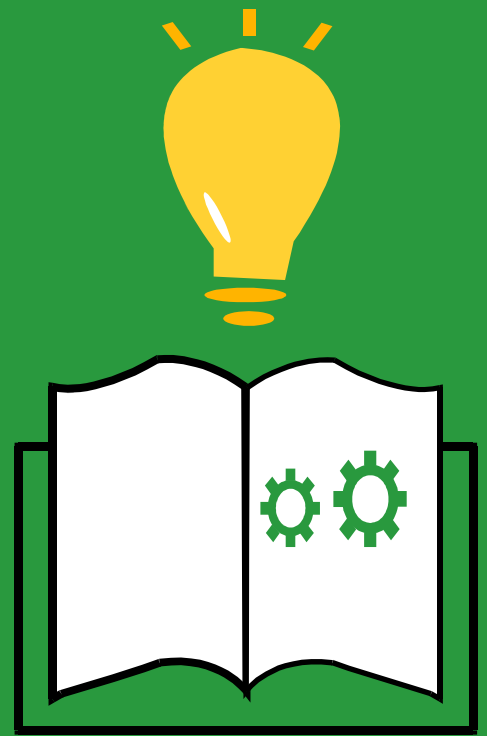# LEARNING IN CIVIC EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY

A Toolkit for Youth Empowerment

CITIZENS FOR A BETTER ENVIRONMENT (SHEHRI-CBE)

LEARNING IN CIVIC EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY

A Toolkit for Youth Empowerment

CONTENTS

1 Introduction

This *Section* discusses the need and relevance of this published work by setting a context to the importance of civic education, as it applies to youth. Outlined also is the structure and content details of the *Toolkit*

The Context - Why this Toolkit?

In 2022, the world population reached 8 billion people, with 15-to-29-year-olds numbering 1.8 billion, or around 23.0 per cent of the total (World Bank, 2022). For Pakistan, the proportion is much higher. According to official, recent census results-based estimates, approximately 64% of Pakistan's population is under the age of 30. Pakistan has struggled historically to nurture inclusive societies and democratic governance. In order to ensure democratic processes to prosper and sustain, it is critical, that this large share of the population that also represents the future, must be made an essential part of the active citizenry. In simple terms, Active Citizenry refers to the voluntary capacity of citizens, communities, civic society organizations, working directly or networking or with elected representatives and service providers to exercise economic, social, and political power and influence in pursuit of societal improvement.

Young people first and foremost have a fundamental right to participate and engage meaningfully in society. According to *Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, signed by 196 countries, young people have the right to have their voices listened to and taken into account in decisions that affect their lives. This right, alongside other rights outlined in the Convention such as the right to non-discrimination *(Article 2)* and freedom of expression (Article 13), puts a duty on governments to create an enabling environment for young people to influence decisions and policies that impact them. The 2030 Agenda recognizes that *children and young women and men are critical agents of change and will find in the new Goals a platform to channel their infinite capacities for activism into the creation of a better world. In addition, in a 2013 resolution the United Nations General Assembly urged Member States and entities of the United Nations System, in consultation with youth-led organizations, to explore avenues to promote full, effective, structured and sustainable participation of young people and youth-led organizations in decision–making processes.* This resolution was reinforced by the United Nations Human Rights Council in 2016 (Young Peoples Participation and Youth Engagement, 2020).

Positive and constructive civic participation for youth may relate to activities where young people socially and politically mobilize, exercise voice, and influence decisions affecting them in a meaningful and proactive manner. Forms of engagement may include voting & electoral engagement, volunteering & civic service, participation in local and civic governance issues, advocacy and issue campaigning and finding representation in citizen groups mobilized for ensuring accountability and inclusion in decision making processes. Meaningful youth civic engagement delivers better public policy, stronger accountability, and social cohesion — and very importantly, it reduces risks of political alienation and violent radicalization.

Presently, a major challenge is that our youth do not actively participate in the political process and even if they do, it is mostly restricted to the phase of electioneering and voting, that more often than not is not well informed and driven mostly by social media-based activism. Activism happens mostly without a proper understanding of how our political system works. There is an urgent need to not only promote and encourage constructive socio–political activism but to make it more informed where it is not only at the time of elections that the youth get mobilized, rather the time period in between, where they engage with their elected representatives and service providers, provide input and feedback and demand and monitor transparency and inclusivity in governance.

About the Toolkit

This *Toolkit* is aimed at building skills among youth in pro-active civic and social mobilization, getting informed, forming networks, pursuing active advocacy and community uplift. The scope is wide-ranging, covering various aspects of advocacy, from communication and networking to policy analysis and community engagement.

There will be discussion on what constitutes civic activism and ways to construct the information and organizational frameworks and strategies for engagement. Students will get exposed to a number of global and national best practices in youth civic engagement, where a diversity of models and approaches get documented.

Thera a few generalized models also explained that have the capacity of creating a space for increased and structured networking and collective action. A dedicated section looks into the methodologies of Participatory Action Research, that offer a model for not just advocacy—based action but educating and capacitating on approaches and strategies for immersive community engagement for empowering the marginalized and under–privileged sections of the society. There are contact details provided for some legislative, institutional and programmatic avenues provided by the government of Pakistan at the federal, provincial and local levels to engage and empower youth. Contacts of selected youth led non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and start-ups are also documented to facilitate connection and engagement for seeking inspiration and learning.

This Toolkit is not just targeted at youth—rather it is designed include the academia, government, civil society organizations and community groups—all multi layered stakeholders that have a critical role to play in empowering our youth. It is felt, that this Toolkit, will inspire the readers to become more informed, conscious, empathetic and pro-active citizens of the state.

2

Understanding Civic Education and Advocacy

This *Section* discusses the need and relevance of this published work by setting a context to the importance of civic education, as it applies to youth. Outlined also is the structure and content details of the Toolkit

What is civic education?

Importance and processes for promoting civic education for youth

A state cannot claim to promote democratic values unless its citizens are empowered with the knowledge, skills, and values to engage meaningfully in public life — Such traits form the cornerstone of any democratic society. For young people, it is especially vital. Youth not only constitute as the majority in many developing countries but also represent the generation and voices for the future. Yet, across much of the world, including Pakistan, young people often grow up disconnected and alienated from how decisions are made, and develop a strong distrust of policy makers and institutions of governance. Lack of facilitating forums and spaces for meaningful engagement makes them uncertain about how to contribute to civic and political life. This disconnect can have extremely disturbing consequences as youth radicalization can happen and also youth disenchantment can contribute to them leaving and searching for life options elsewhere.

What is civic education?

- Strengthening democracy through knowledge and agency

  Vibrant and strong democracies rely on informed and engaged citizens who understand their rights and responsibilities enshrined within a clear social contract enacted between the state and the citizens. Civic education helps youth learn how government systems function — from the grass root level of local union councils to parliaments — and how ordinary people can influence them and hold them accountable. As young citizens become more informed and educated on governance matters such as voting systems, budgeting processes, and constitutional rights, they can engage more constructively with the organs of the state Knowledge builds agency that leads to informed and active citizenry

- Developing democratic values and tolerance

  Civic education also nurtures more nuanced democratic values such as respect for diversity, pluralism, tolerance, dialogue, and non-violent conflict resolution. Research consistently shows that young people exposed to civic learning in schools, at levels of higher education and in working with advocacy groups, are more likely to volunteer and participate in local problem–solving working with marginalized communities and in community service. Such engagement helps build empathy and a more caring citizen

- Preparing Future Leaders ad Innovators

  Civic education cultivates critical thinking, skills for networking and communication, problem solving and conflict resolution — skills that are essential for good leadership. Many of today's political leaders, social entrepreneurs, human rights advocates, trace their motivation to early experiences in civic or student organizations. Investing in civic learning is, therefore, an investment in the next generation of ethical and informed leaders

How to empower youth with civic education?

