**OSF Pakistan Portfolio Review**

**Right to Information**

**Introduction/Portfolio Parameters:**

This portfolio review assesses OSF Pakistan’s efforts to support the work of its partners in promoting a more effective right to information (RTI) regime in the country. This portfolio includes 22 grants (amounting to USD 1,413,126), made between 2009 and 2015. The RTI portfolio is categorized as both a field and a concept in our 2014-2017 country office strategy. As support to the field, we have been funding prominent civil society actors who have pioneered work on RTI in the country by challenging ineffective legislation and advocating for the adoption and implementation of effective RTI laws on the supply side. On the demand side, they have been promoting the use of these laws by citizens, journalists and other pressure groups to resolve service delivery issues and promote public accountability, demonstrating their use in people’s everyday lives. As a concept, OSF Pakistan has brought all actors working on RTI together under an RTI coalition which works on creating demand for enactment of RTI laws according to international best practices as well as providing a platform to civil society groups for collective efforts for implementation of RTI laws and knowledge sharing. Need for building a coalition on RTI was expressed by OSF and representatives belonging to different civil society organizations who participated  in  a  workshop  on  ‘Law  Reform,  Strategic  Litigation  and  RTI  Implementation’, held in 2011 in Islamabad. Since OSF Pakistan is one of the few donors for whom RTI is a key strategic area of interest, and with our already established linkages with local organizations that were actively working on the issue, we had a comparative advantage on taking this forward.

This document maps the historical and current RTI landscape in Pakistan in which OSF is operating, OSF’s assumptions, ambitions, approaches, achievements and lessons learnt under this portfolio. We look forward to receiving constructive reflection on our work so far, evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of our interventions, as well as the changing context, so that we can improve and incorporate feedback from this exercise into our strategy and its implementation.

**Context:**

There is now a global recognition of the importance of transparency in promoting effective governance and also as a fundamental right in and of itself (as enshrined in national, regional and international level laws and treaties). RTI is seen as being fundamental to enhancing citizen participation in decision making, affecting public policy, and tipping the balance of power between states and citizens. Internationally, momentum for reform has been created by intergovernmental bodies and aid agencies (OSF being one of the key players), working with local NGOs and policymakers that have pressurized governments to pass RTI laws. In many cases, this pressure has translated into reality at the national level as domestic political elites have realized they need to support RTI efforts to gain or maintain their political legitimacy domestically and internationally.

Article 19-A of Pakistan’s Constitution makes citizen’s right to information a constitutionally guaranteed right. Unfortunately, the current federal RTI legislation, in the form of the Freedom of Information Ordinance 2002, does not provide a proper, time bound mechanism for providing information, grants undue discretion to government authorities to deny information, and provides inadequate appellate procedures to correct the errors on appeal. Similarly, the subnational laws in Sindh and Balochistan are replicas of the Federal ordinance and do not meet the international standards of an effective law or regional best practices. All three of these laws have weak implementation mechanisms and do not meet international criteria for effective RTI legislation such as being guided by the principle of maximum disclosure, permitting only clearly and narrowly drawn exceptions, requiring cost effective and speedy access to information, establishing an independent appellate body, and mandating penalties for wrongful denial of information.

In 2013, two subnational RTI laws were enacted in Pakistan — the Punjab Transparency and RTI Act and the KP RTI Act. Both are considered effective pieces of legislation, being ranked quite highly by the Centre for Law and Democracy, an independent group that ranks RTI laws worldwide. Both laws include the principles of maximum disclosure, a process to facilitate access to information, limited scope of exemption, no or affordable fees for citizens who wish to access information, and protection of whistle blowers. Under both these laws, independent information commissions (consisting of three members) have been established to ensure that these principles are upheld. There are many factors that led to the enactment of these laws, and OSF’s partners played an active role throughout the process, which will be discussed in detail under the “Our Work” and “Achievements” section.

It is important to note that, from the very beginning, the RTI movement in Pakistan has been a relatively top down initiative. The Freedom of Information Ordinance, promulgated in 2002 under President Musharraf’s regime, was prompted by two key factors: the government’s desire to overcome international hostility stemming from its military background and pressure from donors. Moreover, even the RTI movement in Pakistan over the last few years has been led by only a few civil society organizations and media elite and unlike the grassroots demand for information in other parts of the region, such as in India and Bangladesh, it has been associated with a handful of key individuals. However, with the enactment of the two new subnational laws, the dynamic is beginning to change. There have been a few cases where ordinary citizens have demonstrated the use of these laws in helping demand and access their other political, economic or social rights from the government, which is leading to more confidence in the law and its use for ordinary citizens. This was evident in the recent widespread civic pushback to KP government’s decision to exempt its assembly from the ambit of the RTI law. Social media was used as a tool by a large number of citizens, journalists, politicians and civil society activists (even those who are not directly connected to the RTI movement) to criticize this move and eventually led to the decision being reversed.

