

TOOL 3  
**HOW to Engage**  
Parliamentarians for  
Effective Reforms in  
the Education Sector?



**CPDI-Pakistan**  
Promoting Peace and Development  
Through Citizenship

CPDI-Pakistan

Centre for Peace and Development Initiative, Pakistan  
105. Park Towers, F-10/3, Islamabad.  
Tel. No: +92-51-2108287,4319430 Fax: 051-2101594  
Email: [info@cpdi-pakistan.org](mailto:info@cpdi-pakistan.org)  
Website: [www.cpdi-pakistan.org](http://www.cpdi-pakistan.org)

TOOL 3

## HOW to Engage

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Effective Reforms in  
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*Centre for Peace and Development Initiative, Pakistan*  
105. Park Towers, F-10/3, Islamabad.  
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

*“The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”*  
Edmund Burke

An effective and a functional democracy, where government is responsive and accountable to the public, is hard to conceive in the absence of vigilant citizens and civil society groups, who constructively engage the elected representatives to ensure the protection and promotion of basic human rights and vital public interests. The absence of citizens' vigilance can easily turn even the elected governments into despotic regimes, which respond to vested interests and pay least attention to protection of basic rights and freedoms, and needs of general public and marginalized sections of society. On the other hand, if citizens are vigilant and actively engaged in the governance processes, it is more likely that the government's policies and priorities would reflect their interests and aspirations. It may be appropriate here to refer to Thomas Jefferson, who is famously quoted to have said: “The price of freedom is eternal vigilance”.

Vigilance and engagement require citizens to keep themselves informed about how their government functions and then take initiatives to influence public policies for appropriate reforms. Pakistan, however, presents a situation where citizens generally remain disengaged from the governance process. On many occasions, vested interests have captured governments and effectively dismissed even the need of holding free and fair elections. But even when people were consulted, they were not necessarily able to make the best choices in view of information gaps and manipulations in the political process. Worst of all, after having elected a government, citizens and civil society groups in Pakistan find themselves completely helpless to hold the government accountable. It is, therefore, extremely important that citizens and civil society groups not only work for informed voter choices during elections but also learn effective ways of engaging elected representatives on critical issues of public concern. Low priority of education sector in the government's priorities in one of many such issues in Pakistan.

Education is an extremely important area for a developing country like Pakistan where major challenges include basic literacy as well as production of adequately educated, politically conscious and technically skilled human resource that could contribute to social and economic development of the country. However, despite some tall claims by political leadership, it remains a neglected area, while citizens have traditionally been kept excluded from decisions related to policy-making, resource allocation, management patterns and monitoring systems. Drastic policy changes have often resulted in treating students like guinea pigs for experimentation of all sorts of new initiatives ranging from different medium of instructions, various examination methodologies and schedules to changes in curriculum. Situation could have been better if citizens and civil society groups were proactively engaged with related government institutions, especially members of the parliament and related parliamentary committees.

In order to effectively engage parliamentarians for effective education sector reforms,

it is necessary that people and civil society groups thoroughly understand the role, functions and responsibilities of members of parliament as well as of parliamentary committee on education. It may be noted that, while the parliament is better known through its full-house sessions, significant parliamentary work takes place in various committees of the parliament. It is, therefore, necessary that people in general and civil society groups in particular develop a deeper understanding of how parliamentary committees function. Such an understanding is a pre-condition for making informed and effective engagements.

Against the above background, this Tool introduces citizens and civil society groups to the role of parliament as well as parliamentary committees. It also provides practical tips for accessing and engaging members of parliament as well as parliamentary committees, especially with regard to introducing reforms in the education sector. It is expected that this would facilitate citizens in putting forth their point of view and effectively participate in policy and law making processes at the national level.