In order to implement models of effective civic education, an ecosystem approach is most helpful—engaging schools, higher learning institutions, media, civil society organizations, communities, and digital platforms. Some possible entry points are discussed below:

- Integrating Civic Learning into Formal Education

  Schools and universities can act as the most strategic and viable pedagogical spaces for reaching young people. Civic education dividends can be best served if they are not limited to textbook lessons about constitutions or government structures. Instead, curricula should emphasize and blend with book learning, actual problem—based learning — connecting theory with real—life communities and governance challenges. A number of models that get discussed in more detail later in the toolkit, such as youth parliaments, and student councils can help students practice participation rather than just study it. The existing curricula requirements for undergrad institutes in Pakistan as set by the *Higher Education Commission (HEC)*, does require credit bearing courses facilitating community engagement through experiential learning

- Harnessing digital media for civic learning

  We live in a digital age. Today's youth live online. Social media, podcasts, and online courses can serve as powerful and empowering vehicles for civic education if used responsibly. Digital literacy needs to be integrated with civic literacy: teaching youth how to verify information, do issue based networking and engage constructively online. Campaigns like Digital Pakistan or global initiatives like *UNDP's Digital Youth Champions* show that online platforms can be spaces for learning democratic engagement rather than just political polarization

- Youth representation in governance structures

  Governments, particularly local authorities can institutionalize civic education by creating youth advisory councils, student representation in local assemblies, and consultative processes in policy design. The experience of programs like the Youth Parliament of Pakistan demonstrates how simulated and real-world exposure to governance fosters civic confidence and understanding

- Activating civil society forums

  Facilitating civic education is not the responsibility of just the education sector or government. Civil society organizations, media outlets, religious institutions, and parents all play a role. Multi—stakeholder initiatives can develop inclusive civic curricula, mentor youth leaders, provide opportunities for immersing in communities for documentation and problem solving so that civic learning reaches marginalized groups

Civic education is not merely about learning facts; it is about shaping values, identities, and collective futures. For youth, it provides the tools to understand power, question injustice, and imagine better governance. For society, it provides the foundation of an active, informed, and responsible citizenry. In times when misinformation and disengagement, threaten democratic life, civic education remains the most reliable safeguard. Empowering youth through civic learning is, ultimately, the most sustainable investment a nation can make in its democracy.

Youth advocacy

Advocacy can be termed as the act of supporting, promoting, lobbying for or arguing in favor of a cause, policy, or idea, with the ultimate goal of influencing decision-making, mobilizing public opinion and related policy communities, and resulting policy outcomes.

When placed within the domain of youth, advocacy becomes a process through which young people raise their voices, organize collectively, and influence decisions that affect their lives and communities. This can be done through promoting ideas, policies, or actions that advance social justice, inclusion, and positive change.

> Advocacy is a deliberate process of influencing those who make policy decisions
>
> —CARE International

In the context of youth civic engagement, training and empowerment in conducting effective advocacy can empower young people to:

- Identify issues that matter to them (such as education, climate, gender, employment)

- Engage with decision-makers—from local leaders to provincial and national policymakers

- Engage with administrators and service providers on issues of civic governance

- Mobilize peers and communities through campaigns, dialogue, and creative actions

In a larger context, informed and targeted advocacy can help hold institutions accountable to ensure transparency and fairness and lead to incorporating citizen voice in decision making thus ensuring sustainability and ownership of people centered policy and development interventions.

> Advocacy is an evidence-based process that directly/indirectly influence decision-makers, stakeholders and relevant audiences to support and implement an action (s) that contribute to the fulfilment of the desired change
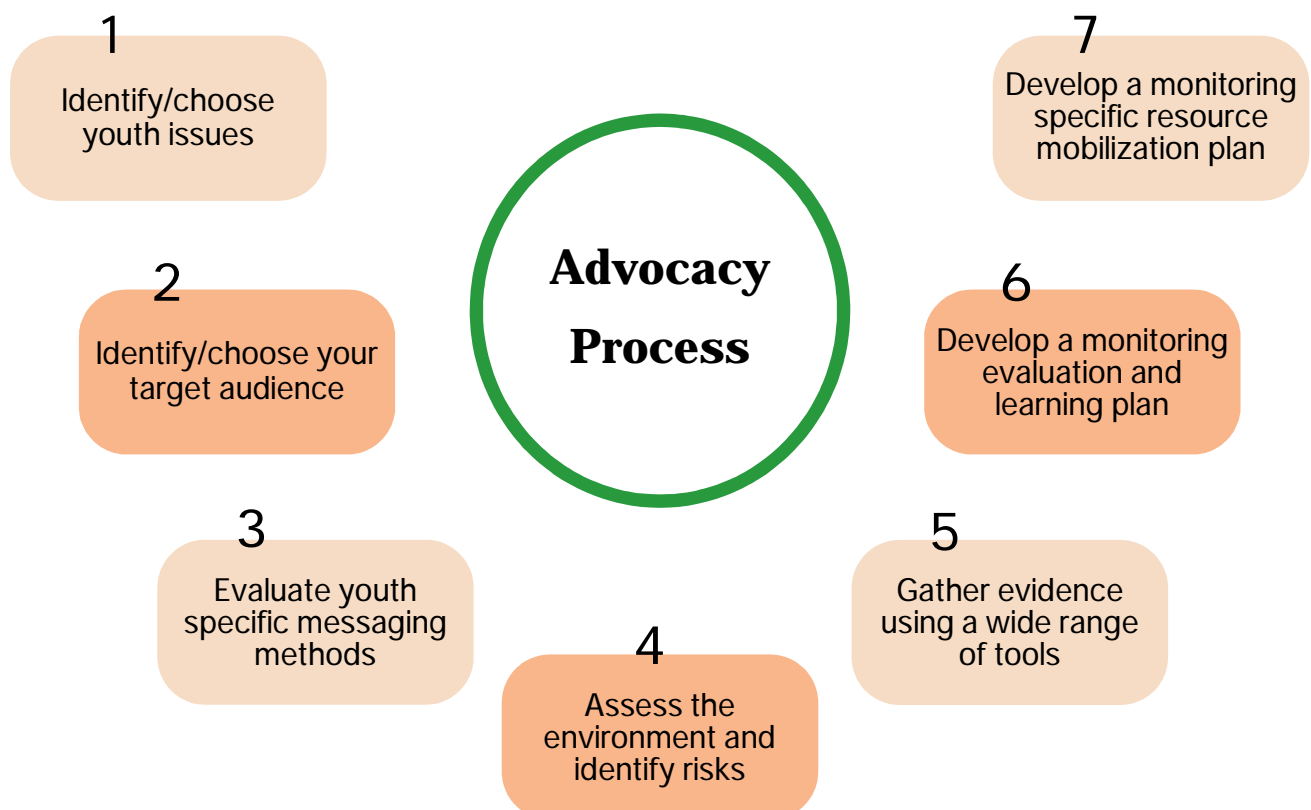>
> —UNICEF

Adocacy based activities

This definition encompasses a range of activities, including:

- Policy analysis and research: Youth conduct research and analysis on issues affecting young people, such as democratic and political processes, education, employment, health, and climate change. This research informs their advocacy efforts and ensures that their positions are evidence−based

- Public awareness raising: Youth use various communication channels to raise public awareness about issues affecting young people and to mobilise support for their advocacy campaigns. This includes social media, traditional media, public events, and community outreach.

- Dialogue and engagement: Young people engage in dialogue and build relationships with government officials, youth-led/serving organizations policymakers, and other stakeholders to advocate for their priorities. This can involve lobbying, participation in consultative forums, and presenting recommendations to government bodies.

- Capacity building and training: Youth organizations provide training and support to young people to develop their advocacy skills and knowledge. This empowers young people to participate effectively in political and democratic processes.

- Social mobilization: Youth organizations mobilize young people to participate in protests, demonstrations, and other forms of collective action to raise their voices and demand change.

