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Editorial

Dear Readers!

Praise Be to Allah (s.w.t)! The Islamic Republic of Pakistan commemorated its 78th Independence Day on August 14, 2025 with national fervor along with celebration of historic "Marka e Haq," (Victory of Truth) against India in the four days war on May 7-10, 2025. The operation "Bunyan-ul-Marsoos," (solid metal-filled wall) at Fajr (time of Morning Prayer) on May 10, 2025 reflected unwavering national unity, perseverance and gallantry of our people, leadership and dedicated brave security forces safeguarding in air, land and seas. The victory not only reiterates our country's just stance against India on long standing right of self-determination of Kashmiris, Indus Water Treaty and above all human security for all in South Asia, but once and for all shifts the regional paradigm in favour of Pakistan as the superior state in terms of being the rational, responsible and legitimate power of South Asia.

PIPS also celebrated the Marka e Haq celebration week from August 7-15, 2025 which included a Youth Parliament session for youth leaders from all parts of Pakistan on Constitution, Parliament and National Cohesion. PIPS also conducted Council of Committees workshop for MPAs of the Provincial Assembly of Balochistan followed by an absorbing workshop on effectiveness of Public Accounts Committees with Members of the Provincial Assembly of Punjab. The Institute also conducted the presentations by its Young Interns on themes of national interest and training of interns from Institute of Rural Management as part of parliamentary studies initiative.

This Issue of the PIPS Parliamentary Research Digest includes absorbing articles on Youth & Education Reforms in Pakistan, Strengthening Local Governance; and Conflict Management and Peace Building by Parliaments. We welcome feedback of our invaluable readers. Please do not hesitate to send your feedback or contact for any of our services at research@pips.gov.pk

Muhammad Rashid Mafzool Zaka
Director General (Research)



Hon Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan, Speaker, Provincial Assembly of the Punjab at inaugural session of PIPS and MuP-EU, Workshop for Members of Public Accounts Committees, August 20, 2025



PIPS Marka e Haq celebration Session on Parliament & Constitution August 7, 2025:
Group Photo of Mr Asim Khan Goraya, Executive Director, with Youth Parliament of Pakistan



Parliamentary Studies Initiative of National Parliament: PIPS Training on August 21, 2025:
Group Photo of Mr Asim Khan Goraya, Executive Director with IRM Interns from 11 universities

PARLIAMENTARY BUSINESS

Resolution Passed by the National Assembly on the Event of 78th Independence Day of Pakistan

RESOLUTION

13-08-2025

Recalls with pride and gratitude the historic struggle and unparalleled sacrifices of our forefathers, under the leadership of Quaid-e- Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the founders of our nation, which culminated in the creation of an independent and sovereign State of Pakistan on 14th August 1947;

Congratulates the Pakistani Nation on the 78th Independence Day and reaffirms its commitment to protect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our beloved Pakistan;

Recognizes the significance of the Markaa-e-Haq, a glorious victory of the valiant Armed Forces of Pakistan against unprovoked military provocation by India;

Acknowledges the unwavering resolve, courage, contributions, and professionalism demonstrated by the Armed Forces, all branches of our security apparatus, and our civil heroes, whose dedication and sacrifices have been instrumental in safeguarding and strengthening the nation;

Appreciates the unity, resilience, and patriotism of the people of Pakistan, who stood shoulder to shoulder with their Armed Forces in that critical hour;

Pays rich tribute to the martyrs and ghazis whose sacrifices have preserved the freedom, dignity, and honour of the nation;

Affirms Pakistan's commitment to peace, stability, and friendly relations with all neighbors, based on the principles of equality, mutual respect, and non-interference, while maintaining its unflinching resolve to defend its sovereignty against any aggression; and

Urges all citizens to work collectively towards the prosperity, unity, and progress of Pakistan, drawing inspiration from the spirit of sacrifice, discipline, and national pride.

-Sd-

Tariq Fazal Chaudhary

Minister for Parliamentary Affairs.

Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Minister for Defence

Bilal Azhar Kayani, Minister of State for Railways

Raja Pervez Ashraf

Syed Naveed Qamar

Aseefa Bhutto Zardari

Aasia Ishaque Siddiqui, Parliamentary Secretary for Privatization

Gul Asghar Khan, Parliamentary Secretary for Communications

Haji Rasool Bux Chandio

Shazia Marri

Ali Muhammad

Sehar Kamran

Syed Abrar Ali Shah

Shahida Rehmani

MEMBERS NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

OPINION

Youth & Education Reforms in Pakistan**Zehra Arshad,**Executive Director of SAQE and National Coordinator for Pakistan Coalition for Education
&**Urwa Naeem,**

Program Coordinator- Research and advocacy, SAQE

1. Introduction:

Pakistan stands at a demographic crossroads. With just over two out of every three Pakistanis below the age of 30 and nearly one in three between 15 and 29 years of age,¹ the country possesses what economists call a "demographic dividend," a youthful workforce that could drive decades of economic growth. Yet this potential remains largely untapped, creating a ticking time bomb rather than a golden opportunity.

Pakistan's youth today face staggering deficits. Only 72% of those aged 15-24 are literate² while over 25 million school-aged children remain out of school,³ with girls falling disproportionately behind boys. The numbers tell a sobering story that extends well beyond education. According to the 2023-24 Pakistan Economic Survey, while the country's labor force stands at 71.8 million, 4.5 million individuals remain unemployed. Youth unemployment proves particularly acute, with those aged 15-24 facing an 11.1% unemployment rate—the highest among all age groups, followed by 7.3% for the 25-34 bracket.⁴

Skills mismatch represents a major underlying problem. Almost 40% of recent graduates report difficulty in finding suitable employment within their chosen fields due to a mismatch between their skills and the job market demands.⁵ This disconnect fuels both underemployment and emigration, one of the main reasons for Pakistan's persistent "brain drain."

Digital exclusion compounds these challenges. Only 45-50% of Pakistanis use the internet regularly, while women remain severely underserved.⁶ Reports indicate that over 80% of Pakistan's

¹ Adil Najam, "Pakistan's Moment of Youth," *Dawn*, May 5, 2024.

² Pakistan Institute of Education, *SDG-4 Midterm Review Pakistan 2024* (Islamabad: Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, 2024).

³ Pakistan Institute of Education, *Pakistan Education Statistics 2023-24* (Islamabad, Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, 2024).

⁴ Bakhtawar Mian, "Youth Hit Hardest as 4.5m Remain Jobless", *Dawn*, June 12, 2024.

⁵ Amal Kamal, "Pakistan's Youth Unemployment Crisis: A Wake-Up Call", *The Friday Times*, November 14, 2024.

⁶ Ikram Junaidi, "over half of Pakistan does not have access to internet", *Dawn*, April 24, 2024.

women's mobile phones are controlled by family members.⁷ This digital divide significantly restricts access to online education, employment opportunities, and vital information.

Marginalization from decision-making spaces adds another layer of exclusion. Many youth feel disconnected from formal governance processes, reflected in low voter turnout and weak channels for amplifying young voices in policymaking. Without "meaningful engagement," youth frustration inevitably grows, potentially creating broader social instability⁸.