## 2. HISTORY OF THE PARLIAMENT IN PAKISTAN: AN OVERVIEW

Pakistan came into being on 14<sup>th</sup> of August 1947 under an Act of the British Parliament namely: the Independence Act 1947. This Act had become possible only as a result of elections held in the then British India in 1946, which clearly demonstrated that the Muslims wanted for themselves a separate homeland i.e. Pakistan. Hence, Pakistan is truly referred to as a product of a democratic process. Prior to independence, it was decided to let the members elected in 1946 work as a Constituent Assembly. In view of this decision, a notification was issued in the Gazette of India, published on 26<sup>th</sup> July 1947 whereby the first Constituent Assembly of Pakistan was given shape with 69 Members (later on the membership was increased to 79), including one female Member. The Assembly was to exercise all the powers, which were formerly exercised by the Central Legislature. One additional responsibility, however, included the framing of a new Constitution, prior to which all territories included in Pakistan were to be governed in accordance with the Government of India Act, 1935 (as adopted after necessary changes).

The first session of the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan was held on 10<sup>th</sup> August 1947 in the Sindh Assembly Building in Karachi. On 11<sup>th</sup> August 1947, Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah was unanimously elected as the President of the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan. This Constituent Assembly, however, could not frame the new Constitution during its tenure. The Constitution adopted in 1956 could not survive for long; while similar was the fate of the Constitution adopted by the military regime of Ayub Khan in 1962.

The 1973 Constitution of Pakistan, which represented a broad consensus of political parties, provided for a federal and parliamentary form of government, with President as the Head of the State and Prime Minister as Head of the Government. The Federal Parliament consisted of two houses i.e. the National Assembly and the Senate. The National Assembly is the lower house, which consists of directly elected members; while the Senate is the upper house and includes members indirectly elected on the

basis of the principle of equal representation for all federating units. The 1973 Constitution, despite many controversial amendments, continues to represent the broad national consensus and remains operative.

Like most other legislatures, parliament in Pakistan also has a system of parliamentary committees. Both National Assembly and Senate have separate parliamentary committees, which are responsible to oversee the functioning of one or more ministries. In addition, it is possible to establish committees with the mandate to work on a particular issue or for some specific functions, as decided by the respective House.

Parliamentary committees are termed as “Mini Legislatures”. It is also said that the parliament in session is parliament at exhibition, but it is in its committees that the parliament is actually at work. The origins of committee system in the Sub-Continent dates back to the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919. The standing order of the Central Legislative Assembly established under these reforms had provided for the following committees:

Committee on Petitions relating to Bills;  
Select Committee on Amendments of Standing Orders;  
Select Committee on Bills;  
Public Accounts Committee; and  
Joint Committee on Bills.

Apart from committees of the Legislative Assembly, members of both houses of the Central Legislature also served on the standing advisory committees attached to various departments of the Government of India. All these committees were purely advisory in character and functioned under the control of the Government with the minister-in-charge of the department acting as the Chairman of the Committee. This committee system not only survived but also became stronger as a result of reforms introduced in the following years both by the British and later by the Government of Pakistan.

### 3. ROLE OF THE PARLIAMENT

Parliament in Pakistan consists of elected representatives and, therefore, represents the will of the people. It essentially performs the following three functions:

**3.1. Representation:** As representatives of the citizens of Pakistan, members of the parliament are expected to remain well informed about the problems and needs of their constituents and, on that basis, inform and influence the policy making processes. Furthermore, as public representatives, they also play a role in forming the government in a parliamentary form of government. Members of the National Assembly elect one of them as the Prime Minister, while some others become ministers. Members of the Senate play no role in electing the Prime Minister but some of them are taken on board as ministers.

**3.2. Law Making:** As elected representatives, members of the parliament are responsible for the legislative function. Their role entails recommending new and better laws, proposing amendments in existing laws, and voting for or against proposed legislation (bills), while keeping in mind the views, demands and needs of their constituents.

**3.3. Executive Oversight:** In order to have an effective parliamentary democracy, it is necessary that checks and balances be placed on the executive (i.e. the government) to ensure that it works within the framework of law and the mandate provided by the citizens of the country. Members of the parliament play this role by, among others, asking questions, seeking explanations, holding debates and making recommendations for appropriate changes or improvements in policies or in the ways these are implemented.

The Parliament performs the above-mentioned functions in its full House sessions as well as through parliamentary committees.