- Monitoring and accountability: Youth organizations monitor the implementation of policies and hold governments accountable for their commitments to young people. This ensures that young people's voices are heard, and their needs are addressed.

1
Identify/choose youth issues

2
Identify/choose your target audience

3
Evaluate youth specific messaging methods

4
Assess the environment and identify risks

Advocacy Process

5
Gather evidence using a wide range of tools

6
Develop a monitoring evaluation and learning plan

7
Develop a monitoring specific resource mobilization plan

Advocacy skill building

- CLEAR AND CONCISE MESSAGING

  Advocacy messaging efforts should be clear and concise messages that are easily understandable by a wide range of audiences. Use straightforward language, avoid jargon and ensure that the core message is communicated effectively.

- KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

  Tailor your communication approach to the specific audience you are forgeding, understanding their needs, interests, and values and frame your message in a way that resonates with them. This could involve using diferent delivery method or having certain spects of your advocacy campaign based on their priorities.

- ENGAGE WITH STAKEHOLDERS

  Sective advocacy involves engaging with various stakeholders including policymakers, community members, partner organizations and the media. There is a need to maintain open lines of communication and establish productive elationships to gain support and understanding for the couse. This can be achieved through meetings, public forums, social media, or other platforms.

- UTILIZE STORYTELLING

  Storytelling is a powerful tool for advocacy. Use stories to connect emotionally with your audience, providing real–life examples that highlight the impact of the specific issue you are advocating for. Personall narratives and testimonials can be particularly compelling in generating empathy and support.

- UTILIZE A MULTI-CHANNEL APPROACH

  Spread your advocacy messages across multiple channels to ensure maximum reach and visibility. This could include traditional media (such as newspapers, TV and Radio), social media platforms, wobaltos, podcasts, online petitions and community events Dferent channels can attract different demographics and help amplify your message.

- BUILD COALITIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

  Collaboration is often instrumental in advocacy efforts. Seek out like-minded organizations, individuals and groups to form coalitions and partnerships. By joining forces, you can pool resources, leverage expertise and empty your collective advocacy messages

- USE DATA AND EVIDENCE

  Support your advocacy efforts with solid data and evicience. This con enhance your credibility and strengthen the validity of your arguments. Whether it's statistics, research findings, or expert opinions, Incorporating credible evidence can bolster the effectiveness of your communication.

- MOBILIZE SUPPORTERS

  Encourage your supporters to take action and be involved. Provide them with cloor instructions on how they can contribute, whether it is by signing petitions, attending attending roles, contacting policymakers or sharing Information on social media Empower them to become advocates thermalves, expanding the reach and impact of your advocacy efforts
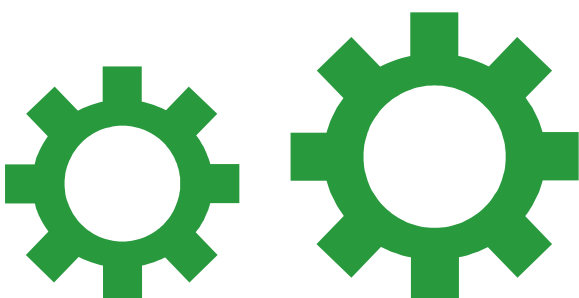
Youth advocacy strengthening democracy

When it comes active youth engagement and advocacy-based actions leading to strengthening democratic processes, there are a number of ways that can happen:

- Increased political participation

  Youth can stimulate democratic processes by ensuring increased participation in voting, campaigning, and volunteering. Such actions can and need to happen both during and after the times of electioneering. Youth can bring innovation and ingenuity by positive and constructive use of social media platforms for raising awareness, monitoring the performance of service providing agencies and creating networks for collective action

- Championing inclusivity and equity

  Youth can engage pro-actively, with communities on the margin such as religious and gender minorities, economically disadvantaged communities, and help bring their voices and concerns in the mainstream thus contributing to influencing people centered decision making

- Bringing accountability in governance

  Youth advocacy can focus on holding institutions of governance accountable to the citizens in fulfilling the social contract enshrined in the Constitution and other legislative and institutional instruments of governance

- Peacebuilding and social cohesion

  In divided and fragmented societies such as ours, youth play a very important role in building bridges across ethnic, religious, socio−economic divides, promoting tolerance, reconciliation, peace and co−existence

3

Participatory Action Research – Tool for Community Based Inclusive Problem Solving

This *Section* details the need, process and methodology of making interventions for addressing community needs in an inclusive, participatory and evidence based manner. Explained within the construct of the Participatory Action Research approach. Discussed are objectives and anticipated outcomes, processes, tools and methodologies

Introducing participatory action research (PRA)

For polices, plans, programs, projects to have sustainability and long-term viability, it is important to make the associated processes inclusive and participatory. Grass roots approach to planning and decision making always trumps top heavy modes of decision making when it comes to having the buy in and legitimacy of the target audience, that can then ensure long term viability of actions. Inequity and social injustice are outcomes of non-inclusive planning that hinder sustainable growth and development.

A number of models and approaches have been structured to make decision making processes inclusive. They may include participatory action research, human centered design, participatory budgeting, citizens jury and assemblies etc. This section discusses the participatory action research methodology with the aim of encouraging and educating youth on how they can find an outreach within communities for implementing research that finds community driven and needs relevant solutions to livability challenges.
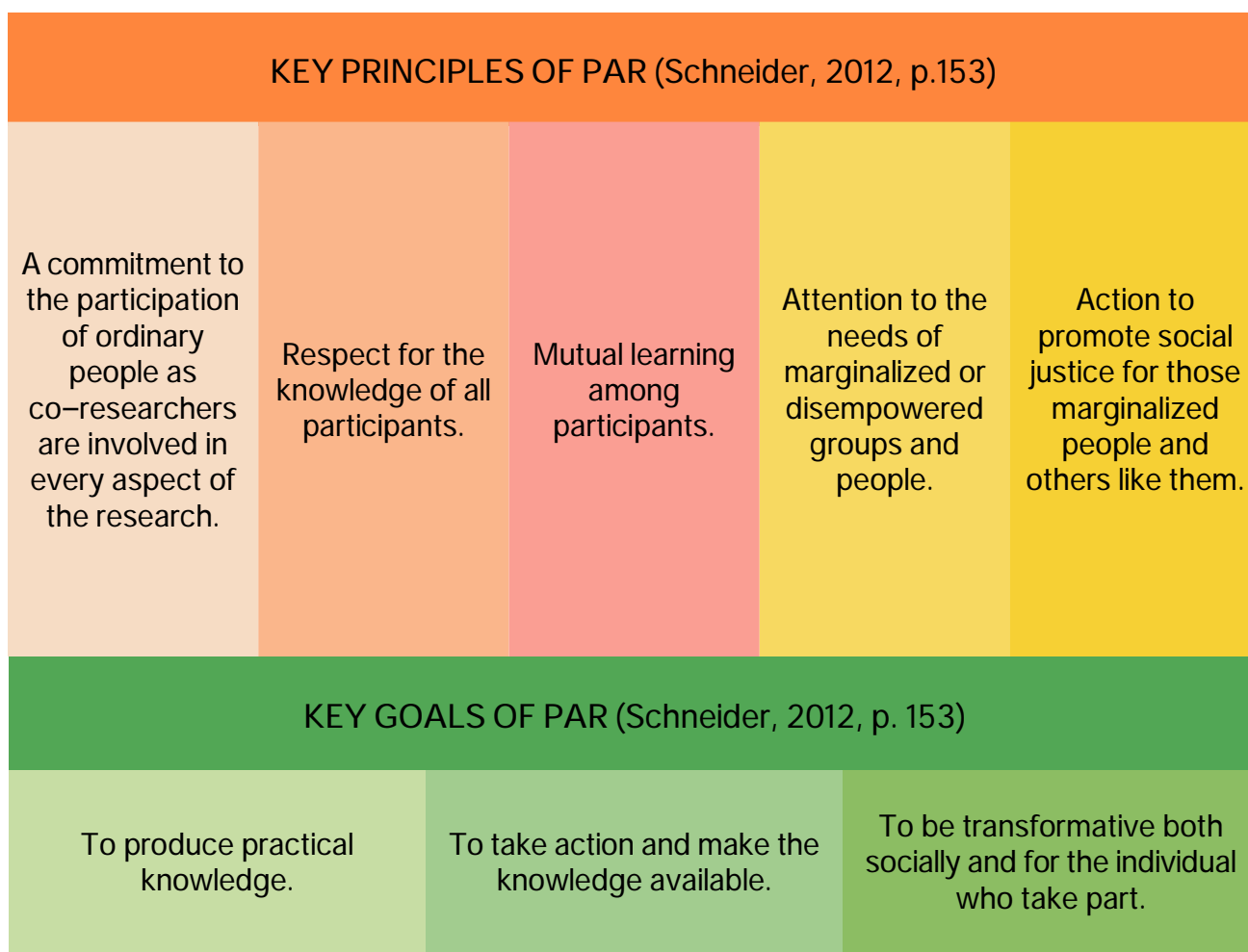
Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a collaborative research approach that combines *investigation, reflection, and action* to address real−world problems faced by communities. It challenges the traditional notion of research as an activity conducted "on" people by external experts; instead, it is research conducted *"with"* and *"for"* people, where community members actively participate as co−researchers.

