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Parliamentary Training and Research



SENATE SECRETARIAT
RESEARCH DIRECTORATE

Table of Contents

Parliamentary Training and Research

I.	Introduction.....	2
II.	Parliamentary Training and Research in Pakistan	3
	➤ Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Service (PIPS)	3
	i) PIPS information and Research Services.....	4
	ii) Capacity Building and Skill Development Services.....	4
	iii) Legislative Services.....	5
	iv) PIPS Achievements.....	6
	➤ Research Services and Library in Senate of Pakistan.....	6
	i) Senate Research Directorate.....	6
	ii) Senate Library.....	8

I. Introduction

The roles of parliamentarians may be summarized as: representation; debating, deliberating upon and determining legislation and other matters relevant to the public interest, within the authority of the legislature; scrutiny of the executive government and holding it to account and seeking redress of grievances raised on behalf of citizens, groups of citizens or in the public interest generally.

Although Parliaments differ in their form and practice to suit their countries' political system, they have one aim in common, namely; to make Parliaments as effective as possible in order to meet the demands of the people who they represent. Thus, Parliaments worldwide play a vital role in the governance of their countries through their core functions of representation, legislation and oversight. Through their oversight functions, Parliaments ensure a balance of power, transparency and openness of Executive activities. In order to support Members of Parliament discharge their legislative and oversight functions effectively, they need various services including information and research services¹.

According to the World Bank Institute (WBI), the role of a parliamentary research service “is to search for the right information, integrate it with other materials, synthesize it and translate it into non-technical terms and to disseminate it to all parliamentarians in a form that is as objective and nonpartisan as possible.” Thus, its purpose is to provide independent, appropriate, timely and accurate information to Member Parliaments. Moreover, the Parliamentary Strengthening Learning Program states that, “having access to up-to-date information is essential in order to highlight policy alternatives and to draw attention to policy consequences.”

The International Federation for Library Associations and Institutes (IFLA) suggests that parliamentary research services exist for the sole purpose of assisting members in their representative, lawmaking and oversight roles. This means that they are not traditional libraries developing comprehensive collections or universities producing original research and writing lengthy erudite papers that no one has time to read. It also means accepting as core business the requirements of client focus first and foremost².

¹*Parliamentary Information Services: The Role Of The Library And Research Departments In The Zambian Parliament In Helping Members Of Parliament Make Better Laws – By Chama M Mfula And Loveness M Mayaka At The 29th Ifla Pre-Conference, Singapore, 16th August, 2013-*

²*“A proper functioning of a Parliamentary Research Service Assembly of Republic of Kosovo” Policy Brief 2011 – www.institutigap.org*

II. Parliamentary Training and Research in Pakistan:

In Pakistan training and research is an essential part of each provincial and legislative assembly including Senate and National Assembly. In collaboration they are working to provide non-partisan, relevant and authoritative research support to assist legislators in fulfilling their individual Parliamentary functions in addition to extend assistance to various House Committees, External Affairs and Inter Parliamentary Relations in line with their Parliamentary duties and perform a knowledge management role by organizing and re-purposing information materials generated through all available open sources.

Apart from established Research departments/ directorates, another specialized body “Pakistan Institute of Parliamentary Services (PIPS)” is working independently under the patronage of National Assembly of Pakistan. The Parliament in Pakistan had remained deprived of the power of Knowledge that comes from timely, accurate and credible information and objective bipartisan analysis on the most sensitive of national matters till the establishment of PIPS. A brief introduction of PIPS and senate Research Directorate is given below to understand the broad services provided to Member Parliaments in Pakistan.

➤ Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services (PIPS)

The Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services, PIPS, was formally established as an exclusive and independent, first of its kind research and capacity building facility for the parliamentarians, through an Act of Parliament on December 15, 2008.

The Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services envisions establishing an appropriate forum to equip parliamentarians with cutting-edge strategies and tools to perform their representative, legislative and oversight functions effectively and efficiently. Moreover, the PIPS endeavors to provide high-quality, accurate and result-oriented services to elected members and staff of the Legislatures in Pakistan to promote parliamentary excellence.