## 4. PARLIAMENT AND PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES

**4.1. Proceedings in the House:** Under the 1973 Constitution, the National Assembly of Pakistan is required to meet for at least 130 days during a parliamentary year. Similarly, the Senate of Pakistan is required to meet for a minimum of 90 days during its parliamentary year. In addition, as mentioned above, both the National Assembly and the Senate work through their respective parliamentary committees.

In the full sessions, members of the parliament (i.e. National Assembly or Senate) generally perform, among others, the following specific functions:

- They ask questions and seek explanations from the concerned ministers i.e. Oversight or Accountability Function;
- They debate government policies and practices, highlight flaws and weaknesses, and make suggestions i.e. Representation Function;
- In the case of National Assembly, they elect the Prime Minister and/or remove him or her when he or she loses their confidence i.e. Representative and Accountability Function;
- Members of the National Assembly approve the annual budget; while Senate can only make recommendations to the National Assembly on money bills such as the annual budget;
- They debate and approve or reject the legislative bills introduced by the government i.e. Law Making Function;
- They introduce private member legislative bills and approve or reject them after debate i.e. Law Making Function.

Many of the initiatives taken by members of the parliament in a House are forwarded to the related standing committee for through examination and recommendations.

Currently, both the Senate and the National Assembly have Committees (also known as Standing Committees) -- each one relating to a certain ministry or function of the government. The primary function of these committees is to consider the business referred to them by the respective House of the Parliament. In addition, the committees have suo moto powers, whereby the committees can initiate action on a particular matter vis-à-vis the related ministry or department.

*The Legislature in the House is Legislature on exhibition  
and  
the Legislature in the Committees is Legislature at work.*

**4.2. Role of Parliamentary committees:** The parliamentary committees are units of organization within a legislative House that allow groups of legislatures to review policy matters or proposed bills more closely than would be possible by the entire House. In many countries, referral to a committee is a formal step in the process of adopting a bill. The possible roles of the committees vary from country to country, depending upon the governing system, strength and organization of political parties, available resources and other political factors. Roles might include initiating and amending bills, administrative review, investigations and budgetary review. Committees may also be the locale where inter-party negotiations occur.

In many democracies, however, committee systems play a major role in shaping legislative outcomes. They often share at least some of the following attributes:

- **Advice to the Ministries:** The committees often include in their membership experts or their members develop some expertise in a given policy area generally through continuing involvement, interest and stable membership. This expertise is often recognized and valued by their colleagues. By virtue of this expertise, the members of the committees not only are better equipped to scrutinize the Bills but can also extend appropriate advice to the related ministries or divisions on various issues. They can also play a leading role in evaluating the performance of related ministries.
- **Representation and Debate by All Political Parties:** The committees, on the one hand, represent diversity in view of membership from different political parties and, on the other hand, provide platforms for reconciling differences.
- **Input of All Stakeholders:** Committee arenas are considered important and, therefore, people inside and outside the legislature seek to influence outcomes by providing information about what they want and what they will accept.

Sometimes, committees take proactive steps to solicit feedback from various stakeholders, for instance, by organizing public hearings.

- **In-depth Analysis to Recommend Policy Options:** Committees play an important role in giving in-depth consideration to the legislative bills presented in the Senate or the National Assembly. When committees function effectively, they provide a means for a legislative body to consider, in-depth, a wide range of topics and to identify politically and technically feasible alternatives.

## 5. HOW EFFECTIVE ARE THE COMMITTEES?

Parliamentary committees are essentially recommendatory bodies and, in the current circumstances, it often happens that their recommendations are not implemented. This sometimes creates an impression of their being ineffective, which also causes frustration among the committee members. This situation calls for greater clarity and understanding among parliamentarians as well as civil society about what makes parliamentary committees effective and credible in a democratic environment. It may be argued that effectiveness of a committee depends on a variety of factors including:

- (a) seriousness and competence of its chair and members;
- (b) access to authentic research and data that facilitates and informs the deliberative process;
- (c) clear focus on issues that need priority attention;
- (d) realization by committee members that their focus should essentially be on examining public policies and their implementation;
- (e) transparency and openness that enables the committees to build credibility and ensure the support of civil society for their recommendations, and
- (f) proactive contact with civil society that can help the committee in not only providing research support and alternative perspectives but also mobilize support in favour of their recommendations.

