

**Brief on Information Requests**  
(Jan.–Dec. 2005)

In November 2004, Board of the Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives, Pakistan (CPDI-Pakistan) decided to establish a program on freedom of information and transparency in Pakistan. This decision was based on the realization that the pervasive culture of secrecy and lack of transparency in government departments was one of the main reasons for corruption, non-participation of citizens' in decision/ policy making, and lack of democratic accountability in Pakistan.

In follow-up to the Board's decision, CPDI-Pakistan implemented a number of research, advocacy and training initiatives to promote transparency and freedom of information in governance. One of these was the Information Requests Initiative, whereby CPDI-Pakistan sought to:

- Obtain information from various government departments under the Freedom of Information Ordinance 2002. Purpose was share the thus collected information with citizens and other citizen groups to inform their political choices or advocacy initiatives, and give them the power of information to effectively engage government departments.
- Test the effectiveness of Freedom of Information Ordinance 2002 in terms of guaranteeing citizens' right to information.
- Impress upon the government departments that they should put in place efficient mechanisms to deal with citizens' requests for information.

The Table below briefly explains the nature of information requests submitted by CPDI-Pakistan during the year 2004 and the progress on them since then. CPDI-Pakistan is currently working to have an in-depth analysis of the experience of information requests in order to draw policy-relevant lessons.

<b>No</b>	<b>Information Requested/ Relevant Agency</b>	<b>Action Taken</b>	<b>Status</b>
	<b>Zirai Tarqati Bank Limited (ZTBL)</b>		
<b>1</b>	1. A copy of the Annual Report; 2. Total funds allocated for loans in the district Jhang during the last 5 years (category-wise as well as year-wise); 3. Total funds disbursed as loans in the district Jhang during the last 5 years (category-wise as well as year-wise); 4. Total number of borrowers whose loans were declared as bad loans/ unrecoverable by the Bank during the last 5 years in the district Jhang (category-wise as well as year-wise); 5. Total amount that involved bad/ unrecoverable	Information Requested: April 12, 2004  Agency's reply: none  Complaint to Ombudsman: May 30, 2004  ZTBL claimed exemption. But on 31	CPDI closed the case in view of the limited scope of the Ordinance.

	<p>loans over the last 5 years (category-wise as well as year-wise);</p> <p>6. Branch-wise figures of loans (i.e. number as well as amounts) extended in the district Jhang during the last 5 years (category-wise as well as year-wise);</p> <p>7. Branch-wise figures of loans (i.e. number as well as amounts) declared as bad/unrecoverable loans during the last 5 years (category-wise as well as year-wise).</p>	<p>July 2004, Ombudsman recommended supply of information within 45 days. Agency, however, filed a review request. Ombudsman reconsidered the case and revised his recommendation on 21 Sept. 2004 by agreeing with ZTBL that it was not required to provide the requested information under FOI Ordinance 2002.</p>	
<p>2</p>	<p>1. Total allocation of funds for loaning purposes to various branches of the Bank in the district Jhang in the current financial year (category-wise);</p> <p>2. Do the branches of the Bank get all the allocated funds in one go at the beginning of the year? If not, what is the schedule of providing funds to the branches in the district Jhang?</p> <p>3. Do the various branches of the Bank have enough funds available around the year to meet the demand for credit in their respective areas? If not, what are the reasons and what efforts are being made to address the problem? [Relevant documents on financial flows to various branches in the district may kindly be furnished].</p> <p>4. What is the system of coordination between various branches in the district to ensure that defaulters of one branch are not able to access credit from another branch?</p>	<p>Information Requested: April 12, 2004</p> <p>Agency's reply: none</p> <p>Complaint to Ombudsman: May 30, 2004</p> <p>ZTBL claimed exemption. But on 31 July 2004, Ombudsman recommended supply of information within 45 days. Agency, however, filed a review request. Ombudsman reconsidered the case and revised his recommendation on 21 Sept. 2004 by agreeing with ZTBL that it was not required to provide the requested information under FOI Ordinance 2002.</p>	<p>CPDI closed the case in view of the limited scope of the Ordinance.</p>

	<b>FESCO</b>		
<b>3</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A copy of the latest Annual Report of FESCO;</li> <li>2. Number of total FESCO consumers/ meter-holders in the district Jhang (category-wise as well as tehsil-wise);</li> <li>3. Number of total FESCO consumers/ meter-holders in terms of their distribution between the rural and urban categories;</li> <li>4. Number of total villages electrified by FESCO during the last 2 years in the district Jhang (year-wise as well as tehsil-wise);</li> <li>5. Total revenue collected by FESCO from the district Jhang during the last 2 years both in terms of different types of taxes and service charges;</li> <li>6. Total money spent by FESCO in the district Jhang for network expansion or infrastructure development during the last 2 years.</li> </ol>	<p>Information Requested: April 12, 2004</p> <p>Agency's reply: None</p> <p>Complaint to Ombudsman: June 1, 2004</p> <p>On Ombudsman's recommendation, FESCO provided a part of requested information on June 17, 2004. For remaining information, FESCO stated that it was not available.</p>	<p>CPDI didn't insist for remaining information. Ombudsman closed the case on June 21, 2004.</p>
	<b>National Highway Authority (NHA)</b>		
<b>4</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A copy each of all contracts awarded for construction of highways in the distt. Jhang during the last 2 years;</li> <li>2. A copy each all the contracts awarded for repair work on highways in the district Jhang during the last 2 years.</li> </ol>	<p>Information Requested: April 12, 2004</p> <p>Agency's response: None</p> <p>Complaint to Ombudsman: June 2, 2004</p> <p>NHA claimed exemption; also additional time to seek advice from the Ministry. On 23 June 2004, Ombudsman recommended supply of requested information within 60 days or give reasons</p>	<p>NHA failed to comply with Ombudsman's recommendation. CPDI is still pursuing the case.</p>

		for non-compliance.	
	Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA)		
<b>5</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A copy of the latest Annual Report of WAPDA;</li> <li>2. Number of total WAPDA consumers/ meter-holders in the district Jhang (category-wise as well as tehsil-wise);</li> <li>3. Number of total WAPDA consumers/ meter-holders in terms of their distribution between the rural and urban categories;</li> <li>4. Number of total villages electrified during the last 5 years in the district Jhang (year-wise as well as tehsil-wise);</li> <li>5. Total revenue collected by WAPDA from the district Jhang during the last 5 years both in terms of different types of taxes and service charges;</li> <li>6. Total money spent by WAPDA in the district Jhang for network expansion or infrastructure development during the last 5 years.</li> </ol>	<p>Information Requested: April 12, 2004</p> <p>Complaint to Ombudsman: May 30, 2004</p> <p>On Ombudsman's intervention, CPDI received the requested information on June 25, 2004.</p>	Case closed with CPDI's consent.
	Ministry of Environment		
<b>6</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A copy of the last Annual Report;</li> <li>2. Details about the environmental projects that the Federal Ministry of Environment or its attached departments have supported or implemented in the district Jhang during the last 5 years;</li> <li>3. Details about the environmental projects that the Federal Ministry of Environment or its attached departments are currently supporting or implementing, or plan to support or implement in near future in the district Jhang.</li> </ol>	<p>Information Requested: April 12, 2004</p> <p>Agency's reply: none</p> <p>Complaint to Ombudsman: June 1, 2004</p> <p>On Ombudsman's intervention, CPDI received the information requested on June 21, 2004.</p>	With CPDI's consent, Ombudsman closed the case on June 23, 2004.