PAR acknowledges the importance of local knowledge that has to be harnessed to come up with solutions that can truly bring about bring about social change and empowerment.

Action research is different from conventional academic research, as its purpose is directly to bring about change and to understand what provokes change and what does not. It is not just a way to understand a certain situation or problem, but is also a process for changing the situation and empowerment of all those engaged. It is a process in which you bring together communities affected by a certain situation or problem to figure out what is going on as a group, and do something about it. The "research" and the "action" are related and feed each other through an iterative reflective process

− A Toolkit for Participatory Action Research
Ruth Hall (PLASS) et.al. International Development Research Center (IDRC), Canada

The philosophical roots of PAR lie in the works of *Kurt Lewin* (1940s), who coined the term action research, and later in the critical pedagogy of *Paulo Freire* (1970s), who emphasized education as a process of liberation and empowerment.

KEY PRINCIPLES OF PAR (Schneider, 2012, p.153)				
A commitment to the participation of ordinary people as co–researchers are involved in every aspect of the research.	Respect for the knowledge of all participants.	Mutual learning among participants.	Attention to the needs of marginalized or disempowered groups and people.	Action to promote social justice for those marginalized people and others like them.

KEY GOALS OF PAR (Schneider, 2012, p. 153)		
To produce practical knowledge.	To take action and make the knowledge available.	To be transformative both socially and for the individual who take part.

Photovoice: A Visual, Participatory Method

Some key reasons why PAR approach works and associated benefits are discussed below:
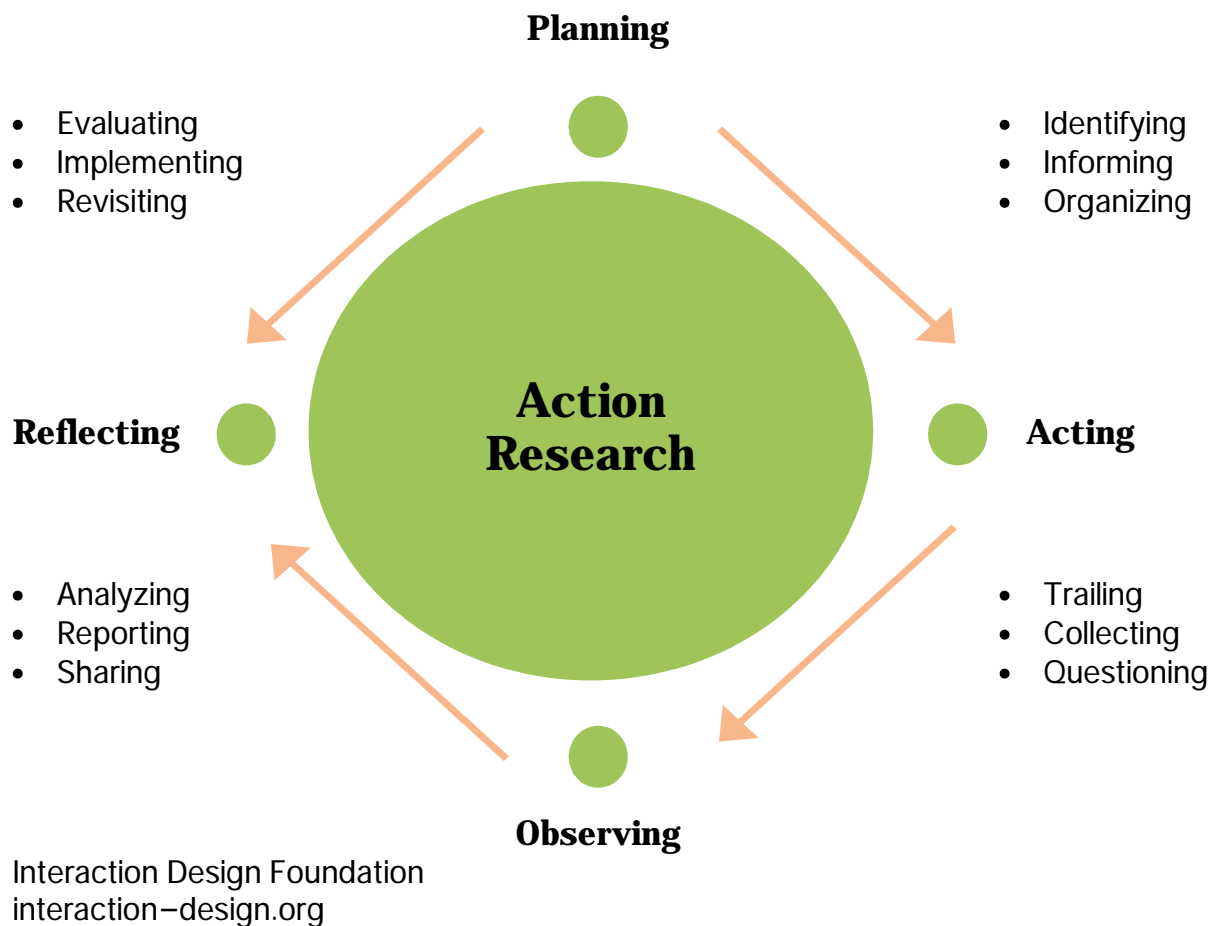
- Democratizes knowledge production