This demographic reality has not escaped policymakers' attention. The government has launched an ambitious array of youth-focused initiatives, investing billions of rupees across education, skills training, entrepreneurship programs, and civic engagement platforms. Yet years into these successive reform waves, fundamental questions remain: Have these programs actually moved the needle on youth empowerment? Are they reaching those who need them most? Do current interventions address the structural barriers that prevent Pakistan from harnessing its demographic dividend? What education reforms are contributing to youth empowerment, and how has the current education system improved to build the capacities and skills of youth that can empower them?

The stakes could not be higher. Countries successfully navigating their demographic transitions often enjoy decades of sustained economic growth. For Pakistan, the window for capitalizing on its youth bulge continues narrowing; making the effectiveness of current reforms quite literally a matter of national destiny.

2. Pakistan's Education Crisis:

Pakistan faces an education emergency that goes far deeper than simple access issues. While the stark statistics are well-documented, over 25 million children are out of school,⁹ making up the largest such population in the world, with only 0.44% of children with disabilities integrated into the system.¹⁰ The real crisis lies in what happens to those who do make it to school. An alarming 75% of Pakistan's children suffer from learning poverty,¹¹ unable to read or write age-appropriate text despite years of formal education. This learning crisis reveals that merely getting children into classrooms is insufficient when the quality of education remains fundamentally broken.

In response to this crisis, the Prime Minister declared an 'Education Emergency' in 2024, acknowledging that traditional approaches have proven inadequate. This emergency includes a

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ UNDP Pakistan, *Unleashing the Potential of a Young Pakistan*, (Islamabad: UNDP Pakistan, 2017).

⁹ Pakistan Institute of Education, *Pakistan Education Statistics 2023-24* (Islamabad, Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, 2024).

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Farrukh Shahab, "Learning Poverty", *Dawn*, January 4, 2025.

series of actions and commitments to curb the crisis, notably a substantial or gradual increase in education resource allocation. However, financing remains a persistent challenge, despite ritual political declarations of education as a 'national priority'. Pakistan's education spending has steadily decreased from approximately 2% of GDP in 2018 to a record low of 0.8% in FY25.¹² This represents a devastating 29% cut in education expenditure.¹³ The UN-backed Incheon Declaration suggests that governments allocate 4-6% of their GDP to education to achieve sustainable progress in education indicators.¹⁴ However, Pakistan is not meeting this target.

Perhaps most concerning is how Pakistan's education system perpetuates existing class divisions. The country operates what is essentially a multi-tiered educational structure, where different socioeconomic groups receive fundamentally different types of education. Elite private schools offer world-class facilities and international curricula, while government schools struggle with basic infrastructure and teacher shortages. The Single National Curriculum, introduced in 2021, attempted to standardize educational content, yet implementation has been uneven and controversial.¹⁵

Pakistan's education crisis extends well beyond basic literacy and numeracy, revealing a fundamental disconnect between what schools teach and what the modern world demands. While foundational skills remain essential, they are no longer sufficient for young people navigating an increasingly complex, fast-changing, and interconnected global environment. Pakistan's youth consistently lack critical thinking abilities, problem-solving skills, digital literacy, socio-emotional intelligence, and civic awareness competencies essential for thriving as global citizens in the 21st century.

This skills deficit becomes particularly apparent when examining Pakistan's approach to higher education expansion. The country has dramatically increased access to tertiary education, with enrolment growing from just 2.6% of the tertiary-age cohort in 2002 to approximately 10% by 2024. The total number of universities has reached 269, comprising 160 public and 109 private institutions, with 58,814 teachers across both sectors. Overall enrolment increased by 4.2% in FY 2024, reaching 2,010,672 students compared to 1,929,295 in FY 2022.¹⁶ Yet this quantitative expansion has not translated into qualitative improvements in graduate outcomes. Universities

¹² "Education Underfunded", *The Express Tribune*, June 26, 2025.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Save the Children, 'Education spending in Pakistan hits new low with more than one in three children out of school' Save the Children, <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/education-spending-pakistan-hits-new-low-more-one-three-children-out-school-save-children>

¹⁵ Ayesha Razzaque, *What really is the Single National Curriculum* (Islamabad: Pakistan Institute of Development Economics, 2021).

¹⁶ Finance Division GoP, *Pakistan Economic Survey, 2024-25* (Islamabad: Printing Corporation of Pakistan, 2025).

produce degree holders who often lack the practical skills and adaptability modern employers require. This disconnect between academic learning and workplace readiness has created a generation of educated but unemployable youth, contributing to the mismatch between educational achievements and economic opportunities.

3. Current Government Initiatives:

The Prime Minister's Youth Programme, launched in 2022, represents the most comprehensive attempt to coordinate youth interventions under a unified framework covering Education, Employment, Engagement, and Environment. This ambitious initiative encompasses extensive programs within each pillar, demonstrating unprecedented political commitment to youth development.

- Education initiatives feature the Youth Laptop Scheme, Pakistan Education Endowment Fund, and Youth Skills Development Program.
- Employment and entrepreneurship efforts include the Youth Business & Agriculture Loan Scheme, National Innovation Award, IT Startups & Venture Capital Project, and Youth Internship Programme.
- Engagement strategies involve the National Youth Council, National Volunteer Corps, and Talent Hunt Youth Sports League, while, Environmental efforts focus on the Green Youth Movement.¹⁷

The National Vocational and Technical Training Commission's Annual Plan for 2025-26 outlines ambitious strategic initiatives aimed at equipping Pakistan's youth with demand-driven, globally recognized skills. Building on the foundations of previous cycles and integrating priorities from the 13th Five-Year Plan and the "URAAAN" Pakistan" development framework, NAVTTC focuses on workforce readiness, international certification, labor market linkages, and promoting skilled labor exports, particularly from underdeveloped regions.¹⁸ Under the Prime Minister's Youth Skills Development Program for 2024-25, the government planned sector-based training for 60,000 youth across 10 sectors and 230 demand-driven trades. The distribution reflects perceived market priorities: Information Technology leads with 25,000 trainees, followed by Construction with 12,000, and smaller allocations for sectors like Textile (4,000), Agriculture (3,000), Services and Aesthetics (4,000), Hospitality-Tourism (4,000), Banking (500), Language (2,000), and Mining (1,000). An additional 3,000 slots were allocated for Driving and Heavy Mobile Operations.¹⁹

¹⁷Digital Youth Hub, "PM's Green Youth Movement", Prime Minister Youth Programme, <https://pmy.gov.pk/environment-page>

¹⁸ Finance Division GoP, *Pakistan Economic Survey, 2024-25*, (Islamabad: Printing Corporation of Pakistan, 2025).

¹⁹ Ibid.