At the same time, it is important to recognize the changing political landscape in Pakistan over the last three years. In the wake of the Taliban’s horrific attack on an army school in Peshawar last year, the Pakistan government initiated major legislative reforms and counter-terrorism operations. In this new environment, civil society space has been severely constrained by state scrutiny of NGOs and ongoing extremist threats, perhaps most acutely reflected in the new draft NGO law and the killing of prominent activist Sabeen Mahmud. This shrinking civic space and atmosphere of fear can have a negative impact on RTI activism as well.

**Our Assumptions:**

The ambition of the program under this portfolio was to build an effective, financially sustainable, widely supported, national and provincial campaign with links to the regional/international RTI movement to promote the enactment and implementation of a more effective RTI regime in the country.

Our main assumptions were:

**Procedural activism was to generate empirical data to highlight the inadequacy of the existing RTI laws in order to generate informed debate on the issue**

NGOs had to use the existing flawed legislation and file information requests in order to test it and demonstrate its ineffectiveness.

**Lack of effective RTI legislation was discouraging its use amongst the public. In order to ensure that people could access information in a timely, accurate, reliable and cost effective manner, there was need for legislative reform.**

The existing RTI legislation did not provide a proper, time bound mechanism for providing information, provided undue discretion to government authorities to deny information and inadequate apellate procedures to correct the errors on appeal. Therefore, journalists, lawyers and civil society activists did not use the RTI mechanisms.

We needed to support civil society organizations calling for reform of existing flawed RTI legislation (in the form of the Federal FOI Ordinance 2002 and its replicas in Sindh and Balochistan). The constitutional amendment making RTI a fundamental right (a result of the advocacy efforts of our partners with policy makers) provided a fresh impetus to call for reform of these laws.

**Strong RTI legislation has to be coupled with an effective implementation mechanism in order to ensure public access to information.**

We have seen in the case of Pakistan where many good laws have been of little use to citizens due to ineffective implementation. It is imperative that RTI laws don’t follow the path of laws which have no impact on the ground and don’t feed into broader systemic governance reforms. Formal institutional mechanisms need to be put in place in order to safeguard effective implementation and leverage the use of RTI laws for positive transparency and accountability outcomes. This means supporting efforts to build capacity of public information officers to disclose information and information commissions to respond to complaints, addressing issues with mechanisms of record keeping, supporting adoption of implementation regulations and monitoring performance of public bodies and oversight mechanisms such as the commissions.

**Once effective laws are in place, efforts need to be taken at the demand side by raising awareness of the citizenry on the use of the law as well as helping them file information requests. This would empower communities to use the law for their benefit.**

Since Pakistan does not have a grassroots led movement on RTI, even with RTI laws being enacted, few people use them or understand their potential benefits. Even within civil society, few groups that are not directly working in the field of transparency and accountability are well versed with the usage of the law. There is a need to bring this right closer to communities through awareness raising activities so that there is a broader engagement and understanding about RTI amongst the general public. This is important so that the law can be used to not only highlight systemic governance failures, but also to be used by citizens to access their basic rights. With the passing of two effective subnational laws there has been a renewed interest amongst citizens on RTI that needs to be built on.

**An effective RTI regime (that also embraces proactive disclosure) can lead to better informed citizen engagement in governance and exposure of wrong doing and inefficiencies. If RTI is coupled with other effective accountability mechanisms, this can lead to a more open, transparent, efficient and accountable government.**

Right to information has the potential to strengthen governance structures and make them more transparent. However, this will only be possible if the RTI movement is tied to a broader movement for comprehensive reforms that seeks to address underlying governance challenges facing the country.

**Our Place:**

Open Society Foundation Pakistan has been a central player in supporting RTI movement in Pakistan. We began funding RTI related projects and supported the few specialized civil society groups that were working on the issue including Consumer Rights Commission Pakistan (CRCP), Individualland and Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI) starting 2009. While other donor agencies such as the World Bank, DFID and USAID were funding broader governance programs at that time, OSF was the only donor organization that was supporting civil society organization’s efforts to promote right to information in the country.

