COMMON MAN INITIATIVE

POLICY. GOVERNANCE. PROGRESS.

NEWSLETTER

May 2018

Introducing Common Man Initiative (CMI)

Voice of the 'common man' in Pakistan, is frequently drowned amidst partisan chatter, entrenched political narratives and competing institutional interests. As a result, non-partisan, independent and purposeful representation of issues concerning the common man no longer finds the requisite space in our governance and policy dialogue.

In recognition of this reality, and with the aim of reclaiming the public space for discourse about core governance issues, we have launched a non-profit, independent and grass-root organization – the Common Man Initiative (CMI).

CMI's overarching goal is to present policy options for a secure and prosperous Pakistan. To this end, CMI shall identify and highlight fundamental governance issues affecting the common man, in order to reshape the relevant public policy narrative. Specifically, through a series of publications, outreach programs, academic collaborations and institutional alliances, CMI shall aim to present actionable ideas for implementation by private and public institutions.

CMI has already developed partnerships with some of the top intellectuals, policy makers, academics, members of legal fraternity, and public officials across Pakistan. Through such collaborations, CMI's carefully selected Board of Advisors including, Mr. Tariq Khosa, Lt. General Ghulam Mustafa, Dr. Moeed Pirzada, Mr. Amjad Islam Amjad, Mr. Ayaz Amir, Mr. Ejaz Haider, Dr. Pervaiz Hoodboy, Dr. Shahzad Qaiser, Mr. Babar Sattar, Ms. Seema Abid Aziz and Ms. Imrana Tiwana will ensure that voice of the common man reclaims its central place in Pakistan's policy and governance initiatives.

Editor's Note

Welcome to the first edition of CMI's newsletter. Through such monthly newsletters, CMI shall attempt to engage with the relevant stakeholders to highlight ongoing governance issues concerning the common man.

In accordance with the constitutional imperative to eliminate exploitation and fulfill the ideal of "from each according to his ability to each according to his work" CMI aims to provide a platform to the common man where his issues can be voiced, heard and addressed.

I hope you enjoy reading this first issue and let us know if there are topics that you would like to see covered in future or changes that should be made.

- Falak Akhtar Wahla

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CMI's Launch Event

The Common Man Initiative was formally launched on the 7th of April, 2018. The inauguration ceremony of the organization was held at Falettis Hotel, Lahore and was attended by 'common man' speakers as well as notable guests and board of advisors.

Mr. Saad Rasool, executive director of CMI, introduced the organization's framework emphasizing on the need to address grass root issues confronting the common man. He stressed on the critical role of State institutions in alleviating plight of the common man, and argued for reassertion of Pakistan's national narrative at international forums.

"There is a need to highlight the issues of a common man who has been ignored for the last 70 years, since the inception of Pakistan. The issues of the common man have been linked with state institutions. The problem of police will not be resolved until resolution of issues faced by prosecution and the judiciary. The issues of the judiciary will not be resolved until resolution of problems of the educations sector. Likewise, the issues of the education sector will not be resolved till resolution of issues concerning security of person and counter terrorism."

The panel and guest speakers expressed their affirmation and support, recognizing the problems face by the common man, and an urgent need to address the same.

"The people in CMI have the experience, expertise, courage, dedication and commitment to serve the common man. This platform will help bridge the gap between the framers and consumers of public policy" – Iftikhar Ahmed

"The common man has never been a priority of the State. Rather, the ruling elite and State institutions have created problems for the common man. There is a dire need of an initiative like the CMI to highlight such issues, and take corrective measures" – Ayaz Amir

The most notable speakers of the event were the "common people" themselves. Mr. Muhammad Ramzan (a local workshop owner) and Ms. Rosina (domestic worker) voiced their discontentment with State policies and stressed the need of immediate action.

"You people are important people, you have the ability to take initiative and do something for us, for this country. Please, do something" – Ms. Rosina

CMI shall endeavor to voice governance issues concerning the common man, in a non-partisan manner, and also to redefine Pakistan's national narrative in the domestic as well as international policy framework.

COMMON MAN
INITIATIVE
POLICY GOVERNANCE PROGRESS

FALETTI'S HOTEL
LAHORE

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LAHORE

POLICY GOVERNANCE

FALETTI'S HOTEL
LAHORE

FALETTI'S HOTEL
LAHORE

Unsung Heroes

Pakistan is home to resilient people; men and women who pursue their dreams to achieve the seemingly impossible. From an international cyclist to Indie musicians, filmmakers and social workers- many have made this country proud without receiving the accolades and recognition that they deserve. For the victories that are yet to be acknowledged in a manner befitting the feat, CMI hopes to step up and share these stories with the public. Our team reaches out and highlights these accomplishments, in an attempt to carve for them their well-deserved place in the pages of history.