  Traditional, more top-heavy research often considers local communities as subjects rather than holders of agency. PAR redistributes power by valuing local knowledge and lived experience equally with academic and professional expertise. It merges and not disconnects the knowledge streams
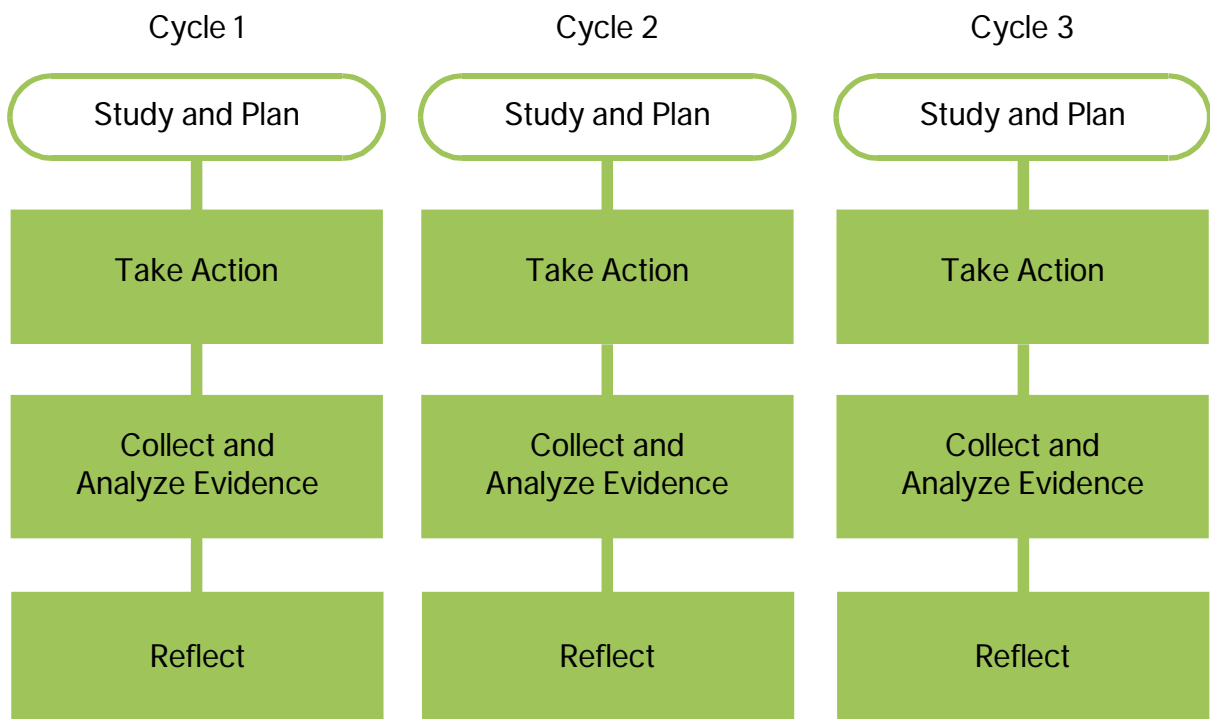
- Ensures relevance and ownership

  As problem solving processes become inclusive community members don't sit out, rather they help define the research questions. Thus, it gets ensured that the findings directly address community needs and lead to credible outcomes having public legitimacy

- Promotes empowerment and capacity building

  As the community become a meaningful part of the problem–solving process, they are inculcated with skills in analysis, reflection, building collective social mobilization and problem-solving, strengthening their ability to influence policy, advocate for change and help sustain intervention in the long run

Planning

- Evaluating
- Implementing
- Revisiting

Identifying
- Identifying
- Informing
- Organizing

Action Research

Reflecting

- Analyzing
- Reporting
- Sharing

Acting

- Trailing
- Collecting
- Questioning

Observing

Interaction Design Foundation
interaction−design.org

Multiple loop learning vs Single loop learning (Chris Arqyis)

Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Study and Plan	Study and Plan	Study and Plan
Take Action	Take Action	Take Action
Collect and Analyze Evidence	Collect and Analyze Evidence	Collect and Analyze Evidence
Reflect	Reflect	Reflect

Progressive Problem Solving with Action Research

Methodologies and tools used in PAR

Participatory Action Research employs both qualitative and quantitative methods but emphasizes more immersive qualitative experiences that allow everyone to contribute meaningfully. Common methods include:

- In–Depth–Interviews (IDIs) – One to one consultation with relevant stakeholders
- Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) – for gathering shared experiences and insights in groups
- Photovoice—participants take photos that represent their experiences and use them to spark dialogue and advocacy
- Community Forums and Workshops – for co–analysis and decision-making
- Timelines and Historical Mapping – to trace changes and patterns over time
- Surveys and Questionnaires – co–designed and administered by community members
- Storytelling and Narrative Inquiry – capturing lived experiences as data
- Participatory Mapping – for spatially visualizing community assets and problems
- Mind Mapping – A visual brainstorming tool used to organize ideas, themes, and relationships around a central concept; helps identify key issues and connections in research
- Transect Mapping – A participatory tool where researchers and community members walk through an area to observe and record spatial, social, and environmental features along a defined path
- Community Mapping – A collaborative process where local people draw maps of their community to show resources, problems, and relationships, helping reveal local knowledge and priorities – problem maps and vision maps
- In–Context Immersion – A qualitative method where researchers spend time within a community or setting to experience daily life and gain firsthand understanding of behaviors, cultures, and contexts
- Venn Diagram – A diagrammatic tool used to illustrate relationships, overlaps, and distinctions among institutions, stakeholders, or issues in a community or research system
- Self-Documentation – A method where participants record their own experiences, thoughts, or activities (through diaries, photos, or videos), providing authentic, insider perspectives for research
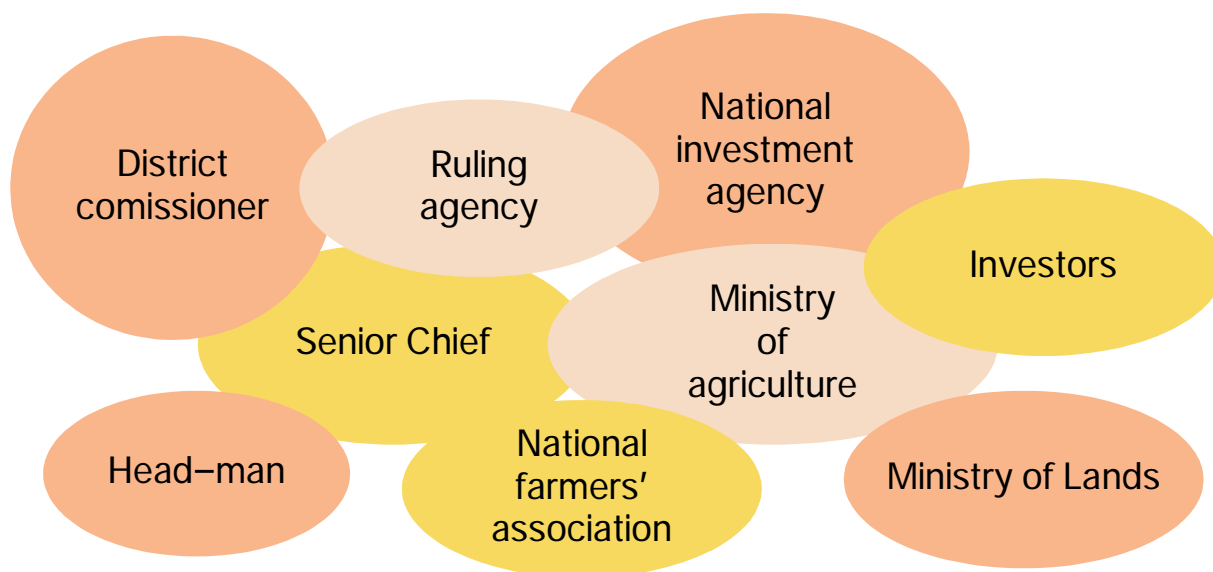
Creating a viable space for engagement

It is very important to understand the political economy of the space where the PAR intervention is happening. Who are major power brokers, how decisions are made, how various stakeholders connect or disconnect with each other–this knowledge is important to develop messaging and actions that can be best designed to engage multi-layered stakeholder engagement and support and guard against complications. Two tools employed to assess these dynamics are discussed below, referenced from *A Toolkit for Participatory Action Research–Ruth Hall (PLASS) et.al. International Development Research Center (IDRC), Canada*

Venn diagrams-tool for stakeholder power mapping

Venn diagrams are a cluster of circles, some of which overlap. These are easy to develop in a small group of community members. You can invite them to discuss the individuals and institutions that play a role in shaping their situation, and they can decide how big or small each should be, depending on how important they are. Next, invite the group to arrange the circles of actors to indicate which work together−and place them overlapping one another.

Here is an example of a very basic Venn diagram – yours might well have more actors, and arrange them in a different way.