Open Society Foundation Pakistan is strategically placed to advocate for a more open society with enhanced transparency and accountability of government bodies. Although the organization is small in terms of the money we disburse as grants (in comparison with bilateral aid donors such as USAID and DFID), the manner in which we engage with our grantees allows for effective implementation of projects and positive outcomes. Following are the strengths of OSF Pakistan that set it aside from most other donors working on transparency and allow for it to make a meaningful contribution in this area of work:

***Strengths:***

* OSF’s capacity to disburse funds quickly with limited bureaucracy.
* Ability and willingness to work with a wide variety of organizations – ranging from larger NGOs working at the regional/national level as well as smaller grassroots organizations working with communities at a very local level (such smaller CSOs can often be overlooked by larger donors).
* Technical expertise and assistance from transparency program staff across OSF foundations/network globally.
* Set of core partners who are pioneers in the field of transparency, specifically RTI.
* Capacity to oversee grants in regions by and large out of reach for international donors.
* Multi-sectoral competence within OSF-Pak (Education, media, law).

Passing of the new subnational RTI laws in KP and Punjab in 2013, has sparked a lot more donor interest, with many donors focusing on right to information as a central element of their program in Pakistan. Some of the international players who are funding this field are DFID, World Bank, USAID, The Asia Foundation, Free and Fair Elections Network and Friedrich Naumann Foundation. The World Bank for instance, was deeply engaged with the KP and Punjab government throughout the process of passing of the legislation and now through their Governance Support Project are building capacity of these provincial governments to implement the new laws. However, their engagement has been limited to direct support to the government and OSF’s niche has been its ability to build strong linkages with RTI activists and civils society groups and support the formation and entrenchment of a coalition that has spearheaded the right to information advocacy campaign. Over the last few years, OSF has also a built a name for itself amongst other stakeholders, including government representatives, who are now directly reaching out to us for building linkages with civil society and capacity building support. For instance, we recently facilitated a consultation workshop between the KP Planning and Development department, Information Commission and civil society representatives on the KP RTI Act 2013 in coordination with the World Bank funded Governance Support Project, acting as a bridge between government and civil society.

**Our work:**

When OSF Pakistan started funding work on RTI in 2009, the movement was in its early stages with a limited number of organizations that were working on the issue. By supporting Individualland, Consumer Rights Commission of Pakistan (CRCP) and Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI), mainly through procedural activism, we aimed at a) raising overall awareness on the issue b) pushing on RTI issues through the local media, and c) Generating empirical evidence of problems with FOI Ordinance 2002 and its replicas in Sindh and Balochistan by systematically filing information requests and recording results. This included supporting activities like awareness raising through TV and radio shows (implemented through Individualland), filing RTI requests, with the overall aim to generate debate around RTI issues and involve the public in the process of recognizing the importance of this issue, the problems of access, the relevant laws, and international best practices.

CRCP followed the discourse of procedural activism to generate demand for operationalization of the RTI laws. The idea was to take an integrated approach that concurrently focuses on capacity building of civil society actors, awareness raising among citizens and activation of different clauses of RTI laws through procedural activism. CRCP would submit information requests to government departments/offices at federal and district level. The requests would be submitted to access information by invoking different clauses or provisions of the RTI laws and related articles available in the Local Government Ordinance, 2001 and other legal statutes. The findings of these procedural interventions were then documented in the form of a research study, which was disseminated among the stakeholders.

Our support to procedural activism was essential in highlighting the flaws with the existing legislation and the evidence that was generated showed how these laws could not be improved through amendments but had to be out rightly repealed, and that new laws had to be enacted in KP and Punjab. Also, the data that was gathered also established that the ombudsman office as an appellate body (as per the FOI ordinance 2002 and its replicas in Balochistan and Sindh) was ineffective, and independent and autonomous commissions needed to be established. These findings established the basis of our future strategy to engage directly on drafting model laws and policy advocacy on repeal of the legislation. While our partners continue filing requests through their district level networks (CPDI in Punjab and Centre for Governance and Public Accountability (CGPA) in KP) our program shifted gears to focus more on getting effective RTI legislation enacted.