The government's emphasis on digital inclusion reflects recognition that Pakistan's youth must be equipped for an increasingly digital world. The launch of the Digital Youth Hub in March 2025 represents an ambitious attempt to leverage technology for youth empowerment, promising to connect young people to opportunities through a single integrated platform. Statistical indicators of digital progress appear encouraging at first glance. Under the Prime Minister's Youth Laptop Scheme, the Higher Education Commission has distributed 100,000 laptops, while the government allocated Rs. 61.12 billion for 159 development projects, including Rs. 12 billion specifically for the laptop scheme.²⁰ Major initiatives include establishment of five National Centres in emerging fields like nanotechnology, quantum computing, manufacturing, brand development, and growth centres, alongside the National Institute of Intelligence and Security Studies and the National Cyber Security Academy as well as investments in IT infrastructure includes establishment of centralized data centres, high-performance computing facilities, enterprise resource planning systems for universities, learning management systems, and smart campuses and classrooms.²¹

Sports and cultural activities have emerged as important vehicles for youth engagement. In 2025, the Prime Minister's Youth Programme launched comprehensive talent scouting, including emerging areas like e-sports and game development. Selected athletes receive scholarships and access to specialized training facilities, representing a significant investment in developing Pakistan's sporting talent. The Talent Hunt Youth Sports League registration drive demonstrated broad-based participation through inclusive media and outreach strategies. Local sports clubs, the Pakistan Sports Board, provincial sports boards, and national sports federations contributed to achieving representation nationwide. Registration numbers reveal both the scale of interest and gender disparities: Cricket attracted 26,009 men and 2,731 women for a total of 28,740 participants, while Boxing saw 1,440 men and 250 women registering, totaling 1,690 participants.²²

Pakistan's extreme vulnerability to climate disasters has prompted recognition that youth must be central to environmental resilience and adaptation strategies. The Prime Minister's Kamyab Jawan Programme launched the Green Youth Movement in 2022, now integrated under the Prime Minister's Youth Programme.²³ This initiative trains and mobilizes young "green champions" to work on environmental projects, resilience planning, and renewable energy development. Youth volunteers have been active in disaster relief efforts and climate education campaigns, demonstrating significant potential for environmental engagement.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Digital Youth Hub, "PM's Green Youth Movement", Prime Minister Youth Programme, <https://pmy.gov.pk/environment-page>

The expansion of youth-targeted financial services represents one of the more tangible successes of recent reforms. The Youth Business and Agriculture Loan Scheme has reached thousands of young entrepreneurs. The government's financial commitment is evident in concrete allocations: Rs 18.5 billion for 18,500 scholarships, 600 foreign scholarships awarded in FY 2025, and over 1,000 indigenous scholarships provided mainly to students from FATA, Balochistan, and Gilgit-Baltistan.²⁴

The government created the National Youth Council in 2020 to provide youth with an advisory voice in policymaking. In early 2025, the council inducted its third batch of 113 members with notably inclusive representation: 49 young women, 49 young men, 2 transgender members, and 13 overseas Pakistan's representatives.²⁵ With the Prime Minister serving as patron-in-chief, the council's primary objective is to provide advisory support on youth-related matters, particularly those aligned with the 4 E's framework of the PMYP.

Pakistan is creating a standalone National Adolescent and Youth Policy for the first time, involving input from all provinces and sectors. The policy will be based on the 4E's framework, with consultations taking place in 25 cities²⁶ with youth from diverse and marginalized backgrounds, as well as multi-sectoral stakeholders. This comprehensive approach aims to unify the previously fragmented youth agenda under a clear policy direction. The integration of youth development within the broader "URAAN Pakistan" framework reflects recognition that youth empowerment is inseparable from overall development goals. The focus on empowering youth, women, differently-abled people, and underserved regions highlights the understanding that sustainable development requires inclusive approaches that address multiple forms of marginalization simultaneously.²⁷

4. Gaps and Challenges

Creating meaningful employment represents Pakistan's most urgent national challenge, with 4 million young people entering the working-age population annually. This demographic reality demands the creation of 1-1.3 million new jobs each year just to prevent unemployment from rising.²⁸ The government's response has been built on a seemingly logical assumption: if young people acquire the right skills, jobs will naturally follow. However, despite these extensive efforts, the employment needle has barely moved. Youth unemployment remains stubbornly high, with

²⁴ Finance Division GoP, *Pakistan Economic Survey, 2024-25* (Islamabad: Printing Corporation of Pakistan, 2025).

²⁵ Noman Adil, "Latest News Today News", *Associated Press of Pakistan* June 30, 2025.

²⁶ Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP), Initiates Nationwide Consultations on National Youth and Adolescent Policy. Press Information Department, April 21, 2025.

²⁷ Ministry of Planning Development & Special Initiatives, "Empowerment, URAAN" URAAN Pakistan, <https://uraanpakistan.pk/empowerment/>

²⁸ UNDP Pakistan, *Unleashing the Potential of a Young Pakistan*, (Islamabad: UNDP Pakistan, 2017).

many trained graduates finding themselves either unemployed or working in jobs that don't match their newly acquired skills. Women face higher unemployment rates of 14.4% compared to 10% for men.²⁹ The disconnect points to a deeper structural problem: Pakistan's economy is not generating enough quality jobs, regardless of how well-trained its workforce becomes. This reality challenges the fundamental assumption underlying current youth employment strategies and suggests that supply-side interventions alone cannot address demand-side economic constraints.

However, these headline figures mask persistent and troubling digital divides. Only 54% of Pakistan's population has internet access, with notable gender disparities, just 50% of women own mobile phones compared to 81% of men.³⁰ While urban areas enjoy 4G coverage, many rural communities operate with only 2G networks or no service, along with long hours of loadshedding. The Digital Youth Hub faces the same challenges that have plagued previous e-governance initiatives: limited rural connectivity, low digital literacy levels, and inefficiencies that make online systems difficult to navigate. Without addressing these fundamental barriers, digital platforms risk becoming another service primarily benefiting already-privileged urban youth.

Perhaps the most significant limitation of Pakistan's youth reforms lies in their consistently top-down nature. Young people are systematically positioned as passive beneficiaries of programs designed by older policymakers, rather than as active agents of change. This is problematic given the extraordinary diversity of Pakistan's youth population: a 15-year-old girl in rural Balochistan faces vastly different challenges than a 25-year-old male university graduate in Lahore, yet most programs treat "youth" as a homogeneous category. Despite these efforts, real power remains concentrated in traditional institutions, while youth representatives are typically consulted on pre-determined agendas rather than empowered to set priorities themselves. The low voter turnout among young people reflects this broader disconnect between formal political processes and youth aspirations.

While sports initiatives promote physical fitness and positive lifestyles, they do not address the fundamental challenge of meaningful integration into the education system. Mental health receives the least attention among youth development priorities, despite mounting evidence of crisis. Experts report that approximately 15% of Pakistan's youth suffer from mental health disorders, yet services remain scarce and stigmatized.³¹ A National Mental Health Policy was adopted in 2020, but has seen minimal implementation. Physical health challenges compound psychological concerns, with rising rates of obesity and diabetes among young people, alongside

²⁹ Bakhtawar Mian, "Youth Hit Hardest as 4.5m Remain Jobless", *Dawn*, June 12, 2024.

³⁰ Junaidi Ikram, "Over half of Pakistan does not have access to internet", *Dawn*, April 24, 2024.

³¹ Shawwala Aslam, "15% of Pakistan's Youth Suffer from Mental Health Disorders: Expert", *Geo News*, July 17, 2025.

persistent malnutrition in vulnerable populations. The Prime Minister's Youth Programme chair has explicitly listed youth health and nutrition among priority topics for the forthcoming comprehensive youth policy, signaling growing government awareness of these issues.³² Sports initiatives provide indirect benefits for physical fitness and positive lifestyle promotion, but comprehensive health programming remains underdeveloped, and its link with education is minimal.