District comissioner

Ruling agency

National investment agency

Investors

Senior Chief

Ministry of agriculture

Head−man

National farmers' association

Ministry of Lands

Actor Tables

As with the Venn diagram, ask a small group of participants to identify the actors that are of relevance to their story, and in each case, to discuss and decide which of these are most important (i.e. able to influence their situation) and which are less important (i.e. less able to influence their situation. Having done that, ask participants to discuss which among these are likely to be more friendly and receptive to the community's concerns, and which are likely to be hostile or unwilling to engage.

You need flipchart paper for this, and can draw a table like this beforehand.

	Friendly	Hostile
Most Important		
Less Important		

Participants can write directly on the paper, or, if you have small cards, they can write the names of the actors on these, and then discuss where to place them. As with the timeline, it is better to have small cards so that people can move an actor - e.g. from less to more important, or from friendly to hostile - on the basis of their discussion. Expect that people will not automatically agree. Again, that is part of the research process; note the disagreements and use the opportunity to ask the participants to explain their reasons for classifying the actors they way they do.

Using the table as a tool for a conversation, discuss how the community, and you as a supporting organization, will engage with these different actors. Bear in mind that:

- Top–left quadrant (more important and friendly) actors are those to build alliances with
- Top–right quadrant (more important but hostile) actors may be the ultimate target, but you will need to identify routes to reach these actors, via others
- Bottom–left quadrant (less important and friendly) actors are those you might not prioritise but can keep in contact with, invite to meetings, share perspectives with and seek invitations from
- Bottom–right quadrant (less important and hostile) actors may not be worth spending time and energy on trying to engage with.

Note that this classification of key actors might change during the course of the project. It may be worth repeating this exercise with the community to check whether the landscape of key actors has changed, and to discuss the implications for your joint strategy together with the community. By applying this method, you can identify allies with whom to work, as well as those individuals, groups or institutions that may resist advocacy efforts or actively oppose them. Thus, actor analysis helps people to develop advocacy strategies and to build more effective coalitions in the mobilization for action.

Regardless of which method you use, remember to take photos both of the process and the final product.

Some important considerations

The PAR approach has both strengths and limitations that have to be considered and catered to before starting an intervention. The approach promotes local ownership and sustainability based on incorporation of local communities and contextually grounded knowledge. This leads to building trust and long-term relationships and encourages collective empowerment. However, successful PAR interventions are time-intensive and require sustained commitment. A critical analysis has to be done of the existing power dynamics and differing expectations may complicate collaboration that have to be accounted for. At times, funding and institutional constraints often limit flexibility.

4

Youth Parliament – A Model for Collective Youth Advocacy

This Section profiles the Youth Parliament framework as a tested model for youth empowerment and building agency for informed political and civic mobilization and influencing decision making for public good

Defining a youth parliament

A youth parliament (YP) can be defined as a formal or semi-formal institution that simulates, role plays or parallels a national or local parliamentary legislative body and gives young people a structured space to debate, build consensus and draft policy recommendations, understand democratic processes, and engage with their policy makers. YPs range from short-term simulation, youth centered programs to long-running, institutionally recognized bodies such as no-for-profits that create spaces for advocacy and drafting policy instruments that then feed directly into legislative processes.

Evolution of youth parliament

- Origins (simulation and civic education): The idea began largely as more in the form of educational and civic-engagement initiatives—academic spaces and youth organizations ran mock parliaments to teach law making and parliamentary procedures, public speaking and debating skills

- Institutionalization: Over time, some countries and advocacy networks gave a more form alized structure to youth parliaments into ongoing bodies with elected youth members, a legal recognition or formal advisory status–creating an interface between youth voices, demands and formal decision–making processes

Common model

Common model

- Single events (weekend or week) run in schools, universities, or by youth NGOs more to build skills and impart knowledge on law making procedures

Advisory model (ongoing, non–statutory)

- Regularly meeting body that prepares position papers for government/legislature

- Often convened by ministries, parliaments, or youth councils

Institutionalized model (statutory or semi–statutory)

- Created by law or parliamentary resolution; may have seats reserved, formal mandates, budgets, and direct consultation rights

Hybrid model

- Combines simulation, advisory and institutional functions: elected delegates, standing committees, liaison officers with parliament, regular public sittings

- Global networking & models: As such experiments evolved, regional and international networks, organizations and NGOs spread the model (regional youth parliaments, continental gatherings, inter–parliamentary youth forums), creating examples activated both at a localized and transnational spaces

How a youth parliament operates — structure & processes

Normally, the following considerations are made in designing the operational framework of a youth parliament:

Membership and representation

- Eligibility: Age range defined (commonly 15–29); may include sub–ranges
- Selection methods: Direct elections (school/university/constituency), nomination, application + selection, or mixed
- Quota and inclusion rules: Gender balance, geographic representation, minorities, disability representation, religious minorities, socio-economic quotas to ensure diversity

Organizational structure

- Plenary: Full membership meets in formal sittings to debate and vote on motions.
- Committees: Thematic committees (e.g., education, health, gender, environment) draft reports and bills
- Leadership: Speaker/president, deputy, whips, secretariat/coordination unit
- Secretariat: Administrative staff (often supported by a ministry/NGO) that manages logistics, research and follow–up

Working cycle

- Agenda–setting: Issues sourced from members, communities, research, or formal government legislative and policy instruments
- Research & hearings: Committees hold evidence sessions, invite experts, gather youth testimony and petitions
- Drafting: Position papers, motions, or youth bills and agendas are drafted
- Plenary debate & vote: Formal debates followed by votes on recommendations
- Delivery & follow–up: Recommendations are delivered to parliament/ministry; tracking mechanisms monitor responses and implementation

Influencing decision making

- Consultative route: Official letters, memoranda, petitions and formal sittings with MPs/ministers
- Co-legislative route: Some institutional YPs have mandated consultations on specific legislation
- Public engagement: Town halls, seminars/workshops, media campaigns and digital platforms amplify outputs

This model for youth empowerment and engagement with the decision-making arena is structured to strengthen the capacity and agency of youth to influence legislation and public policy. Essential skills for effective advocacy and lobbying such as public speaking, research and analysis and drafting documents such as policy briefs are built. This formalized form of engagement gives a lot legitimacy and power to youth to represent public issues with knowledge and skills at the appropriate levels of decision making.

There is power in numbers and the model is well suited to facilitate networking and alliance building. Forms, levels and spaces of power can thus be effectively and intelligently leveraged to influence decision making for public good.

Youth Parliament Pakistan

The *Youth Parliament Pakistan* (YPP) is a platform for the Pakistani youth patterned after the National Assembly of Pakistan. The idea behind facilitating a YPP is not just to put Pakistani Youth through a mock exercise of what Parliament does and how it should work, but to inculcate in them the values and culture of democracy as central to effective governance in any society. In many ways, the process of YPP is not just following the practices adopted by Pakistani Parliament but also to introduce concepts drawing from international best practices that improve upon those practices.

Objectives

Powered by *Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (PILDAT)*, the aim of Youth Parliament Pakistan is to strengthen Pakistani nationalism within the youth especially in these times when skepticism and self–doubt is being spread among the youth. The *YPP* aims to reinforce faith and confidence amongst the future political, corporate, business, legal and technological leaders of the country and give them a platform to develop and bolter their vision for Pakistan. Based on this foundation, young people learn through the Youth Parliament on how to become active citizens and build successful careers as they are empowered to understand global, regional and local challenges of today and tomorrow and inspired to address these as next generation of leaders.