Lack of effectiveness of parliamentary committees is partly because of the curse of frequent military interventions, which have not allowed the parliamentary process to mature in Pakistan. Continuity of political process could have resulted in clearly defining the place and role of parliamentary committees through parliamentary conventions and traditions. Lack of effectiveness is also because the committees do not have access to adequate research and relevant factual data about the issues that need their immediate attention. Civil society organizations, which regularly conduct researches and surveys, could help in addressing their problem but, currently, they have hardly any institutionalized interaction with parliamentarians.

It is widely recognized that effectiveness of committees and the legislature depends primarily on how these are linked in a mutually supportive way to institutions of society in general and citizens in particular. Thus both the parliamentarians and citizens need to acknowledge the need to interact on regular basis to achieve a transparent, efficient, fair and accountable system. It is the utmost responsibility of parliamentarians that they involve the citizens who have voted them. Similarly,

citizens must realize that their role goes beyond just casting their votes; they must facilitate their representatives to identify and priorities the major issues faced by them and then jointly work together to find their early and appropriate solutions.

### Powers of Parliamentary Committees

Powers and functions of parliamentary committees include the following:

- Parliamentary committees consider legislative bills, issues and matters, which are forwarded to them by the respective House or its chair (i.e. Chairman Senate or Speaker National Assembly), and make appropriate recommendations on them;
- Parliamentary committees can propose amendments in legislative bills;
- Parliamentary committees, on their own initiatives, can examine the expenditures, administration, delegated legislative functions, public petitions and policies in relation to the related ministries or their affiliated institutions; and then submit recommendations to the respective House;
- Parliamentary committees have the power to require the attendance of persons or the production of papers or records, or examine such persons on oath or solemn affirmation, if such course is considered necessary for the discharge of duties;
- Parliamentary committees can summon a witness, who shall appear before the committee and produce, if so required, the required documents;
- Parliamentary committees can summon or allow to appear before it and hear expert evidence or any member or any other person having a special interest in relation to any matter under their consideration;

Presently, however, there is an evident lack of communication that leaves a void between the committees and the citizens, which is both the cause and effect of weak democratic governance and ineffectiveness of legislation. This lack of communication does not help the civil society or the parliamentarians. A representative can only be effective if he or she is given a good and timely feedback. For the opinions of his or her constituents empower him or her with the knowledge to put forward his case in the Assembly or Senate.

It also needs to be understood that the committees can only become more effective if they are set in the right context. Otherwise, they are literally only talking shops. A

very large amount of work has to be done to the surrounding infrastructure to allow committees to become more effective. That includes easy, timely and a cost effective access of citizens and civil society to relevant information regarding policies, decisions and performance of state functionaries. In this way, if committees were working transparently and sharing maximum information, people would begin to repose confidence in their functioning and would be more likely to support their initiatives.

### Parliamentary Committees and Civil society Expectations

Civil society in Pakistan expects the parliamentary committees to:

- Hold open meetings;
- Make the time and agenda of committee meetings public;
- Publish bills for public comments;
- Hold stakeholder consultations;
- Organize public hearings;
- Invite comments and feedback from civil society organizations;
- Disclose conflict of interest; and
- Give easy and timely access to maximum information.

It is, therefore, important that the committees become more transparent by opening up a vast majority of their meetings to various stakeholders. The timetable and agenda of committee meetings must be announced well in advance through websites, radio and T.V announcements, press releases and display at prominent places in the committee offices, relevant ministries as well as on notice boards in the secretariats of the Assembly and the Senate.