Current efforts represent only a beginning given Pakistan's climate challenges. The intersection of climate change with existing vulnerabilities creates compound disadvantages, particularly affecting marginalized youth. Young women face increased domestic violence during climate-induced economic stress, while rural youth lose access to education when floods destroy schools.

However, there is no unemployment insurance, nor are there governments stipends for job seekers or apprentices, and no major programs specifically target out-of-school youth. While the focus on loans and scholarships is important, it only represents only one dimension of comprehensive financial inclusion. Young people also need savings products, insurance, and other financial tools that support long-term economic planning. The absence of unemployment insurance or job-seeker stipends leaves many young people vulnerable during economic transitions, while the emphasis on entrepreneurship loans helps address capital constraints, they do not tackle the broader ecosystem challenges startups face without supporting infrastructure like business incubators, mentorship networks, and market linkages.

These initiatives show strong political will, and many tangible results have been achieved. However, challenges persist, such as overlap between federal and provincial programs, bureaucratic delays in distributing loans and scholarships, and limited monitoring of actual impact. Moving forward, effective coordination between federal and provincial levels, stable funding commitments, and strong monitoring and evaluation systems will be essential for success. Nonetheless, translating these comprehensive policy initiatives/ plans into effective implementation remains the key challenge. The gap between ambitious policy announcements and real-world results continues to hinder the potential impact of youth initiatives, indicating that institutional capacity for execution may be as important as policy design for outcomes in Pakistan's youth development.

Examining the underlying political dynamics is essential to understand the limits of reform. Youth programs often provide visible quick wins for politicians, yet, structural changes addressing education quality, job creation, or social inequality need long-term commitment beyond electoral cycles. The tension between federal and provincial responsibilities complicates matters further. While Islamabad announces ambitious programs, implementation depends on provincial capacity,

³² Press Information Department, Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP), Initiates Nationwide Consultations on National Youth and Adolescent Policy, April 21, 2025.

which varies greatly. Additionally, donor-driven priorities can skew resource allocation, favoring photogenic projects over essential but less glamorous improvements like teacher training or vocational guidance.

At the heart of every youth challenge lies the foundational issue of education. Without quality, equitable, and relevant education, efforts in all other areas risk becoming fragmented and ultimately unsustainable. To ensure coherence and lasting impact, all youth reforms must be strategically anchored in education, whether focused on employment, health, digital inclusion, or civic engagement. Education is not merely one sector among many; it is the connective tissue that links opportunity, empowerment, and resilience for Pakistan's youth. Without this central alignment, sectoral initiatives will continue to operate in silos, undermining their transformative potential. Therefore, any serious reform agenda must position education as the primary axis around which all youth policy interventions are designed and delivered.

5. Reforming the Reforms: Toward Holistic Youth Development

The current youth reform landscape, despite its ambitions, reflects a fragmented approach that fails to recognize youth as whole persons navigating complex realities. A young person is not just a potential employee or entrepreneur but also a family member, community participant, climate survivor, and digital citizen. Effective reforms must acknowledge these multiple identities and intersecting challenges.

Core Reform Recommendations:

i. Youth-Led Programming

- Pakistan's youth reforms must fundamentally shift from top-down programming to youth-led design and implementation. This means establishing Youth Councils in every district and at the lowest level with real decision-making authority over program priorities and budget allocation. Young people should not merely be consulted about pre-determined agendas but empowered to identify problems, design solutions, and lead implementation. Inclusion of marginalized youth communities, such as those who are disabled, belong to minority groups, or identify as transgender, is essential.
- Create Youth Innovation Labs where young people from diverse backgrounds can collaborate to develop context-specific interventions. These labs should receive direct funding streams, bypassing traditional bureaucratic channels that often dilute youth voices through adult interpretation. There should be mechanisms to ensure the inclusion of differently abled youth, transgender individuals, including religious and ethnic minorities.

ii. Education Transformation

- Transform education from access-focused to learning-focused by establishing mandatory learning outcome assessments with public reporting of results. Schools failing to achieve minimum literacy and numeracy standards must implement immediate remedial action plans with additional support and oversight.
- Integrate a breadth of skills in education, including financial literacy, digital citizenship, climate awareness, life skills and mental health education, into standard curricula. Ensure all education content reflects Pakistan's diversity and includes positive representation of marginalized communities.

iii. Comprehensive Inclusion

- Inclusion cannot remain quota-based tokenism or retrofitted accessibility features. Reforms must be designed with marginalized youth from the outset through meaningful co-creation processes. This requires consulting disability organizations during TVET centre planning, engaging transgender activists in entrepreneurship scheme design, and incorporating minority perspectives in curriculum development.
- Establish dedicated support streams for marginalized learners, including sign language interpreters for deaf students, accessible learning materials for visually impaired youth, safe spaces for transgender individuals, and culturally sensitive programming for ethnic and religious minorities. Each program must demonstrate how it addresses specific barriers marginalized groups face, not simply claim universal access.

iv. Adequate and Sustainable Financing

- Current financing mechanisms remain inadequate and fragmented across multiple ministries and programs. Pakistan needs a unified Youth Development Fund consolidating all youth-related expenditures under transparent, performance-based allocation criteria. This fund should be financed through dedicated revenue streams rather than annual budget negotiations that create uncertainty and underfunding.
- Substantially increase public spending on education to at least 4% of GDP, coupled with strict mechanisms for effective utilization, impact tracking, and robust accountability to prevent leakage and ensure results.
- Introduce a 2% Youth Investment Levy on corporate profits above Rs 100 million, generating sustainable financing for comprehensive youth programming. This levy should support skills training, entrepreneurship, mental health services, climate adaptation, and civic engagement initiatives that current programs neglect.

v. Integrated Service Delivery Model

- Rather than proliferating parallel programs with overlapping mandates, Pakistan needs integrated youth services providing comprehensive support. Expand the 'Digital Youth Hub' concept to physical spaces where youth can access education guidance, job placement, mental health support, climate adaptation resources, and civic engagement opportunities without navigating bureaucratic mazes. These centres should be staffed by multidisciplinary teams including career counselors, mental health professionals, climate adaptation specialists, and digital literacy trainers.

vi. Mental Health Integration

- The neglect of mental health and well-being undermines all other interventions. Youth struggling with depression cannot effectively pursue education or any other opportunities. Those facing trauma from violence or displacement need healing. Mental health services must be integrated into all youth programs rather than treated as separate or optional components.
- Deploy trained counselors at every education institute, TVET centre, job placement office, and entrepreneurship hub. Establish peer support networks connecting youth facing similar challenges across different programs. Create crisis intervention protocols for youth experiencing mental health emergencies, with clear referral pathways to professional services.

vii. Climate-Centered Programming (GREEN SKILLS)

- Climate adaptation must become central rather than peripheral to youth planning. This means redesigning agricultural training for changing weather patterns, creating substantial green job opportunities in renewable energy and ecosystem restoration, and preparing youth for climate-induced migration through portable, climate-resilient skills.
- Youth in vulnerable regions need priority access to programs that build resilience rather than perpetuate vulnerability. Establish paid employment in disaster preparedness, ecosystem restoration, and renewable energy projects while building technical skills for the emerging green economy.

viii. Digital Inclusion beyond Infrastructure

- The digital divide requires more than infrastructure investment. Meaningful digital inclusion demands affordable devices, reliable electricity, and safe online spaces for young women, and locally relevant content. Rather than emphasizing cutting-edge technologies accessible to few, reforms should focus on universal digital literacy and middle-skill tech employment, offering realistic pathways out of poverty.