PIPS Services:

i) PIPS information and Research Services

A prime goal of the institute is to provide non-partisan and expert analysis on a range of subjects, and to help the legislators in making informed policies about the national challenges. Leading scholars and researchers based in reputable universities, think tanks and civil society organizations across the country are members of a 50 member network of specialists to provide informed policy inputs such as in-depth background notes, assessing bills, research papers,

briefs, legislative summaries, consultations and other services on the request of parliamentary committees as well as parliamentarians.

PIPS launched its “Research on Request Services,” in April 2007, which offers timely, accurate and objective non-partisan informational and research services to the legislators across Pakistan. PIPS has produced 69 comprehensive research papers exclusively for individual MNAs, Senators as well as MPs working in various Standing Committee. These services are offered to parliamentarians in confidence and kept confidential as and till their direction.

ii) Capacity Building and Skill Development Services:

a) Parliamentarians Orientation Program

PIPS Parliamentarians Orientation Program offers thematic capacity building workshops in 23 areas of parliamentary significance in addition to an elaborate New Members Orientation Program. The most popular courses for parliamentarians include orientation sessions on topics such as: rules of procedure & business of the house, question hour; law making process, assessing legislation & legislative research; Budget process/analysis as well as committee work and public hearings. In addition, the Institute holds comprehensive professional development workshops on parliamentary office management, report and minutes writing for committee staff and parliamentary human resource management.

b) Professional Skills Development Program for Parliamentary Functionaries

The Institute also has an elaborate Training of the Trainers Program for developing lead facilitators in parliamentary areas from among legislators and senior parliamentary officials. PIPS training wing has laid out elaborate Training Standards and Procedures to run its professional development courses for parliamentary functionaries.

The Institute has to date developed modules in 21 areas of parliamentary significance. These include modules on legislative research, assessing and drafting legislation, Question Hour, parliamentary history, conflict resolution, Business of the House, budget process, Parliamentary Privileges and Code of Conduct, constituency relations, basic computer skills, software module for librarians, English language, etc. and a Youth Guide on Parliament.

Accordingly no less than 270 workshops for parliamentarians, journalists, members of civil society and staff of the six houses, have been held. PIPS has hosted different modes of professional development programs like policy seminars, issue workshops, skill enhancement

courses for Members & Secretariat staff of Senate, National Assembly and Provincial Assemblies.

c) Resource Persons:

To create meaningful learning environments, the focus is on partnering international legislative specialists with experienced Pakistani legislative practitioners. Till date, resource persons have included former MP of the British House of Commons, retired Clerk of the Wisconsin Senate, international budget analyst, legislative drafting specialists, former Pakistani legislators, former Pakistan Secretariat officers, media specialists, etc.

iii) Legislative services

The Institute is developing a database of national as well as international laws in addition to a team of attorneys and researchers to offer legislative services to national and provincial parliamentarians with effect from January 2012. These services would include legislative drafting services, research on assessing legislations/impact assessment of bills, drafting questions, motions and resolutions as and when required by the members. These services encompass the following:

- Conducting research related to the Federal and Provincial laws as well as studying international laws;
- Identifying revision of laws and inspiring new legislation;
- Strengthening the processes of law-making decisions;
- Consolidating existing initiatives for strengthening documentations of legislative processes;

vi) PIPS Achievements:

- Institute has to-date produced more than 340 informational and research papers exclusively for individual MNAs, Senators, MPAs as well as Standing Committees.
- PIPS Parliamentary Research Digest - country's most widely read parliamentary publication, shared with 1700 readers every month since January, 2014
- Four Parliamentary Resource Centres (PRCs) set up at Islamabad and three provincial assemblies of Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab till March, 2015.
- Since Dec., 2016, research and legislative services extended to MPAs from Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab through its PRCs.

- As envisioned by PIPS Board of Governors, Institute has held outreach sessions on Constitution, Parliament and Nation-Building with over 5000 college and university youth from all over Pakistan since 2014.
- Twenty seven (25) parliamentary publications and books published for Members of Parliament, functionaries as well as civil society since 2010.
- PIPS worked in guidance of Hon Speaker National Assembly to start parliamentary studies courses in 17 universities of Pakistan.
- Around 23 Private Members' Bills Drafted by PIPS for Members of Parliament and Provincial Assemblies.
- More than twenty five (25) technical reports prepared for Standing Committees³.