## 6. BEST WAYS TO ENGAGE PARLIAMENTARIANS

Almost all agree in principle that role of parliamentarians should be preminent in making policies, ensuring their efficient implementation, and holding the government accountable for any failures or wrong-doings. It is also understood that a preminent role of parliamentarians and democratic accountability would be hard to achieve or sustain unless citizens and civil society groups succeed in effectively engaging and supporting them on issues of public interest. At the same time, many people tend to think that it is a very difficult task. It is generally felt that members of parliament are very arrogant and are difficult to access. Others feel that parliamentarians only help their voters and supporters, irrespective of whether their demands are right or wrong, and have no interest in fixing the general public problems (e.g. low literacy rate, corruption, police torture, poor quality public services). Some cynics even doubt their integrity and competence, and are not sure that any kind of engagement with them can be useful. This entire situation calls for a better understanding of how parliamentarians work, what motivates them for action, and how best they can be engaged to reform the way they perform their responsibilities. Inaction is, after all, no alternative

### 6.1. Few Tips for Engaging Parliamentarians

While aiming to engage parliamentarians, it is important to keep the following tips in mind:

- Parliamentarians are active players in the game of politics. And politics is about power. As their power depends on voters, they are more likely to respond to popular demands originating from within their constituencies. That is why it is important to work in the constituencies by mobilizing voters and facilitating their interface with parliamentarians on issues of general public interest.
- Parliamentarians are always involved in a tough competition among each other for acquiring influence, maximum publicity and gaining positions of power. They, therefore, like to take up issues that attract attention of the government, media or public. It may be that citizens and civil society groups can offer them necessary platforms for attracting attention by championing important public causes.
- Parliamentarians are more likely to respond to groups of citizens or networks and coalitions of civil society organizations. That is why citizens and civil society groups must always try to join hands, evolve common positions and then campaign for them.
- If not all, there are always some among the parliamentarians, who strongly believe in certain issues and causes and sincerely want to play their positive role. They, however, may not have the required information, researches or appropriate expertise to plan and undertake necessary initiatives. Citizens and civil society groups can hugely facilitate them, if they are also perusing the same or similar objectives and causes.
- Voters in the constituencies and people in general rarely visit parliamentarians on issues of public interest. They often go to them or talk to them regarding

- their individual issues or problems. For instance, rarely people approach them to ask for action against the increasing incidence of corruption or deteriorating quality of education. Instead, they are approached with problems like: 'my child has not been given admission in school' or 'the police is not registering my FIR'. Complaints about poor quality of public works like school building or road construction are virtually non-existent. Even if such complaints are made in rare circumstances, parliamentarians may find the problem of a systemic nature where they may feel that there is little that they can do. In such situations, it is extremely important that citizens and civil society groups make practical suggestions and make sustained engagements to resolve the identified problems on a sustainable basis.
- In view of power asymmetries, there is a risk that citizens and civil society groups seeking to engage parliamentarians become too close to them for personal or organizational interests and lose focus on their original objectives. This is a risk that they must always guard against. It would be a challenge to be critical of parliamentarians' performance, where appropriate, without any fear or prejudice; continue the dialogue; and sustain the engagement in a positive manner in general public interest.
- Parliamentarians are often very busy either in the parliamentary work, other official business or in the constituencies. Therefore, when we cannot access them, it is not necessarily because they are too arrogant or non-responsive. We must appreciate that they can genuinely be very busy and, therefore, we must find efficient ways to communicate with them and productively engage them.

### 6.2. Ways to Engage Parliamentarians

In keeping with the above, citizen and civil society groups can use the following methods to engage parliamentarians:

**Keep Yourself Informed:** We must all know what our parliamentarians are supposed to do, and what is their actual performance. For this, we must acquire maximum information about parliamentary proceedings and functioning of parliamentary committees. In particular, we must find out whether members of parliament have taken appropriate initiatives in the parliament to address the problems that we confront.

**Write to Them:** We must not be the silent spectators after having elected members of the parliament. We must try to be active participants in policy-making and implementation processes and, in this context, we must remain in contact with our parliamentarians and inform them about our views vis-à-vis the issues that are being debated in the parliament. We must also inform them about their weaknesses or about gaps in their performance in terms of effectively representing the constituents. They must be questioned if they vote for a particular legislation or support certain positions, which do not have a support of the constituents. We can do all this by regularly writing to them through email or letters. An appropriately drafted email or a letter should raise

email or letters. An appropriately drafted email or a letter should raise the issue and support the position taken or demand made with relevant arguments, data and research. Style should be argumentative and convincing, instead of just being angry or what could be simply dismissed as 'emotional' and 'unreasonable'. committee, it is always useful to know whether the issue that you wish to raise has already been considered or is currently under consideration. Related background information would help you in more effectively engaging the committee or its members.