- Establish Community Digital Centres in every union council with subsidized internet access, device lending libraries, and locally-trained digital literacy instructors. These centres should prioritize serving marginalized youth who lack home internet access or family support for digital learning.

ix. Participatory Governance and Accountability

- Youth programs should build in systematic feedback loops, allowing local youth councils to evaluate local projects and providing mechanisms for program beneficiaries to influence program design and implementation. This participatory approach addresses the persistent top-down nature of current interventions while ensuring programs remain responsive to evolving youth needs and priorities. The youth council should be devolved to the lowest levels for meaningful inclusion.
- Establish Youth Audit Teams with authority to assess program effectiveness, recommend budget reallocations, and propose policy changes. These teams should include representation from marginalized communities and have direct reporting lines to senior government officials, bypassing traditional bureaucratic filters.

x. Community-Rooted Implementation

- Shift implementation from centralized bureaucracies to community-based organizations with deep local knowledge and trust. Provide capacity building and funding to youth-led organizations, particularly those serving marginalized communities, to design and implement context-specific interventions.
- Create binding partnerships between government agencies and civil society organizations, with clear performance metrics and shared accountability for outcomes. This approach leverages existing community networks while building local capacity for sustainable youth development.

xi. Comprehensive Well-being

- Launch the National Youth Health Initiative, which addresses physical and mental health needs through integrated service delivery. This includes reproductive health education, mental health counseling, substance abuse prevention, and preventive care services for youth's needs and preferences.
- Establish Youth Health Centres in every district, providing confidential, youth-friendly services without requiring parental consent for basic care. Staff these centres with trained youth health specialists who understand developmental needs and cultural sensitivities.

ANALYSIS

Strengthening Local Governance: Legislative Pathways for Effective Decentralization

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One of the main characteristics of good governance is decentralization of power to grassroot levels. Such decentralization requires effective local governance structures that are responsive to the needs of the citizens. Empowering local governments offers a wide array of advantages including participatory democracy, improved service delivery and stimulation of economic growth. The success of an effective local government system depends on robust legislative framework that guarantees autonomy, accountability and equitable resource allocation. A robust local government system is essential for democratic accountability, good governance and enhanced service delivery.

Role of Decentralization in Improving Local Governance

The modern developmental state is characterized by broad-based participation, growth with redistribution, pro poor policies and responsiveness.¹ One of the desirable ways of achieving these ideals is decentralization of power to local level. The World Bank has defined decentralization as “the transfer of administrative and financial authority and responsibility for governance and public service delivery from a higher level of government to a lower level.”² The aspiration behind this decentralization of power is taking the government “closer to people.” Empowerment of local governments through decentralization entails certain advantages including relevant information about local conditions and needs, greater participation of citizens in decision making process and better accountability of public officials.³ In the United States the local government bodies are responsible for imperative basic community services such as public safety (police and fire), infrastructure (roads, water, waste), education (schools), and local planning, all while operating under powers granted by the provincial (state) and federal governments. Decentralization to local tier of governance focus on local needs, simplify community participation, and guarantee real and much inclusive democracy that ensures participation of indigenous residents as well as marginalized strata including but not limited to ethnic minorities, daily wagers and labor unions, women, youth and the mine workers.

¹ Fumihiko Saito, “Decentralization and Local Governance: Introduction and Overview,” in the *Foundations for Local Governance: Decentralization in Comparative Perspective* ed. Fumihiko Saito (Heidelberg: Physica-Verlag, 2008), 2.

² World Bank, *Decentralization in Client Countries: An Evaluation of World Bank Support, 1990-2007* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2008),³ <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/168786df-7686-5a5f-b510-fa2722d8fc49/content>.

³ Anila Channa and Jean-Paul Faguet, “Decentralization of Health and Education in Developing Countries: A Quality-Adjusted Review of the Empirical Literature,” *The World Bank Research Observer* 31, no.2, (August 2016):200, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44650025>.

1. Success Stories in Decentralized Governance Models

a) India

The strengthening of local government took place with the passage of 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments in Indian Constitution that created a three-tier system of ‘Panchayat Raj Institutions’ in the rural areas and ‘Municipalities’ in urban areas. The decentralization to local bodies in India has been instrumental in improving service delivery to the people. In the Indian State of Kerala, the government initiated ‘People Planning Campaign’ and undertook robust measures aimed at empowerment of the local governments.⁴ This included transfer of massive financial resources to the local governments to enable them to perform their role as enshrined in the Constitution and State laws. In the Ninth Five Year Plan (1998-2003), the government of Kerala took the revolutionary step of increasing state development grants to local government institutions from 5 % to nearly 40%.⁵ This approach has been termed as the ‘big bang approach’ as the government opted to give financial autonomy to local government without waiting for capacity building of local government officials. This initiative contributed significantly in improving the social development indicators in Kerala. This is exemplified by the fact that the state has achieved universal primary education, near total literacy and near gender equality in access to education.⁶ This demonstrates that empowerment of local government leads to positive governance outcomes.

b) Bangladesh

The decentralized governance experiment has proven to be a great success in Bangladesh. The country’s social development indicators have seen a significant progress due to empowerment of local government institutions. The Constitution of Bangladesh provides basis for establishment of local governments in the country.⁷ Furthermore, the decentralization of authority to local governments began in 1997 with the passage of the Local Government Act, followed by *Upzilla* and *Zilla Parishad* Acts of 1998 and 2000 respectively. Decentralization has contributed in significant progress in country’s social development which is evident from the fact that Bangladesh accomplished its Millennium Development Goal (MDG) on gender parity ahead of time.⁸ Moreover, Bangladesh was able to meet another MDG target of halving the population living in poverty in 2012.⁹ The process of decentralization in Bangladesh is not without its challenges but the overall impact of this phenomenon has been a complete transformation of governance in Bangladesh.

⁴ N. Ramakantan, “Democratic Decentralization and Empowerment of Local Government Associations in Kerala”. *Commonwealth Journal of Local Governance*, no. 2 (January 21, 2009): 128 <https://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/journals/index.php/cjlg/article/view/995>.

⁵ Mullikottu-Veetil Mukundan and Mark Bray, “The Decentralisation of Education in Kerala State, India: Rhetoric and Reality,” *International Review of Education* 50, no.3/4 (July 2004): 229 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4151597>.

⁶ *Ibid*, 228.

⁷ See Arts. 59 and 60 of the Constitution of People’s Republic of Bangladesh.

⁸ Jean-Paul Faguet, “Transformation from Below in Bangladesh,” *Modern Asian Studies* 51, no.6 (November 2017):1680 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26599564>.