Objectives of the *YPP* are to groom the leadership potential of the youth of Pakistan and to provide them with an opportunity to:

- Develop critical thinking skills, intellectual curiosity, empathy and innovation
- Become active citizens and build successful careers
- Understand local and global challenges of today and tomorrow and learn to address these challenges
- Understand political system of Pakistan and values and culture of democracy
- Learn to be tolerant of a variety of viewpoints and engage in a rational, reason–based dialogue
- Develop policy alternatives, based on youth's perspective, to address critical issues

Source: Youth Parliament Pakistan

5

Case Studies in Youth Mobilization

This *Section* highlights some global and national youth led organizations and initiatives for readers for learning, referencing and gaining inspiration

Global case studies

Restless Development (Nepal Branch):

Restless Development was founded in 1985 as Students Partnership Worldwide by Jimm Cogan, originally as a gap year program for school leavers from Westminster School to work as supply teachers in India or Zimbabwe. The organization is now a global youth-led development agency that supports young leaders to create change in their communities. In Nepal, *Restless Development* pursues goals centered on amplifying the collective power of young leaders to create a more just and equitable world, with specific emphases on comprehensive sexual and climate justice education, claiming rights, and ending gender-based violence and early marriage. The organization operates across more than 45 districts, focusing on youth from diverse castes, ethnicities, and religions to challenge harmful social norms and promote sustainable development.

To achieve impact, Restless Development engages in a range of activities that build youth capacity and foster community change. These include rolling out programs in over 30 districts to challenge social norms through trained networks, organizing workshops such as those on reducing stigma and misinformation during COVID-19, and conducting events like five-day cloth bag making training to promote green economies and reduce plastic use. Intergenerational dialogues are another key activity, bridging youth with elders to address climate issues

> ### Making a positive, evidence-based change!
>
> Successes in Nepal are evident in both quantitative reach and qualitative transformations. The organization has worked in over 40 districts, positively impacting communities through youth-led actions that reduce unemployment by up to 15% via skill-building. Globally, it has reached over 10 million young people, with Nepal's branch contributing to this by inspiring value champions who push boundaries for social good

and build sustainable futures. The Green Shift initiative exemplifies this approach, enabling young individuals to pursue dreams of contributing to Nepal by integrating environmental education with leadership training. These efforts align with SDG Goal 16 by enhancing youth leadership for peace and justice.

https://restlessdevelopment.org/country/nepal/

Young Power in Social Action(YPSA) (Bangladesh):

Founded on May 20, 1985, in Sitakund, Chattogram district, Bangladesh, YPSA was inspired by the United Nations' International Youth Year: *Participation, Development, Peace* in 1985.
Initially established as Young Power by Founder General Secretary Md. Arifur Rahman to organize local youth for social development, it evolved into YPSA, a voluntary, nongovernmental, and nonprofit organization focused on sustainable development.

YPSA's vision is a society without poverty where basic needs and rights are ensured for all. Its mission is to partner with poor and vulnerable populations to achieve their sustainable development and that of society. It reaches an estimated 14 million disadvantaged people through networking with government, NGOs, civil society organizations, and community-based organizations, and programs are organized under six major themes: *Health, Economic Empowerment, Human Rights and Good Governance, Education, Environment and Climate Change, and Disaster Risk Reduction and Humanitarian Response.*

Successes include numerous awards: *International Youth Peace Prize (1999), National e-Content and ICT4D Champion Award (2010), Regional Grant Competition Winner (2013), ISIF Asia Awards (2014), International Excellence Award (2015).* These recognize innovations in inclusive education, finance, digital empowerment for persons with disabilities, accessible information, and creating Bangladesh's first Inclusive University at the *University of Chittagong.*

https://ypsa.org/

> **Politically neutral: Yet bold!**
>
> YPSA's approaches emphasize facilitation and advocacy, positioning itself as a politically neutral yet bold actor in poverty eradication and rights establishment. It acts as an intermediary to expand choices for the poor, implements direct interventions where needed, and amplifies marginalized voices to influence policies, attitudes, and practices. Policies cover strategic planning, personnel, finance, procurement, child safeguarding, gender, and more, ensuring transparency and accountability.

Alokito Kori (Bangladesh)

Alokito Kori is a youth-led organization in Bangladesh, was founded to address the profound challenges faced by the nomadic Bede community, a minority group living on boats along rivers like the Padma in Munshiganj. The organization's mission centers on fostering community-led development to promote education, financial stability, social equity, and overall well-being for more than 200 Bede families. By building relationships and emphasizing self–reliance, Alokito Kori aims to break cycles of discrimination, poverty, and isolation that have historically denied the Bede access to basic services.

> **Building awareness−the first building block to community empowerment**
>
> Alokito Kori's approach is multidisciplinary and community-owned, starting with education as a foundation. In Munshiganj, they established a community school that leverages the Bede's predictable river routines, allowing children to attend without facing bullying in mainstream schools. This initiative created a safe, encouraging environment, leading to increased enrollment and enthusiasm for learning

The *Bede* community endures significant hardships, including a primary education rate of less than 1% compared to Bangladesh's national average of 77%, near-absent preventive healthcare with only 2% of children vaccinated, financial instability, malnutrition, child marriage, and domestic violence.

Their nomadic lifestyle, with boats serving as homes for cooking, sleeping, and bathing, exacerbates these issues by lacking permanent addresses for services. Recognizing education's limitations, Alokito Kori expanded to holistic programs through a partnership with the Global Fund for Children *(GFC)* under the *ARC initiative, supported by We Trust. For over nine years, they have employed the SALT (Stimulate, Appreciate, Listen, Learn, Team, and Transfer) and CLCP (Community Life Competence Process)* frameworks to build community ownership. These methods involve collective dialogues where Bede members identify strengths, ideate solutions, and train internal *SALT* facilitators, overcoming initial reluctance to collaborate with mainstream society.

https://www.facebook.com/share/17R9XoZ56y/?mibextid=wwXlfr

Youth Climate Lab (YCL) (Canada, operating globally)

Youth Climate Lab (YCL) is a youth-led, non-profit organization based in Canada but operating globally, dedicated to mobilizing youth for just, climate-resilient futures. It emphasizes skill building to prepare young people (ages 18-30) for active roles in climate action, addressing gaps in education, policy inclusion, and financial access.

The primary issue YCL targets is the absence of opportunities for youth to own the climate crisis, including skill deficits in creative problem-solving, policy advocacy, and entrepreneurship, exacerbated by barriers like tokenization in decision−making spaces. This leads to underrepresentation of youth voices in climate solutions, particularly in underserved groups.

YCL addresses these through a three-pillar approach: *Skills, Policy, and Finance shifts.* Programs include Pop−Up Labs at conferences and campuses, where youth develop ideas with mentors experienced in non−profits and social ventures. The Greenpreneurs competition, partnered with *Global Green Growth Institute and Student Energy,* provides funding and skills for youth-led climate ventures. Fellowships teach activism, building confidence and leadership through hands-on climate justice training.

Spread your footprint! Go Global!

Youth involvement is central: Founded by young leaders Ana F. Gonzalez Guerrero and Dominique Souris in 2017, YCL is run by youth, with young people leading programs and networks. Examples include youth providing research and support to government delegations at COPs, like in Seychelles, building practical skills in international advocacy. Over seven years, YCL has achieved notable successes. It has connected with young people in 77 countries, fostering global youth networks for change. Initiatives like Greenpreneurs have enabled new climate actions by funding youth entrepreneurs. Capacity-building has supported small island states and integrated youth into UNFCCC processes. Metrics include empowering thousands through workshops and fellowships, with sustained impact on policy shifts and green jobs readiness, though funding challenges persist in scaling

https://www.youthclimatelab.org/

Surfider Foundation Europe (France)

Europe faces a marine litter crisis, with 80% of ocean plastics originating from land-based sources like poor waste management and single-use items. Youth are disproportionately affected as future stewards, yet often lack platforms for action. Surfrider addresses this by targeting systemic failures in recycling infrastructure and policy enforcement, while building youth capacity in leadership, data collection, and advocacy to influence regulations like the *EU's Marine Strategy Framework Directive.* Over 60% of volunteers are under 30, with youth chapters autonomously managing events and research. For instance, in Spain's Basque Country, young activists led a 2023 campaign collecting 5 tons of plastic, analyzing data to advocate for regional bans. Internships and the *Surfrider Youth Summit* provide training in project management and public speaking, turning participants into eco−ambassadors.

