The EU supports local civil society organizations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to open channels for citizen engagement with government to make public budgets fair and transparent, enhance access to quality public services especially for the poor, and increase trust in public institutions by making them more responsive, inclusive and accountable.

The challenge

Decentralization reforms (2010-16) created important opportunities for citizens, especially the poor, to influence government spending priorities and the delivery of quality education, healthcare, drinking water, irrigation, and other services in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. To help ensure that these opportunities are fully seized, the EU supports civil society to engage with government on public budgets and accountability processes to help citizens have increased and fair access to services.

How do we address the challenge?

The EU supports two local NGOs, Omar Asghar Khan Foundation and Media Matters for Democracy, to work intensively with more than 200 civil society organizations and 100 journalists in some of the poorest communities of 12 districts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. They aim to enhance public scrutiny of government resources; and increase engagement with public representatives and government officials to suggest ways in which services and public spending may be improved.

Such citizen involvement in local governance goes further than electoral participation. It is an exciting democratic innovation that strengthens public institutions by promoting inclusion and accountability. The engagement between different parties at local level provides for a forum whereby organized public opinion can make legitimate claims for sound public finance decisions to improve the management of public resources and the delivery of government services.

What do we do?

Demonstrate innovations in inclusive planning that ensure the voices of the poorest and their interests are reflected in development priorities

Analyze public budgets to recommend reforms for more transparent public finance management

Support public interaction with government officials to improve development outcomes and the delivery of essential services

Build civil society capacity in social accountability to help citizens, especially the poor, assess public spending and services, and suggest ways to improve them.

Train journalists to effectively use data for improved reporting on citizen actions to hold governments to account

What are we aiming to achieve?

Pro-poor, inclusive development planning effectively demonstrated

Public spending and demand enhanced for fair and transparent public finance decisions

Increased engagement of public representatives and government officials with civil society organizations on citizens' based demands for quality public services

Civil society organizations enabled to use social accountability to resist citizens, especially the poor, to engage with government for improved public services

Good practices in budget transparency and social accountability shared across Pakistan

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The European Union (EU) funds projects and programmes around the world in order to help address global and local challenges. The reduction of poverty and the respect of fundamental rights and freedoms are key objectives in this context.

In Pakistan, the EU is committed to a stable, democratic and pluralistic country that respects human rights and benefits from its full economic potential by supporting sustainable and inclusive development for all its citizens. The EU provides Pakistan with about €100 million annually in grants for development and cooperation. Among other issues, the EU supports Pakistan in its efforts to tackle poverty, increase education, promote good governance, human rights, rule of law and ensure sustainable management of natural resources. EU-funded projects are covering all of Pakistan with a special focus on Sindh and Balochistan.

The collaboration between the European Union and Pakistan is grounded in the Strategic Engagement Plan (SEP) signed in 2019. Areas of cooperation under the SEP include peace and security, democracy, rule of law, human rights, and migration but also sectors such as energy, climate change and science and technology.

The EU is one of Pakistan’s largest trading partners. The EU supports Pakistan’s integration into the world economy and its sustainable economic development, namely by granting it preferential access to the European single market under the GSP+ system since 2014. Under this scheme almost 80% of Pakistan’s exports enter the EU duty and quota free. In 2018, Pakistani exports to the EU were worth €6.9 billion.

In order to enjoy the trade preferences under GSP+, Pakistan needs to demonstrate progress on the implementation of 27 international conventions on human rights, good governance, labour rights and environmental protection.

**Support to policy**

Through the Citizen Engagement for Responsive and Accountable Governance (CERAG) citizens, especially the poor are empowered, to exercise their right to hold the government accountable for its use of public funds. This supports the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government’s efforts to reform the management of public finances and the provision of basic services. Interactions between citizens and the government under the project are also enhancing public confidence in government institutions.

**What can we learn from this project?**

CERAG’s contributions have succeeded in shaping new channels of citizen engagement in governance that go further than electoral participation. It has shown that social accountability and public budget analysis are democratic innovations that allow creative interactions between responsible and active citizens and responsive and accountable government institutions. This engagement positively affects the dynamics of rights and responsibilities that exist between people and government institutions, in particular the relationship between the duties of the state and the entitlements of citizens.

**Expected Results**

- **Over 300,000** families of which 200,000 are poor, have access to improved schools, healthcare, drinking and irrigation water, veterinary care, roads and other essential services.
- **3,000** demands for improved services have been made by 277 trained civil society organizations in 12 Khyber Pakhtunkhwa districts.
- **More than 300** representatives and government officials have taken over 5,000 actions in response to citizen demands to improve public services.
- **More than Rs.100 million** from public budgets, including about Rs.29 million local government funds, have been expended in response to citizen demands for improved public services.
- **Voices and interests of hundreds of women and men in very poor communities have shaped development plans.**
- **22** reforms in public finance management have been recommended based on analysis of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa’s budgets for three financial years since 2017.

**EU in Pakistan**

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