⁹ *Ibid*.

c) Bolivia

The process of decentralization in Bolivia began in 1994 when the ‘Law of Popular Participation’ was promulgated by Congress. The passage of this law brought about a momentous paradigm shift in resource allocation and distribution of political power. This legislation provided immense financial autonomy to the municipalities by diverting a whopping 20% of all national tax revenues.¹⁰ The law further made municipalities responsible for public services by providing local ownership in education, health, roads and sports. Bolivia’s journey towards decentralization has resulted in marked improvements all important development indicators. This is evident from the fact that decentralization led to more investment into primary services and human capital and resulted in redirecting resources from wealthier urban centers to rural zones.¹¹ Thus, Bolivia’s experiment with decentralization has provided impetus to national development and fostered participatory governance in the country.

d) UK:

There is clear distribution of responsibility for three tiers of government in the UK. The Local government services comprise vital tasks such as waste collection, housing, planning, and social care, delivered by county and district councils. Most of these services, like education and waste disposal, are mandatory, while others, such as leisure facilities, are discretionary. The Local Government Association (LGA) delivers funds on the organization and delivery of these services, including information on workforce and HR support, shared services, and climate change management.

2. Challenges Pertaining to Decentralization in Pakistan

The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Article 32 categorically states that: “The State shall encourage local government institutions composed of elected representatives of the areas concerned, and in such institutions special representation will be given to peasants, workers and women.”¹² Although the constitutional and legislative framework of Pakistan calls for administrative, financial and political decentralization of power to local governments, various structural obstacles have impeded the idea of decentralized governance. Some of the challenges that have obstructed decentralization in the country are:

a) Lack of Political Will

The reluctance of the political parties to decentralize administrative and financial control to local governments is one of the major obstacles in the way of strengthening governance at local levels. Anecdotal evidence suggests that mainstream political actors did not introduce

¹⁰ Jean-Paul Faguet, “Decentralization and Local Government in Bolivia: An Overview from the Bottom Up,” *Working Paper no. 29, Development Research Centre, London School of Economics*, (May 2003): 4 <https://www.lse.ac.uk/international-development/Assets/Documents/PDFs/csdc-working-papers-phase-one/wp29-decentralisation-and-local-government-in-bolivia.pdf>.

¹¹ Jean-Paul Faguet, “Can Subnational Autonomy Strengthen Democracy in Bolivia?” *Publius* 44, no.1 (Winter 2014): 64, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24734618>.

¹² Constitution of Pakistan, see at:

local government reforms in order to avoid political power to be devolved to local level.¹³ However, the increase in population has made it rather impossible for Provincial Governments to reach out and provide quality health care, basic education, sanitation, clean drinking water and constructing village to market roads that are largely mandate of indigenous locally elected representatives.

b) Fiscal Centralization

The fiscal system of the country is highly centralized. Without adequate fiscal decentralization of taxation system, local governance is unlikely to succeed. The fiscal centralization of the state can be assessed from the fact that the federal government and provincial governments receives major shares of total revenues while the revenue generation capacity of local governments is limited to taxing local business and real estate.¹⁴ Lack of decentralized fiscal system often hampers the financial autonomy of local governments. The real fruit of 18th Constitutional amendment is not possible without administrative and fiscal devolution to the local representatives that is possible only in shape of Provincial Finance Commission (PFC) which must apply fiscal distribution on divisional or district level so that service delivery may be ensured at the local tier guaranteeing outreach to maximum number of people viz a viz provision of essential amenities and basic welfare initiatives.

c) Lack of Citizens Participation in Decision Making

A successful decentralized local governance structure requires mechanisms that enable citizenry to participate in decision making process. A major obstacle in the empowerment of local government institutions is the disconnect between the citizens and local government representatives.

d) Challenges in Implementation of Local Government Laws

Due to lack of coordination among various government agencies, the implementation of local government laws remains a daunting challenge. The legislative framework does not provide monitoring and accountability mechanisms which often lead to disempowerment of local governments.

3. Way Forward

It has been demonstrated that effective legislative intervention can act as catalyst in strengthening local governance in Pakistan. Local government legislation should incorporate following measures to bolster decentralization of power in the country:

- i. The provincial governments can take a lead in strengthening legal and institutional frameworks. This requires removing inconsistencies in the overlapping provincial laws

¹³ Aijaz Ali, "Fragile states, decentralization and the nature of barriers to citizen participation in local government: a view from Pakistan," *SN Social Sciences* 2, no.11 (January 2022):6 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43545-021-00308-1>.

¹⁴ Fayaz Hussain Tunio and Agha Amad Nabi, "Political Decentralization, Fiscal Centralization and its Consequences in Case of Pakistan," *Cogent Social Sciences* 7, no.1 (June 2021):8-9 <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2021.1924949>.

- relating to local governments and undertaking robust capacity building initiatives for local government officials.
- ii. There is also a need to provide greater financial control to local government institutions. The provincial legislations on local governments should strive to empower local governments to generate their own revenues through taxes. Decentralization of power cannot work without granting financial autonomy to local governments. This empowerment could go a long way in creating self-sufficient communities.
 - iii. A Constitutional amendment may be moved to introduce mandatory Provincial Finance Commission (PFC) that must guarantee distribution of funds on divisional or district level so that meaningful service delivery may be ensured at the local tier guaranteeing outreach to maximum number of people for proactive provision of essential amenities and basic welfare initiatives as well as responding quickly in times of hazards and natural calamities in disaster management efforts.
 - iv. The legislative frameworks on local governments should encourage citizens to become part of decision-making process. Such public participation could be ensured by involving citizens in planning and decision making through consultations, public hearings and public petitions. Furthermore, for the purpose of promoting transparency, all the necessary information about operations of local governments including budgets, expenditures and allocations should be readily available to public.
 - v. It is essential to improve the implementation of provincial laws on local governments. Every provincial legislature in Pakistan has passed local government laws, however, the implementation of these laws remains an enormous challenge. For better implementation of laws, the provincial government could establish vigorous evaluation systems to check the progress and implementation of local government laws. There is also a need for establishment of redressal forums for the complaints of local government representatives vis-à-vis problems in implementation of local government laws.
 - vi. There is a need to build broad-based political consensus on the decentralization of powers to local governments. This consensus can ensure long-term empowerment of local governments, regardless of which political party comes into power.

OPINION

Conflict Management and Peace Building by Parliaments**Wajid Aslam**

Assistant Research Officer, PIPS

1. Introduction:

Parliaments constitute the legitimate representatives of the people, independent of the executive branch and imbued with the responsibility of overseeing government action. Parliaments and other representative bodies (such as regional assemblies and local councils) are well situated, as the people's representatives to manage social crises, prevent violent conflict and bring about lasting peace. Democratic governance is essential for conflict management. Legitimate and representative governance, based on the rule of law and respecting peoples' fundamental rights, is the most effective means for societies to prevent, manage and recover from conflict. The international community particularly international institutions, acknowledge the role of Parliaments in peacebuilding and post-conflict management. For instance, UNDP has formulated guidelines in this regard, named "Parliaments, Crisis Prevention and Recovery: Guidelines for International Community".¹ These guidelines affirm the commitment of the international community to support democratic governance processes during and after conflict, and more specifically, elected legislatures.