Partnerships with the EU and UNESCO amplify youth voices, ensuring young leaders participate in consultations.

Since 1990, Surfrider Europe has mobilized over 100,000 volunteers, removing 20+ million kg of waste through cleanups. It contributed to the 2019 *EU Single-Use Plastics Directive*, banning 10 problematic items, and supported national laws in France and Portugal. It has led to 500+ youth-led projects funded since 2015, with 80% of participants reporting increased advocacy skills, and can be considered majorly successful.

> **Innovative ideas for engaging youth**
>
> Surfrider's strategies include the Blue Solutions program, which funds youth-led projects for waste prevention, such as innovative recycling tech and anti-litter campaigns. The Youth Network coordinates chapters where young members (16–30) design local initiatives, like the annual *Million South Beach Cleanup* in Hendaye, France, engaging thousands in waste audits to inform policy. Educational tools, including the *Plastic Free July adaptation*, teach recycling skills through workshops, while advocacy pushes for bans on items like microbeads

National case studies

HIVE

HIVE is a youth-led social-impact organization founded in 2015 through the merger of two of Pakistan's largest youth organizations. Its mission is to tackle issues of extremism and marginalization, serving as a resource for civil society groups and social enterprises to foster a more inclusive, equal, and peaceful Pakistan. HIVE's programs emphasize training, mentoring, and networking opportunities for small community-based actors. It partners with field experts across Pakistan to raise awareness and promote dialogue on extremism and peacebuilding. Additionally, HIVE brings together activists, entrepreneurs, and artists for collaborative projects addressing local and national challenges.

Since 2019, *Peace Direct* has partnered with HIVE through its *Local Action Fund,* a flexible funding program for grassroots peacebuilders. Under this, HIVE identifies grassroots peacebuilders and provides small grants to support their local peacebuilding initiatives.

Key initiatives highlight HIVE's approaches and successes.

In 2023, drawing on a decade of learning, HIVE launched the *Community Innovation Lab (CIL)* a collaborative action–learning space that examines, incubates, and catalyzes innovative solutions to complex social problems at the community level. CIL offers on-demand support through a flexible, adaptive methodology to local actors across Pakistan.

> **Going grassroots to make the real connections!**
>
> In 2022, *HIVE* funded the creation of *Aman Chaupal,* an inclusive social space in Sandan Kallan, Pakistan, designed to promote open, intergenerational dialogue and amplify voices of marginalized communities, including religious minorities and women. This red brick structure, dubbed the *Palace of Sanda Kalan,* has hosted diverse discussions and events, enabling lower-class villagers and local influencers to engage jointly. For the first time in the village's history, women participated and their issues were publicly addressed, establishing it as a beacon of community strength and a refuge for gatherings and celebrations

• Chanan Dvelopment Association (CDA)

Chanan Development Association (CDA) focuses on discrimination and peacebuilding, and is fully youth-led, with its board, staff, and volunteers all under 29. It acts as a resource center, offering training, exposure, and networking to strengthen youth–led groups nationwide. Young people lead as agents of change, examples can be found on the CDA's website and include Jan from Quetta establishing a social cohesion hub for countering extremism, Madiha running a sports club for over 100 children, and so on.

Founded in 2004 by young activists as a theatre group, *CDA* has grown into a national entity with a mission to empower youth, particularly young women, for meaningful participation in policy and decision–making. This creates a healthy, just, democratic, and peaceful society free from biases based on gender, religion, status, or language. Its vision aligns with addressing high–risk behaviors, lack of awareness, and discriminatory laws through innovative approaches like interactive theatre for social change, peer education, and advocacy

Creating forums for youth mobilization

CDA addresses societal these through a multifaceted, youth-centered approach. Operating in over 110 districts, it leverages a network of 360 youth-led organizations, 15,000 active volunteers, and over 100,000 peer educators. A flagship initiative of the *CDA* is the *National Youth Peace Festival (NYPF)*, Pakistan's largest youth gathering for peace. Since 2019, through the *Youth Action for Peace program (now Local First)* with *Peace Direct, CDA* provides small grants to young peacebuilders, enabling innovative local projects

The primary social issues *CDA* targets include conflict driven by religious, cultural, and social intolerance, especially affecting minority groups and women. This encompasses human rights violations such as forced conversions, child marriage, extremist violence, and restrictions on civil society. *CDA* promotes interfaith harmony, civic education, democracy, human rights, gender equality, and health/reproductive health (including HIV/AIDS).

https://www.peacedirect.org/our-partner/chanan-development-association-cda/

• AIESEC (Pakistan)

AIESEC in Pakistan, established in 2004 as part of the global *AIESEC* network founded in 1948, is a non–profit, youth–led organization headquartered in Lahore. It operates across Pakistan, focusing on developing leadership among youth aged 18–30 through practical, value–driven experiences. As the world's largest youth–run organization, it is present in 100+ countries, but in Pakistan, it emphasizes strengthening local employability and innovation.

Targeting youth unemployment

The key issues include youth underemployment, skill shortages in areas like entrepreneurship and global collaboration, and barriers to international opportunities in Pakistan's competitive job market. AIESEC in Pakistan addresses these through scaling programs like their *Global Talent program* that connects companies with young, skilled talent for professional internships. It allows businesses to find and hire young professionals and in turn, provides youth with opportunities for cross-cultural work experience, leadership development, and career growth.

AIESEC in Pakistan have sister *programs* like *Global Volunteer,* and *Global Teacher* where youth from Pakistan have access to global volunteering and teaching opportunities to build their portfolios and acquire real-world skills that will later make them more competitive in local job markets.

Over two decades in Pakistan, AIESEC has achieved significant successes. It has contributed to developing over 1 million global leaders, including business and civil society figures, with Pakistan's branch enabling thousands of youths to access international internships and volunteering, boosting career prospects and SME innovation. They host Youth Leadership Events like workshops and conferences for practical learning to inspire value-driven leaders; part of a 1M+ global alumni network, successfully equipping the youth of Pakistan with the skills necessary in today's world.

https://www.aiesecinpakistan.org/

CITIZENS FOR A BETTER ENVIRONMENT (SHEHRI-CBE)

Citizens for a Better Environment (Shehri-CBE) was formed in 1988 (based in Karachi City), as a non-political, noncommercial, non-governmental organization (under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860) by a group of concerned citizens to provide the citizens with a platform to effectively voice their concerns in determining their future and taking action in arresting the deterioration in their living environment and to improve the same. Citizens for a Better Environment (Shehri-CBE) is now fighting at the forefront of various issues of public   concern related with environment. The organization is actively engaged in areas of work like public advocacy and public interest litigation, right to information, good governance, community policing, police reforms, urban mobility, climate change and last but not the least institutional reforms.

OBJECTIVES

- Establishment of an aware and pro-active civil society, good governance, transparency and rule of law
- Promotion of research, documentation, dialogue and influence of public policies
- Setting up an effective and sustained guidance to local area citizen groups on their local area and environment
- Introduction of an effective and representative local government system, e.g. capacity building and training
- Preparation of proper master plan/zoning plan for Karachi and effective implementation of the same

HOW IS SHEHRI RUN

A volunteer Managing Committee, duly elected by the General Body for a term of two years, thereby functioning in an open and democratic manner. Membership is open to all who subscribe to its objective and memorandum.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs) FOCUS

Shehri-Citizens for a Better Environment brings a focus in all its works on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that define the global development agenda for today. This Publication 'LEARNING IN CIVIC EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY−A Toolkit for Youth Empowerment' Creates strong linkages with the targets of Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities & Communities) and Goal 16 (Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions), other than finding cross linkages with the remaining goals as well.