The organizations that we were supporting at this stage were based out of the capital, Islamabad, and their awareness raising and advocacy efforts were focused on other provinces. For instance, Individualland was working in Balochistan even though it had no field office there and all their staff was based out of Islamabad. Because they were not able to have a more longer term engagement with the stakeholders in Balochistan (government, policy makers, citizens, media, civil society) that went beyond the project cycle, we were unable to see a longer term impact of their efforts in the province. Since the organizations that we were supporting were capital – based, middle class in nature, their awareness raising, trainings and general adoption campaigns were unable to create a more broad based movement and alliances with other organizations and local communities. Majority of the information requests that were being filed were by these organizations themselves, not by ordinary citizens to advance their rights or by specialized groups (education, health, environment, trade, etc.) for their research or advocacy purposes. While these organizations were doing useful work, they were operating in silos, and had no joint strategy. Moreover, the existing law was so flawed, that there was little incentive amongst the public and even the media to use it as a tool to access public information.

Recognizing these needs, OSF organized a 2 day workshop in 2011 that brought together RTI activists in Pakistan with the Scottish Information Commissioner and RTI experts from OSJI. In view of the insertion of Art 19-A in the Constitution, the time was ripe to consider strategic litigation. The CSOs working on RTI discussed their experiences, brainstormed about ways to make RTI more relevant for ordinary citizens, and also got some basic training on legislative drafting, strategic litigation and running RTI helpdesks. As the federal government did not display any enthusiasm amend the 2002 RTI ordinance, we supported strategic litigation challenging its constitutionality, inter alia on the grounds that 1) the ineffective law weakens rather than enforcing the RTI and more importantly 2) failure to provide for a right to appeal executive decisions on information requests to a body independent of the executive authority violates the principle of separation of powers and the right to appeal to an authority independent of the one that made the decision.  The matter is sub judice and the Federal Government has been put on notice for final arguments.

It was at this workshop that OSF staff noted the effectiveness of building broad-based RTI campaigns and coalitions in other countries, including India, and wondered whether such a campaign or coalition could be successful in Pakistan. Although civil society groups had launched advocacy initiatives for the repeal of the existing ineffective laws, and created awareness on the right to information, these initiatives had been scattered, with all organizations competing for the same pool of funds and not coordinating their work. OSF Pakistan felt that there was a need for a coalition on RTI, for a more collaborative and sustained effort, to create demand for enactment of RTI laws at all three tiers of government and for providing an umbrella organization for civil society groups to put pressure for the effective implementation of these laws.

The 35 member Coalition on RTI (CRTI) which OSF has been supporting since 2012 has its secretariat housed in CPDI and is focused on advocating and facilitating enabling mechanisms, processes, tools and techniques to ensure the implementation of a user friendly right to information regime in Pakistan. It has brought together the efforts of our partners, including representatives from the media in a cohesive manner, augmenting their voices on policy advocacy and allowed them to draw on each other’s skills. Another achievement of the coalition has been the ability to bring on board partners who might not directly be working on RTI, but have a stake in using it instrumentally to further their goals. The Network Pakistan, an organization that works on consumer protection issues is one example of an organization that is effectively putting RTI to use as a tool in their programmatic work. The coalition has also connected and helped develop expertise of groups that are based out of each of the four provinces, and are now taking a lead on RTI from their respective localities, rather than all the expertise being centered in the capital. CGPA for instance, based out of Peshawar, focuses on advancement of RTI in KP province whereas Shehri specializes on working in Sindh. The coalition has also become a vehicle through which to support (financially and technically) more informal, grassroots led community based organizations in their awareness raising activities. One such group, Life, Media and Health Organization has become a coalition member and is carrying out awareness sessions in KP and also draws on technical support from the more experienced partners in the group.

Our support to the coalition and our partners have played a pertinent role in the enactment of the highly ranked new RTI laws in KP and Punjab. CRTI launched a sustained advocacy campaign in KP and Punjab in the run up to the 2013 elections. The coalition members worked to convince and enable various political parties to incorporate RTI into their party manifestos. Later the network provided full assistance to the KP and Punjab government to draft the legislation. Meanwhile, CPDI and CGPA, created pressure groups in the federal and provincial political corridors, intervened during critical lawmaking phases, and launched a vigorous social media campaign for the enactment of effective RTI legislation.