**Write to the Committee:** Write to the committee and make specific demands, which are supported by good arguments and necessary data. You should write to the chair of the committee and, if convenient, send copies to all members. It is because, if the chair chooses to ignore for a certain reason, some other members may feel that it is worthwhile to discuss and follow up. Such letters should be concise and to the point.

**Share Information:** Sometimes we tend to think that they know everything but it may not be the case. It is, therefore, important that we share information about our problems with them, as well as about the possible ways of addressing the identified problems. In this context, if we have access to relevant researches or reports, we must ask the parliamentarians and, if they do not have the same, it would be useful to share those with them. This can be done by either simply posting the related reports to them or by personally visiting them to explain as well.

**Invite Them to Your Meetings:** While parliamentarians are often too busy to spare time for individual meetings, they may find it worthwhile to participate in the public meetings (i.e. seminars, workshops, conferences) in order to interact with larger number of people in short time. It would, therefore, be useful to organize such meetings. However, such meetings should be carefully planned so that issues of public interest are frankly discussed, which result into concrete suggestions and public commitments by the parliamentarians in attendance. In other words, such meetings should not result in merely non-productive public relations exercises for parliamentarians.

**Visit Them:** Parliamentarians always find themselves surrounded by people, but these people may not be talking to them about the issues of public interest. Many of them may just be representatives of certain vested interests. It is, therefore, important that citizens and civil society groups, who have good ideas about reforms, also visit the parliamentarians to take up issues that must be addressed in public interest. For instance, while people approach parliamentarians for exercising undue influence in favour of out of turn promotions and premature and arbitrary transfers, some should also be visiting them to demand a fair and just system of transfers and postings.

**Facilitate Them for Effective Initiatives in the Parliament:** As the parliamentarians are often very busy or they may not have good understanding of the issue that we want them to raise in the parliament, we should find ways to facilitate them. We can do it by giving them prepared questions that they may ask in the parliament, or by providing them research support in drafting bills or preparing for legislative debates in favour of positions that we consider as correct, just and important.

**Appreciation and Criticism:** While we must criticize the poor performance, we must also openly and loudly appreciate good initiatives by individual members or groups of parliamentarians. This attitude on the part of citizens and civil society groups can significantly contribute to improving performance of parliamentarians. This would also help in warding off the anti-democratic forces, which are always bent upon maligning and undermining the democratic institutions.

**Follow Up:** Actively follow up by frankly expressing your views, regular sharing of information, submitting demands, holding meetings and, where necessary, joining hands with other citizens and civil society groups to mobilize support and put adequate pressure to affect the desired change.

### 6.3. Ways to Engage Parliamentary Committees

In addition to engaging individual parliamentarians, especially in the respective constituencies, citizens and civil society groups must also find ways to engage related parliamentary committees. So, for instance, if you are interested to affect a change in the education sector at the federal level, it would be appropriate for you to engage either the (a) Standing Committee of the National Assembly on Education or (b) Standing Committee of the Senate on Education. You can establish such an engagement by using the following methods:

**Do Research into the Issue that You Want to Raise:** Do adequate research to gather relevant data and facts regarding the issue that you want to present to the Committee. You must be sure that the issue that you are going to raise relates to the Federal Government, or else it must be raised in the related committee of the provincial assembly. See details of Committee meetings, their agenda and recommendations in order to be aware of what would be appropriate to ask and who to target. When we communicate the problems, we must also submit our suggestions for reforms. Such suggestions should be based on research and must be realistic.

➤ **Collect Information about the Committee:** The required information may relate to, among others, the jurisdiction of the committee, its membership, meeting schedule, past initiatives and address of its office. You may be able to

collect this information from the websites of the Senate ([www.senate.gov.pk](http://www.senate.gov.pk)), National Assembly ([www.na.gov.pk](http://www.na.gov.pk)) or CPDI-Pakistan ([www.cpdipakistan.org](http://www.cpdipakistan.org) or <http://edu.cpdipakistan.org>).