Post-conflict societies face formidable tasks such as: rebuilding the state institutions, addressing past injustices and reconciliation between divided and often displaced communities. In this context, Members of Parliament play a very crucial role as they are directly responsible for the welfare of their constituents in general and the vulnerable conflict-ridden masses in particular. A well designed and effective representative legislature can provide a national forum for dialogue and confidence building among the people. An effective parliament is essential for the success of any transition from conflict to peace. Parliament is inclusive of all social components and offers a national platform for a free and open exchange of views. The Inter-Parliamentary Union uniformly emphasizes that Parliaments "should be at the heart of conflict prevention, mediation, reconciliation and peacemaking" and the Member Parliamentarians can and should lead the way in showing how to work together across political, cultural and religious divides. Practically, parliaments contribute to peacebuilding through four major functions or components: Legislative action, promoting reconciliation and inclusivity, oversight and accountability and representing affected populations.

¹ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Parliaments, Crisis Prevention and Recovery: Guidelines for the International Community*, (Denmark: UNDP, 2006), https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/guidelines_on_the_role_of_parliaments_in_conflict_and_post-conflict_situations.pdf

2. Role of Parliaments in Post-conflict Scenarios:

A robust post-conflict order requires institutions perceived as legitimate, capable, and inclusive. The World Bank's "World Development Report 2011" found that institutional legitimacy is the key predictor of sustained peace. Parliaments, by debating, legislating, and overseeing play a central role in building that legitimacy and breaking cycles of violence. Inter-Parliamentary standards emphasize the same point. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and its partners stress that empowered, representative parliaments are essential to conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and security, not only domestically but also via parliamentary diplomacy.

- i. **Legislative Framework for Peace:** Lawmaking and amending old laws to bring reforms for contemporary challenges remains the most important function of any legislature. In post-conflict settings this often means ratifying peace by supporting legal frameworks.

Legislatures pass constitutions, propose and amend laws and bring reforms that set the rules for a society. For example, in 2005, in Colombia, Law 975 of 2005 was approved, known as the **Justice and Peace Law**, which was ratified to facilitate the reintegration of these demobilized former combatants into civilian life. This law offered former paramilitaries reduced prison sentences in exchange for their full confession and contribution to reparations for victims and national peace. By October 2020, over 4,400 former paramilitaries had passed through the justice and peace tribunals and only 650 had been sentenced.²

- ii. **Oversight and Accountability:** Besides passing laws, Parliaments make sure that peace agreements and processes to deliver justice are implemented in letter and spirit, ensuring they are not overlooked. This oversight occurs through scrutiny of the executive, budget monitoring and institutional accountability. The legislators have the authority to hold post-conflict governments accountable. Again, in Colombia, for example, the peace accord included a clause that the special jurisdiction for peace (JEP) and other transitional bodies remain subject to Congress's oversight and budgetary approval. Later, when President Duque sought to amend the JEP Law/Statute, Congress overcame this stance and effectively stopped those changes for lack of support, and even the Supreme Court said that "Only Congress" has the power to alter or change the peace framework. This shows us how the parliament can safeguard the constitution

² International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), *Background: After Decades of Conflict, Cementing Peace and Securing Justice for Victims in Colombia*, n.d. <https://www.ictj.org/location/colombia>

from misuse or attempts to monopolize it.³ Similarly, parliaments can also form special committees to oversee all sorts of matters whether economic, security, planning, development or any other as required by the government or the state. In doing so, they hold the governments accountable for their actions.

- iii. **Promoting Reconciliation and Inclusivity:** Legislatures do not just make or amend laws; they are also forums for national dialogue. Parliaments can restore and build friendly relations by taking part in the debates and including themselves in cross-party cooperation through dialogue. Victims of post-conflict situations often look towards their elected representatives to stand up for them and raise their voice about concerns and issues faced both in the past and the present. Inclusivity is also advanced through rules and practices of parliamentary procedure. Northern Ireland provides a clear example under the agreement named “The Good-Friday Agreement”. According to this agreement the assembly’s standing orders require cross-community consent for major decisions. This means that certain votes must receive support not just a simple majority but a specified majority of both unionist and nationalist representatives. This special type of voting gives each community of the country veto power and compels collaboration among all parties. The assembly is elected by proportional representation, ensuring multiple parties and thus both major traditions are represented.⁴
- iv. **Representing Victims and Communities:** Representation is quite close to the inclusivity of the conflict-affected populations. Parliaments preferably speak up for the refugees, internally displaced persons also known as (IDPs), minorities and other groups if they have suffered during conflict or war. This can be illustrated by the example of the Columbia, its constitutional process for the 2016 accord required consultation with conflict victims, many displaced victims and war distressed persons traveled to Havana to testify and propose terms and later, Congress acknowledged victims by establishing special justice mechanisms in the law. On the other hand, quotas and affirmative rules help ensure direct representation of victims, this can be explained through the example of Rwanda’s local Gacaca system (grass-roots truth and reconciliation courts) included elected local councils. Many of those community

³ International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), *Colombia: The Special Jurisdiction for Peace, Analysis One Year and a Half After Its Entry into Operation*, (International Commission of Jurists, 2019), <https://www.icj.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Colombia-Jurisd-para-la-paz-PUBLICATIONS-Reports-Fact-finding-mission-report-2019-ENG.pdf>

⁴ UK Government, *The Belfast Agreement*, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-belfast-agreement>

leaders later participated in parliamentary elections. Today many Rwandan MPs were themselves survivors, giving them personal stake in reconciliation.⁵

- v. **Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR):** In post-conflict scenarios, it becomes necessary for all the stakeholders to normalize the situation. In such circumstances, the role of Parliaments becomes pivotal. The Parliaments can enact laws that enable Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration. Such legislation may cover the eligibility criteria for reintegration as well as disarmament, vetting, data protection and community based reintegration for both victims and those who surrender to the state.

Likewise, Parliaments can oversee the implementation agencies, demand independent audits and seek public reporting on governmental actions. In this way, a smooth transition to peace and stability can be ensured.

3. Way forward:

Given below are a set of recommendations that can be emulated by MPs for peace building in different environments in order to resolve the post-conflict scenarios:

- i. **Ensure Broad Representation:** Rwanda's gender quotas made its legislature hugely inclusive and Northern Ireland's STV system ensures minority parties gain seats. Ireland uses proportional representation (PR) for voting in elections, with each voter having a single transferable vote (STV). PR-STV is a candidate-based system. This means voters can choose to vote for as many or as few candidates as they like, in order of their preference.⁶ Parliaments should set out quotas or power sharing rules, especially in post-conflict era, so that women, minorities and formerly excluded groups hold meaningful seats. Parliaments that reflect society or part of the society are more likely to be trusted for example;
- ii. **Enact Robust Peace and Justice Laws:** Parliamentarians may use the legislative process to create transitional justice frameworks (truth commissions, special courts) and comprehensive victims' reforms (anti-corruption, land, security sector). Parliaments should be debating these bills publicly and amend according to aspirations of the general public, by getting their feedback, ensuring they meet international standards. Meticulous legal frameworks help prevent immunity, uphold law and order and set out clear benchmarks for non-recurrence.

