

## Strengthening Procurement Capacities of Parent Teacher Councils

**P**arent Teacher Councils (PTCs) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are functioning since 1997 with an aim to instill a culture of citizen participation, voice and accountability in school management. Although PTCs have been effective to some extent in enhancing community participation into school management but there still exist various gaps regarding awareness and capacity of PTC members to conduct procurement-related business.

### Education Procurements In-sight

An initiative to bring issues in education sector procurements in the forefront of policy debate and strengthen institutional capacities within the concerned government departments to exercise their mandate of security more effectively

Highlighting the capacity gaps in parent teacher councils, research evidence points towards inability of PTCs to utilize the available resources<sup>1</sup>. In this regard, lack of relevant knowledge and skills to conduct purchases and procurements is one of the major issues which needs to be focused in order to improve the ability of PTCs to use school funds effectively.

Each PTC receives an annual grant based on a formula which takes into account number of classrooms. In 2014-15, the KP government allocated Rs. 890 million for procurements and purchases done at schools level. This non-salary budget allows the PTCs to improve infrastructure in their schools and make other non-salary expenses. Recently, PTCs were allowed to undertake construction work on their own by providing them conditional grants in two pilot districts. This pilot phase was considered

Unlike Punjab, the funds provided to PTCs in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) are not fixed.

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### Institute of Social and Policy Sciences (I-SAPS)

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### Policy Conclusions and Recommendations

Key policy conclusions that emerge from the analysis and functioning of parent teacher councils are summarized as follows.

- ✓ Evidence points out that the PTC members are not well-trained on rules and procedures related to procurements and relevant record keeping. Hence, capacity building initiatives should be implemented on priority and regular basis where all PTC members participate and their capabilities are enhanced.
- ✓ The mandatory procurement committee within each parent teacher council should be ensured in order to help PTCs perform better with regard to procurement-related functions.

economical and now its scope has been extended to eight districts of the province.

Considering that the resource envelop of schools is increasing, it is important to ensure effective and efficient utilization of this budget by PTCs and to ensure the best value for money. For this, the PTC members need to be duly capable and aware of their responsibilities. However, evidence informs that the PTC members are not only untrained but in some cases are even not aware of the procedures and policies. Hence, the ability of members to effectively use these huge funds for school development and improvement remains questionable.

### **Awareness of Responsibilities, Procurement Rules and Procedures**

Lack of awareness of basic procurement practices and record keeping procedures undermines the organizational effectiveness of PTCs. A recent survey conducted by I-SAPS<sup>2</sup> established that some of the PTC members were not even aware of their basic responsibilities and did not have an understanding of the basic rules and procedures of school purchases. Given the limited knowledge, it is unlikely that the community members of PTCs will be skilled enough to understand and execute their responsibilities. It is therefore important to build capacities of PTC members for procurement related functions along with increase in the school funds.

### **Lack of Focused Trainings on Procurement and Purchases**

Keeping in view the educational backgrounds of the members and the organizational awareness,

it is imperative to have capacities of PTC members built so that they can effectively participate in development of the school. Recently, a PC-1 has been approved for capacity development of over 28,000 PTCs in 25 districts of the province<sup>3</sup>. The capacity building initiative is aimed to raise awareness of PTC members about their roles, responsibilities and other related functions. Also envisaged in the PC-1 is to contract call centers to use information technology and telephone calls for ongoing support of PTCs. However, this training is not intended to carry out procurement of civils works etc. Although initiatives like these in the past<sup>4</sup> have tried to bridge the capacity gap, but there still exists a need to build capacities of individual PTC members on procurements and purchases. Referring to I-SAPS PTC survey, more than half of the members of the surveyed parent teacher councils had never received any training with regard to planning, financing, record keeping and monitoring of procurement-related functions.

### **How to Enhance Organizational Capability of Parent Teacher Councils?**

Giving more autonomy to parent teacher councils and enhancing their role to conduct major civil works in schools on their own is no doubt an effective step towards best value for public money. However, the overall purpose seems to be compromised without proper capacity building of the PTC members on an ongoing basis. Following are some of the suggested ways to strengthen the existing policies and improve functioning of the school councils:

### Procurement Committees

Although mandatory, many PTCs in the province have not formed procurement committees<sup>5</sup>. Procurement committee not only help in better decision-making but also ensure that the process is inclusive and not dominated by a single person (head teacher in many cases). Formation of a procurement committee within the PTC should be ensured in order to have better oversight and decision-making.

### Enhanced Representation of Teachers

At present, as per the Parent Teacher Council Policy, only one teacher is member of the PTC. Since teachers are more qualified in terms of education received and have direct stakes in the development of school, their enhanced participation is expected to improve the overall functioning of the parent teacher council.

### Capacity Building of PTC Members

It goes without saying that building the capacity

#### Composition of Parent Teacher Council (PTC)

- ◆ Comprises of 8 members
- ◆ Parent Member – Chairperson
- ◆ Head Teacher - Secretary
- ◆ Parents – 50% representation
- ◆ General Members

of PTC members is the most significant function if they are to be entrusted with the responsibility of conducting and monitoring major procurement works in the schools, developing plans for school improvement and ensuring transparency and accountability in all schools-related procurements. It also needs to be ensured that all members of the parent teacher council are provided training on rotational and ongoing basis rather than a one-time capacity building of only chairperson and co-chairperson.

#### References and End Notes

1. I-SAPS (2013), *School Level Budget Analysis of Government Schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: The Case of District Swabi*, Islamabad.
2. I-SAPS Parent Teacher Councils Survey 2014
3. This program has been developed under DFID-supported Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Education Sector Program (KESP).
4. A number of earlier projects funded by other donors, notably GIZ and CIDA, have also delivered trainings for PTCs.
5. I-SAPS (2014), *Education Sector Procurements in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: A Horizontal Accountability Perspective*, Islamabad.



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