

PRESS RELEASE

Leading experts Unite for Robust, Financially Independent, and Inclusive local Governments: CPDI

Karachi, October 24, 2023: This demand was raised during the consultative session to discuss implementation of Sindh Local Government Act of 2013, thoughtfully organized by CPDI and FNF Pakistan. Elected representatives, esteemed members of civil society, influential figures from the media and academia, local government experts, government officials, and representatives from local government training institutes converged in this pivotal dialogue forum. They collectively reflected upon the intricacies and challenges surrounding local governments in Pakistan.

During an informative session, Mr. Moazzam Ali Janjua, Project Manager at CPDI, provided an in-depth overview of the key features of the Sindh Local Government Act. Addressing the vital issue of resources for strengthening local governments, he expressed concern over the National Finance Commission (NFC) and its challenges in executing awards to the provinces. Mr. Janjua noted that since 2010, successive NFCs have grappled with reaching a consensus and adhering to the constitutionally mandated timeframes for award implementation. To ensure consistency, he emphasized the necessity of subordinated legislation to govern NFC awards effectively.

During the Panel Discussion, Mr. Arshad Wohra, former MPA and deputy mayor of Karachi, underscored the pivotal role local bodies play in the democratic framework. He called for a precise definition of Article 141 in Pakistan's Constitution to ensure an effective distribution of powers. Wohra emphasized the urgency of addressing local government election cases within the Supreme Court, alongside other pressing matters. He argued that citizens should not be required to approach the Chief Minister for local community issues; instead, local councilors should be vested with the authority to resolve such matters at the grassroots level. Wohra further stressed the importance of conducting local government elections regularly and promptly. He highlighted that a constitutional amendment is indispensable to empower local governments, ultimately resolving critical community issues within the province.

Mr. Khawaja, Director of Revenue and HR at Karachi Metropolitan Corporation, emphasized that political interference has hindered the effectiveness of local governments in Pakistan. He stressed the need for a functional Council of Common Interests (CCI) with well-defined rules, a consistent National Finance Commission (NFC) Award underpinned by subordinate legislation, and the devolution of political, financial, and administrative authority to empower local governments. These factors, he underscored, are pivotal for the system's seamless operation.

Mr. Ahmad Hussain, Director P&D Department Sindh, said that it is imperative to establish proper revenue generation mechanisms at the Local Government level while maintaining a high standard of transparency. The utilization of revenues collected by LGs can be significantly improved; however, the initial focus should be on setting clear priorities. He pointed out that sudden changes imposed by authorities, including

alterations in delimitation, have created significant obstacles, making the planning process considerably more complex.

Advocate S A Younas, City Counciller Jamat-e-Islami and many other elected representatives present at the session strongly advocated for the allocation of more powers to effectively serve their communities. They highlighted the importance of viewing political parties not just as public representatives but as proactive participants in Local Government elections.

About CPDI

Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI) is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting peace, development, and good governance. With expertise in advocacy and governance, CPDI strives to bring about positive change in Pakistan.

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