**OSF Pakistan Portfolio Review – Right to Information**

**Outcomes Summary**

The portfolio review included grants that the OSF Pakistan office has made since 2009 till present on right to information in Pakistan. The review confirmed that the work of the Foundation in this area will focus on strengthening the access to information movement in the country. Some of the ***key questions and comments*** that were raised are as follows:

* There was a recognition of the important role that OSF has played in the enactment of two effective subnational RTI laws, in supporting a growing and cohesive coalition on RTI, and starting to make use of RTI as an instrument in some of the Foundation’s own programmatic work.
* It was noted that the focus of the program so far has been on the quality and adoption of RTI laws, rather than the importance of information itself and how it can be used for the benefit of the country and its citizens. This has led to a focus on supporting organizations that are exclusively working on repealing the laws, rather than more broad based sectoral groups that could make use of the law to access information that would be important for their sectoral work.
* There was a debate on whether it is useful to press for an effective law first (as has been the case under this program of work) or focus efforts on building a movement around RTI first. It was concluded that working with a flawed RTI law might lead to disappointment and alienate citizens and civil society from the movement.
* One of the main issues that was identified was that there has not been a widespread grassroots take up of the RTI in Pakistan. The movement is operating in a silo without too much interest in the general population and in other movements in the country. It was assumed that having an effective law in place would lead to its widespread use, but that has not been the case. Looking at this retrospectively, it was realized that it would have been a more effective strategy to include a broader base of organizations in the movement right from the outset, rather than just specialized groups working on RTI/transparency issues.
* Supporting groups that are just doing general awareness raising on the RTI law was cautioned against, as this dynamic has not played out very effectively in other countries. Instead, the thinking should be around what kinds of participatory processes are available for citizens, and how RTI can help in encourage these kinds of state-citizen engagement.

Based on the discussion, following are some of the ***next steps and follow up actions*** that were identified:

* Need to marry RTI work with other movements and rights groups. For instance, the paralegals in the legal empowerment program in Pakistan were trained on RTI, and such inter programmatic collaborations need to be expanded to expand the reach of RTI. It is important to engage actively with not only grassroots, but also specialized professional groups and intermediaries such as lawyers and journalists as without their support the movement would lose momentum.
* Have to start focusing on what kind of information we want to be accessing and making public and for what use? What is the nature of the information and how can we demonstrate its usefulness for the public? Drawing on the experiences of other foundations and partners within the OSF network that are making instrumental use of RTI. For instance, the manner in which International Budget Partnership is employing RTI to improve the financing and implementation of maternal and child health policies and programs. This would entail carrying on some of the practical work we are doing with RTI, such as our projects on community social audits.
* There needs to be more of a focus on proactive disclosure of information and open data in the program’s work as these are also now enshrined as part of the new laws.
* It was concluded that the Foundation also needs to continue pushing for more effective RTI legislation and its implementation at the federal level, and in the other provinces where effective laws still have not been enacted.

The review reflected on lessons learned from OSF Pakistan’s work on RTI, with the conclusions that; 1) we need to find more ways to put power behind the RTI movement through a more active engagement with grassroots groups and sectoral organizations 2) focus on making RTI user friendly for the average citizen and 3) demonstrate the value of information by using RTI as an effective instrumental tool in achieving other rights/policy goals.