Jannat Ali

Promoting Health Care, Human Rights and Advocacy for the Trans Community

"Respect is a very basic thing"

"I am a trans-woman, a trans-rights activist, and a performing artist. Dancing is my passion and dream, but unfortunately in Pakistan there is a stigma attached to it.

We try to put things in boxes and categorize them, if you're one thing, you can't be the other. We associate everything with gender, from gender-specific colors to gender-specific sports. When I started taking Kathak classes, I told my family I was going to take yoga lessons because they would not have allowed me to dance. Dancing helped me channel the frustrations of battling with myself, with my gender identity. It allowed me to express my emotions positively.

My passion for it grew and dancing became my profession, when financial hardships hit our family, I was able to support them. It is now a part of my activism, I do a lot of activism through art. I did my MBA from UCP with a distinction. I did not want to have the stereotypical lifestyle transgender are perceived to have, such as begging or prostitution. I wanted to be known an artist and an activist.

One thing that has been ingrained in my mind is the need for unity and inclusiveness. Without the presence of these two elements, all activist movements are futile. In my work, I try to reconcile the generational gap, so that people have a common platform.

Recently, I presented a bill to the senate with two of my friends. There were six to seven meetings and in every meeting, a lot of time had to be spent educating the people on gender issues. Most of the time we found ourselves discussing basic topics rather than the actual bill, because of the participant's lack of knowledge in the matter. We did a lot of research regarding all these issues and took books with us to meetings. We met with religious leaders - and it was a scary experience to enter a room full of them - but we took them by surprise with our thorough research. Education played a large role in the success of this project, because people generally expect transgender to be illiterate and ignorant.

In another project, I am focusing on generating employment for the transgender community. Often, people cash on the 'transgender cause', I want to make sure that transgender who are offered training are also later employed, that they get a reward for their hard-work and are motivated to excel in life.

I just want to say, that before any gender, there is a human being. Respect is a very basic thing. Acceptance will not come with the push of a button but times are changing. There is more tolerance and people are working towards sending out a positive message about us.

Do not underestimate someone just because they are transgender, otherwise, they would not be able to contribute to the society with their maximum capacity. I have challenged myself throughout my life, so that I come up as a role-model for my community".

Common Man Stories

Limited access to education and socio-economic class polarization has excluded many in Pakistan from having the opportunity to voice their grievances. Stepping on to the streets of Pakistan and tapping into the vernacular richness on ground, our team interacts with the common man and compiles a testimony to their life. CMI believes that lessons of error, growth and wisdom can be learned by all those willing to teach, who are currently unable to speak and be heard. Engaging with communities and individuals, this project is a bridge between those who want to speak and those who want to listen.

Azam Ali Khan

Distress of a Common Man - Highlighting the Need for Education, Environment & Health Policies

"We as a nation have a lot of potential, it is just that we have not been given the chance to utilize our talents".

"I work as a delivery person for a company that makes hand-washing liquids and soaps. We deliver the merchandise to hospitals, restaurants and such.

I have two children, I got my son, 8-years-old, admitted in school. He was doing pretty well but had to leave; we were facing a lot of financial difficulties when I left my previous job for an optics company. I had to leave because of a fallout I had, but I am going to join that field of work again and get my children admitted in a school. I want my children to have a better life than I did, I am not educated and have been working since I was a child. All the hard work that I do now is for a better future for my children. Education has become the need of time. We as a nation have a lot of potential, it is just that we have not been given the chance to utilize our talents.

The work that I do right now is extremely difficult with the ever-increasing pollution. It causes breathing problems. I have been working at this job for three months now, and over the course of my short employment, my health has severely deteriorated.

The people who are sitting in their cars, with their windows rolled up, give no heed to the 'common man'. It is always the laborer that is on the rough end of the stick. The rich people can afford to roam around in air-conditioned cars but not us. Be it sunny, rainy, or cold, we need to work and make a living for our families".

Publications

Quarterly

The core of the research at CMI translates into the quarterly publication of academic papers. These papers will include an in-depth understanding of the problems at hand, with dynamic policy alternatives that include recommendations from experts.

Our upcoming quarterly publication shall include four (04) academic papers, in areas all governance and policy that require immediate scrutiny and expert deliberation. These include:

1) Right to Education and Its Implementation Across Provinces

2) Child Abuse and Sexual Harassment

3) A Case for Urban Policing in Pakistan

4) Electoral Law and Interim Government

Monthly

The abundance and diversity of challenges that obstruct our national journey of progress are manifold. While it might be impossible to deliberate, in detail, on all such issues, CMI still believes its essential to consistently shed light on core issues of governance.

For this purpose, our monthly publications shall aim to address different social and legal issues that affect the 'common man'.

Upcoming

May Publication

Review of the affirmative action policy making framework in Pakistan

Opinion Polls

To ensure our finger remains on the pulse of ever-evolving public discourse, CMI will conduct opinion polls on current issues.

Monthly Initiative

"Ramazan Campaign, 2018"

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