of technological developments to be harnessed, their use should not be limited to feedback and grievance redress alone. Rather, the opportunity to create more inclusive engagement structures through digital technologies needs to be explored, in consultation with the communities.

The engagement of women, minority groups and youth has not yet been given the attention it deserves – either in citizen engagement initiatives or in the available literature. In Pakistan, as in other countries, although the effective participation of women and other marginalised groups is broadly accepted as (at least) a benign social good, there has been little emphasis on making this a reality.

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LIST OF EXPERTS CONSULTED

Redacted

ANNEX A: STRENGTH OF SOURCES (BOOKS, JOURNAL ARTICLES AND REPORTS)

Weak

- “Civic Engagement, Leadership, and Visibility Accomplishments.” *The White House Council on Women and Girls*. June 2016. https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/documents/Women%20and%20Girls_Civic%20Leadership%20Engagement%20and%20Visibility.pdf
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