➤ **Research Services and Library in Senate of Pakistan**

i) Senate Research Directorate

The introduction of a pioneering and innovate Research Services has revolutionized legislative debates and decision- making across the global parliaments. The Research Directorate at the Senate of Pakistan was established in 1993 to provide a variety of Research Services to the House and its Members. The Directorate is a non-partisan segment of the secretariat, which firmly adheres to the values of commitment and efficiency. It is actively involved in supporting the Senate of Pakistan by developing a creative approach to policy analysis, anticipating legislative needs and responding to specific requests from legislators in a timely manner.

The Research Directorate has enhanced its research work over the years to become a more active part of the Senate Secretariat. Both demand driven and self-generative products are being provided by the Research Directorate to the House, the Members, the Committees, and the Secretariat as support.

The Research Directorate is currently engaged in a wide range of activities which include:

- Research Briefs; Background Papers; Talking Points for local and international events; Country Profiles; Comparative Studies; Preparation of Fact Sheets etc. for support during Debates; formation of Questions and Supplementary Questions; and provision of requisite statistics and data.

³*Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services (PIPS)*

- Assistance to the Senate IPR Branch in relation to IPU, CPA, APA and other International Parliamentary Conferences.
- Speech writing services to the offices of the Honourable Chairman, Deputy Chairman, Leader of the House, Leader of the Opposition, and the Members of the Senate, when required.
- Research support to the offices of the Honourable Chairman and Secretary Senate.
- Preparation of Legislative Briefs on Bills and Ordinances that are to be either introduced in the Senate or transmitted by the National Assembly.
- Preparation of Summaries of Reports, both that are to be presented in the House (both constitutionally required and statutory reports).

The contribution of the Research Directorate to parliamentary business has been significant in enhancing the role of the legislature towards democratic growth. The Research Directorate has enabled members in committees and the House to generate consensus during deliberations and debates. This has been due to available information on alternatives and options on contentious issues. Indeed, parliamentary research has played an instrumental role in the parliamentary business of the Senate of Pakistan for more than two decades⁴.

ii) Senate Library

The library of the Senate was established in 1973 soon after the adoption of Constitution of Pakistan in April, 1973. The Senate Library's vision is to make it a center of intense intellectual inquiry.

The Senate Library has more than 20,000 books and subscribes periodicals covering different areas like law, constitution, parliamentary practices, legislation, economics, politics, international affairs, philosophy, history etc.

Moreover, the Senate library is heading to achieve higher standards by automation and digitization. Information housed in this library is accessible from anywhere through Online Public Access Catalogue (Web OPAC). The Library continues to embrace change and align itself to thrive on diversity, support professional growth and opportunity, and reward flexibility and innovation. Library Committee (comprising of six Senators) holds meetings frequently to improve day to day library work⁵.

⁴Report to the People of Pakistan Parliamentary Year, 2016-17 – Senate of Pakistan

⁵ “Senate Library” – www.senate.gov.pk

To conclude, Parliamentarians need to have access to accurate, up-to-date, and well-researched information in order to be able to assess legislation and policies in an efficient and effective manner. The legislative function is one of the key responsibilities of the Parliament and once the Bill has been presented, Members of Parliament not only debate and scrutinize the Bill in detail, but also have the power to amend, approve or reject it. In order to have laws and policies that reflect the aspiration of the people they represent, Parliamentarians not only need to have the capacity to analyze and review legislation, but also relevant information. The information is particularly very important if they are to assess the exact scope and impact of any proposed legislation or policy on the people they represent.

In order to support Members of Parliament discharge their legislative and oversight functions effectively, they need various services including information and research services. In Pakistan, Pakistan Institute of Parliamentary Services (PIPS), Senate Library and Research Directorate and provincial research departments with the support of the ICT cater the information needs of parliamentarians. In collaboration they are working to provide nonpartisan, relevant and authoritative research support to assist legislators in fulfilling their individual Parliamentary functions in addition to extend assistance to various House Committees, External Affairs and Inter Parliamentary Relations in line with their Parliamentary duties and perform a knowledge management role by organizing and re- purposing information materials generated through all available open sources.