Our work has not been limited to supporting our partners in the enactment of the new laws, but also their operationalization. On the supply side, our partners have played a critical role in demanding the timely appointment of commissioners, release of funds for their functioning and have also been building capacity of public information officer through trainings on managing and archiving records and responding efficiently to information requests. CGPA is also monitoring the performance of public offices through the development of an RTI scorecard, and the rankings are being made public in order to incentivize public bodies to have a more open information regime. Our partners are also working in partnership with the information commissions to spread awareness of the law through consultations, community meetings and awareness drives. One concrete example of such a partnership is the setting up of a RTI helpline which is housed at the KP information commission but is being run in partnership with CGPA staff.

On the demand side, our partners have extended their support and helped Pakistani citizens to file their requests by establishing district-level commissions and launching helplines and helpdesks. Shehri in Karachi, for instance, has an RTI helpdesk at their office through which they facilitate citizens in filing requests. They are also effectively using the law as a tool in their advocacy and research on environmental and land encroachment issues in the city. Our partners are also engaging with students at colleges and universities through awareness sessions, essay writing competitions and holding RTI winter and summer camps. Starting last year CRTI has also started distributing “RTI Champion” awards for students, journalists and citizens who are making effective use of the law. Specialized trainings have also been held with journalists, specifically focusing on how RTI can be used for investigative journalism.

OSF Pakistan has also been able to effectively connect the RTI movement to the regional access to information movement as well as the broader global transparency and open government movements. Our partners are deeply engaged in the Open Government Partnership as well as the Global Partnership for Social Accountability and are advocating (along side us) with the government of Pakistan to become members of both these platforms. Even though Pakistan is not yet a member of these initiatives, our partners benefit greatly from these networks as a community of practice. Last year, CRTI also held a regional conference on RTI where lessons learned and best practices were shared by experts on RTI from across South Asia.

**Our Achievements:**

**We have supported the adoption of two highly ranked subnational RTI laws in the shape of the KP RTI Act 2013 and the Punjab Transparency and RTI Act 2013**

By supporting projects in which our partners have been involved in a broad, multi stakeholder consultation process to put RTI on the agenda of governments in both provinces prior to and after the 2013 elections, drafting and sharing model legislation, using media strategically to shed light on the issue, has all contributed to building pressure for the enactment of these laws. This also includes production of research material, such as law rankings and comparisons and reports that have been used by RTI advocates for the advancement of access to information.

**We have contributed to the consolidation of a cohesive movement on RTI, bringing together various actors in the shape of the Coalition on RTI**

OSF has built an RTI constituency in the country, and even when there was no donor support in this area (donor fatigue had set in by 2009) we kept the flame on RTI activism alive. Our efforts to pull together a coalition has also helped streamline the movement, providing a sustainable network for all groups to consolidate and coordinate their efforts on promoting RTI. Other donors now reach out to our coalition partners for technical assistance on RTI, which is testament to their capability and relevance.

**Approval of Federal Draft RTI bill by Senate Committee on Information and Broadcasting**

Even though enactment of this bill is still pending, our partners have been successful in building consensus amongst the Federal government and have gotten the Senate Committee on Information and Broadcasting to approve a draft RTI bill that the Canada based Centre for Law and Democracy has scored an impressive 146 points on the international RTI rating, which would put Pakistan 11 points ahead of the next best right to information law (Serbia’s) in the world.

**Representatives of the media have started effectively using RTI for their investigative reporting**

A small, but growing number of journalists have started using RTI to gather evidence on investigative reporting, and many of these stories have revealed and highlighted important governance challenges, uncovering government incompetence and corruption. A few journalists have also started championing the cause of an effective RTI regime in the country, not only using RTI as a tool for their stories but also advocating for its effective implementation and playing a watchdog role, monitoring the performance of the information commissions and public bodies.

**Increased ownership amongst the citizenry at large as the use of RTI has begun to demonstrate its potency in defending other rights**

Although Pakistan does not have a grassroots led movement on RTI, and it is a challenge to convince the general public to use the law and of its benefits in helping attain other socio-economic rights, the enactment of two new effective laws and our partner’s efforts to create demand for them has borne some fruit. There are now cases of RTI proving to be useful in people’s day to day lives and as a tool against corruption and nepotism. For instance, last year’s ‘RTI Champion’ award was given to a citizen from Peshawar who won his case for appointment as a computer operator in the Burea of Agriculture Information by making use of the law to access the merit list for the job.