⁵ Emelia C. O'Neill, *The Gacaca Courts, Ever Rwanda*, <https://www.everrwanda.com/essays/the-gacaca-courts>

⁶ The Electoral Commission (Ireland), *Ireland's Voting System*, The Electoral Commission (Ireland), <https://www.electoralcommission.ie/irelands-voting-system>

- iii. **Maintain Vigilant Oversight:** Legislatures can establish parliamentary or standing committees on peace implementation, security and human rights. For example, Members of parliament can regularly review budgets for reintegration programs, question officials on demobilization progress, and require reporting on ongoing operations. Through hearings and inquiries of the committees, parliaments can expose delays or corruption.
- iv. **Foster Dialogue and Reconciliation:** Parliament itself can set up the central and most reputed stage for national reconciliation. It may accordingly initiate post-conflict management peace efforts through holding debates on past abuses, invite survivors and even former combatants to address the member parliamentarians and issue formal statements acknowledging their suffering in post-conflict. Several parliaments have adopted reconciliatory measures e.g. Sri Lanka's parliamentary apology to the Tamil victims.⁷ Parliaments should encourage cross-party working groups on peace. Member parliamentarians should be working together to depoliticize atrocities by treating victim's rights as human and nonpartisan cause.
- v. **Center Stage for Victims in the Process:** Parliament must ensure that victims' voices reach the legislators. This can happen by allocating seats on advisory councils to survivor groups, sponsoring fact finding missions and "Victims" arbitration within Parliament. For example, in Columbia victims' organizations have parliamentary mediations to follow up on the peace deal promises.⁸ Parliaments should also take measures and make room for the war victims to attend the parliamentary sessions, symbolizing their role in the new polity. This step can boost the morale of the war victims when they see their concerns and issues are being addressed in the assembly.
- vi. **Safeguard Transitional Institutions:** To build trustworthiness and reliability, Parliaments must take steps to pass the laws which ultimately protect the independence of truth commissions and courts. This includes transparent appointment procedures, secure funding lines and non-interference clauses. For example, the Kathmandu Post reports that Nepali victims mistrust the process because past governments have reportedly failed to deliver. Parliament can counter this by rigorous checks on executive power and empowering civil society to monitor transitional bodies.

⁷ Vibhu Mishra, "UN says Sri Lanka has 'historic opportunity' to end impunity, deliver justice," *UN News*, August 13, 2025, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/08/1165647>

⁸ USAID, "Victims' Participation and Collective Reparation Program: Final Report", (Columbia, USAID, 2024), <https://reliefweb.int/report/colombia/victims-participation-and-collective-reparation-program-final-report>

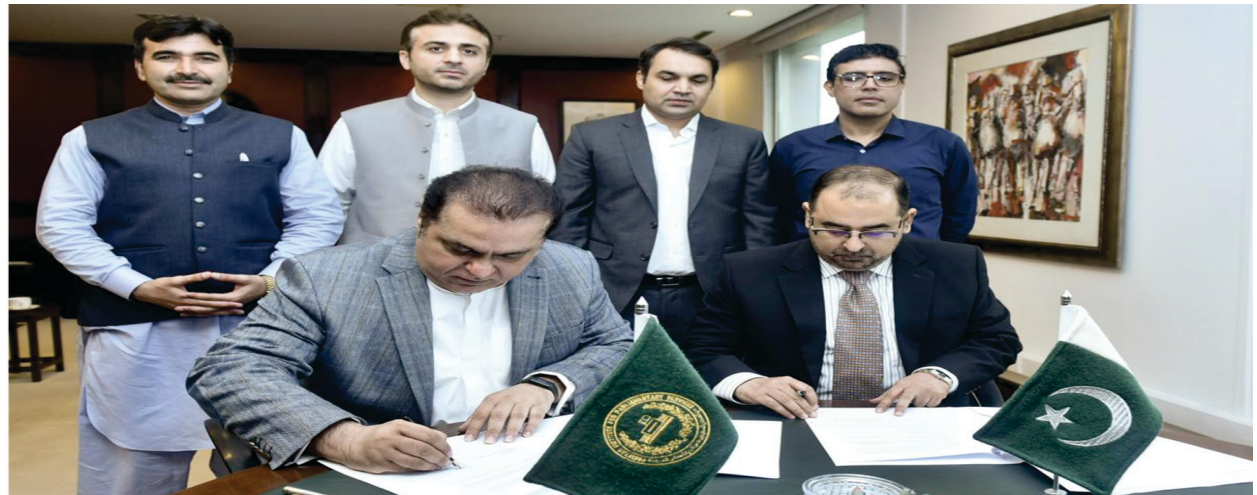
- vii. **Build Parliamentary Capacity:** By looking at most of the cases around the world, we find out that the majority of the post-conflict parliaments are new and inexperienced. They should be focusing on the training of their staff, provide expert advisors on legal, medical and security. They can also seek help from the international organizations like (IPU and UNDP), to help the members of parliament to understand the complex peace legislations. A well-informed Parliament can better manage the complexity of peace accords and justice issues.
- viii. **Build Inclusive Political Culture:** Parliamentarians should always lead by example, in practicing tolerance and cohesion. This means observing codes of conduct, condemning hate speech and building coalitions and uniting the people under one umbrella.
- ix. **Poverty Alleviation through Equitable Resource Distribution:** The Parliaments through their budgetary role can take steps to alleviate poverty, which is rampant in post-conflict scenarios. They can distribute the resources in such a way that everyone gets his due share in the resources. In such a way, the Parliaments can rebuild the societies and build foundations for a lasting peace.⁹ In post-conflict situations, the people who are affected by the wars or warlike situations suffer from various issues like poverty, civil unrest, law and order situations and inequitable distribution of resources etc. Parliaments provide the affected population with such a forum where they can represent their issues through elected representatives. The Parliaments, through various tools such as budget scrutiny efforts, oversight and representation of all the communities, bring such reforms that make the foundations for lasting peace.

In a nutshell, the Parliaments must ensure a. inclusive representation by free and fair elections, b. formulating peace laws, c. undertaking strict oversight of governmental actions, d. curb poverty and d. building parliamentary capacity and strong political culture. In this way, Parliaments can play a pivotal role in nation building in post-conflict eras.

⁹ Mitchell O'Brien, *Parliaments as Peacebuilders: The Role of Parliaments in Conflict-Affected Countries*, WBI Working Paper (Washington: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank, 2005). <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/809101468339866619/pdf/336400WBIOPARLIAMENTS1AS1PEACEBUILDERS.pdf>



PIPS Training on Minutes Writing for Officers and Staff of the Provincial Assembly of Punjab, Lahore, August 9, 2025.



Executive Director PIPS Mr Asim Khan Goraya signs MoU with Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) for collaboration in Research and Trainings at PIPS, August 8, 2025.



Group Photo of PIPS and WPC Joint Seminar on Constitution for All with MNAs, August 12, 2025.



Group Photo of MPs with Hon Abdul Khalid Khan Achakzai, Speaker, Provincial Assembly of Balochistan at PIPS and MuP EU, Workshop for Council of Committees August 5, 2025



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