#### Find out About Current and Past Initiatives of the Committee:

Before getting in touch with a parliamentary committee, it is always useful to know whether the issue that you wish to raise has already been considered or is currently under consideration. Related background information would help you in more effectively engaging the committee or its members.

**Write to the Committee:** Write to the committee and make specific demands, which are supported by good arguments and necessary data. You should write to the chair of the committee and, if convenient, send copies to all members. It is because, even if the chair chooses to ignore it for a certain reason, some other members may feel that it is worthwhile to discuss and follow up. Such letters should be concise and to the point.

**Seek Support of Others:** It is usually more effective if your demand, however genuine, has a support of other individuals and groups as well. It would, therefore, be helpful if you make it known to the concerned committee that other groups also support the position you are taking. You can ensure it by getting your demand endorsed by others.

**Use Your Right to Information:** Know your rights as envisaged in the Freedom of Information Ordinance 2002 and the Section 137 of Local Government Ordinance 2001; and use the information thus collected to support the issue that you plan to raise before a committee. (See Tools 1 and 2). Parliamentarians and parliamentary committees must also give you full access to the information that is held by them, as it is your fundamental human right.

**Demand Transparency and Public Participation in Committee Proceedings:** Make demands to improve processes and functioning of parliamentary committees so as to make them more transparent and open to effective public participation. Such demands should include, among others, open meetings, recognition of citizens' right to information, a policy of proactive information disclosure, stakeholder consultations, public hearings and disclosure of conflict of interest, if any.

**Make Issue-Specific Demands:** Make specific demands on various aspects of the related sector. For instance, with regard to the education sector, you can demand parliamentary investigations into issues like low utilization of education budget, corruption in procurement of furniture meant for government schools, late publication of textbooks, frequent transfers of teachers, and violation of merit in the appointment of teachers.

**Show Respect and Maintain Decorum:** Whenever you contact or engage a parliamentarian, you must show respect and maintain decorum.

Irrespective of whatever views we may have about their persons, positions or performance, they represent the citizens of the country, who have reposed their confidence in them. This is, however, not to say that we cannot analyze their performance critically or disagree with them on various issues. This is also important to create a conducive environment for serious dialogue and effective engagements.

**Be Consistent and Follow Up:** Actively follow up with parliamentary committees by sending your views regarding the issues on their agenda, regular sharing of information, submitting demands and, where necessary, joining hands with other citizens and civil society groups to mobilize support and put adequate pressure to affect a change.

## 7. HOW CAN YOU CONTACT PARLIAMENTARIANS?

You can find contact details of all members of the Parliament at the respective websites i.e. National Assembly (<http://www.na.gov.pk>) and Senate ([Http://www.senate.gov.pk](http://www.senate.gov.pk))

Contact details of parliamentary committees on education are as follows:

#### Mrs. Tehmina Dasti

Chairperson

National Assembly Standing Committee on Education

Address: National Library Building, Islamabad

Tel: +9251-9223022

#### Mrs. Razina Alam Khan

Chairperson

Senate Standing Committee on Education and Science and Technology

Address: Old USAID Building, G-5, Islamabad

Tel: +9251-9223968 (office); Fax: +92-51-9223975

Email: [committee@senate.gov.pk](mailto:committee@senate.gov.pk)

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

Members of the Parliament represent citizens' of Pakistan. They must be supported and facilitated in the performance of their work and, where appropriate, we should engage them to inform and influence their initiatives. They must also be responsive to citizens and should be held accountable for their performance. This is, however, possible only when citizens are active and vigilant; and proactively and jealously guard their right to participate in governance processes. It further requires access to information and knowledge. In this context, it may be appropriate to refer to Thomas Jefferson who said: "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free ... it expects what never was and never will be." We must insist on our right to information and be vigilant, which is regarded as an eternal price for freedom.

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CPDI-Pakistan

Centre for Peace and Development Initiative, Pakistan  
105. Park Towers, F-10/3, Islamabad.  
Tel. No: +92-51-2108287,4319430 Fax: 051-2101594  
Email: [info@cpdi-pakistan.org](mailto:info@cpdi-pakistan.org)  
Website: [www.cpd-pakistan.org](http://www.cpd-pakistan.org)