Similarly, the first punishment under the Punjab Transparency and Right to Information Act 2013, whereby the provincial Information Commission ordered the deduction of two-month salary of an executive district officer (for failing to provide requested information in the stipulated time), ordering the Schools Education Department to initiate disciplinary action against him, also goes to show that the appellate body for this law is not toothless. This has further garnered trust and enthusiasm of citizens to apply the law in practice.

**Civil society organizations are making use of the law to promote broader governance reform and improve public service delivery**

For instance, based on information gathered by our partner CPDI, it was revealed that in Pakistan’s Punjab province, over one-third of the Basic Health Units—clinics that provide primary care to underserved areas—were operating without a doctor. It was a startling revelation, as the province’s ruling party had campaigned specifically on strengthening the Health Units. In certain Punjab districts, over 80 percent of the clinics lacked a single doctor.

**RTI is now a cross cutting theme in OSF’s other programmatic work**

Some of our partners are using RTI as a tool to conduct community level social audits, gathering information that is helping them generate evidence on the state of public service in their locality, and then building an advocacy campaign around that information to push for improvements in public service delivery. They have drawn on the expertise of international experts from Kenya (Muslims for Human Rights), an OSEA funded organization to introduce this work in Pakistan.

**Lessons Learned and Way Forward:**

**Prior to the formation of the CRTI, the efforts of our partners in promoting an effective RTI regime were scattered and not as effective.**

While some of the projects tested the ordinance (filed info requests, recorded results), the tests did not generate widespread public outrage for several reasons, including that the number of information requests actually filed in each test was small, the requesters didn’t seek information that was crucial for large parts of the public, and the organizations that conducted the tests didn’t have a strong enough media and outreach strategy. Moreover, because most of the partners were based out of the capital, they were unable to build broad based, national level support on the issue.

**The RTI movement in Pakistan is still operating in a silo and are distanced from grass root struggles and other movements in the country**

Up until now, most of the efforts of our program were geared towards ensuring the enactment of effective RTI laws and their operationalization. However, we have seen that promoting effective legal frameworks does not ensure the use of information by people to fight for their other rights or for this information to be used to promote public good and transparency. As mentioned in the achievements section, even though there have been cases of this, for the large part, it is still a few specialized RTI civil society organizations that are using the law, and these organizations have been unable to connect effectively with other rights groups. The awareness raising campaigns on RTI have been more general in nature, but its use as an enabling right for other rights movements, such as the health, education, disability/minority rights movements has not been demonstrated. There is a pressing need to demonstrate instrumentality of RTI and connect more deeply with other movements in the country.

**Need to promote proactive disclosure of information in the country**

There is still a gap between the open data and right to information communities in Pakistan. As proactive disclosure is now built into the new subnational legislation, more efforts need to be made to bring these two movements together so that information can be made proactively available in a timely and user friendly format by pushing public bodies to publish high quality data. Moreover, efforts need to be made so that the government data that is already available can be analyzed and visualized in effective ways for increased transparency, accountability and citizen engagement.

**Need to continue efforts to promote enactment of effective RTI laws at the Federal level and in Sindh and Balochistan**

Most donor attention is now in KP and Punjab with the new laws being enacted, and OSF must ensure that our efforts for their effective operationalization and implementation does not divert attention from the pressing need to pass similarly strong laws at the Federal level and in Sindh and Balochistan.

**Need to continuously monitor the performance of Information Commissions**

Our experience has shown that even though Information Commissions have autonomy, civil society needs to play a watch dog role to ensure that they are meeting all requirements, responding in a timely and effective manner to complaints and also punishing public bodies who are failing to respond to information requests. Our partners are already working on developing a performance barometer to assess the progress of the commissions that we hope to implement starting next year.

**Drawing on the experiences of other countries in the region, such as India and Bangladesh, where the movement has been more bottom up as compared to Pakistan can be beneficial in helping us strategize for the future**

While our partners are constantly engaging with other RTI activists and experts in the region, it would be beneficial to have a more systematic study or look into why there is difference in some of the experiences of the RTI movements. For instance, India is being able to generate a large number of RTI requests in comparison to Pakistan, but there has not been a methodical look into why that is so. We can draw on OSF’s internal resources for this purpose, such as our new Fellow, Shekhar Singh, who is a renowned RTI expert from India and is currently conducting his research on assessing the right to information movement’s impact in India.

We recognize that OSF needs to play a more active role in all the above mentioned areas, and contribute to further strengthening the RTI regime in Pakistan.