

Qno: 4 What are the key considerations determining community participation is an effective policy-making tool in the context of Pakistan.

ANSWER

① Introduction:

Global works like *Why Nations Fail* see inclusive institutions as the key to progress. But in Pakistan, one sadly sees de-institutionalization at the hands of elected political leaders.

This vacuum is usually filled by effective community participation since citizens can not be mere consumers of good governance.

They must be participants and co-creators.

Ultimately, good governance is a mass movement to make sure fruits of development reach the poor and the downtrodden. Thus, community participation is undoubtedly an effective policy-making tool in Pakistan.

② Key considerations for Effective Community Participation

① Institutionalize Grassroots Community Participation

Citizens do not have just rights but responsibilities also towards the polity & the aspect of "For community participation to grow as an effective policy-making tool, it must be institutionalized at all levels to optimize its potential in public service delivery".

The 2019 Punjab local government Act has made budget hearings mandatory, ultimately adding to transparency in policymaking.

② Decentralize Power to Enhance Governance Capacity

When government is brought closer to people, it reduces the trust deficit between the state and the society. On-ground decentralization of local government would strengthen community participation. For instance, KP's village and neighborhood councils gained formal authority in 2021 under revised LG laws.

C) Joint Ownership of outcomes by citizens and Governments

Governments in high income countries co-design and co-create public policies. They govern with citizens, not for citizens to bring about a sense of joint, collective ownership of the outcome of those policies too. Yameen Latif Heritage Foundation's post-flood reconstruction model after the 2022 floods trained villagers to build flood-resilient homes using local materials like bamboo and lime.

D) Communal Feedback Integration in Policy Cycle

Community feedback should influence actual decisions and policies. Feedback loops are central to policy effectiveness. For instance, SMS complaint system under the Sehat Sahulat Program in KP, integrating their say into the system.

E) Ensure Transparency and Open Access to Information

Community participation can only transform

as an effective policy making tool when governmental decisions and policies are transparent and open enough for public access.

For instance, Shereas Nakhomina Dashboard shows real-time nutrition status, improving accountability.

(F) Public Opinion-Public Policy Nexus

There should be a strong nexus between public policy and public opinion. When there is a drift between them, community participation as a tool loses its relevance in effective policy-making process. For instance, public backlash against SNC highlighted this gap.

(G) Genuine Political Will and Leadership Commitment

Community participation only thrives when political leaders genuinely put people at the heart of political process. Rather than tokenism and symbolic representation, locals and community leaders should be

have a say in governance as they are directly influenced by the government policies. For instance, Awaaz II program addressed social issues in Pakistan, ranging from GBV to child marriages.

(H) Technologically-Driven Community Initiatives

E-governance minimizes government and maximizes governance. Community initiatives should embrace technological tools to expedite their constructive role in policymaking process. Online apps like Punjab's "Babbar Online" help citizens report municipal issues directly.

(I) Inclusion of Youth and Marginalized Groups

64% of Pakistan's population is under the age of 30. Youth engagement is a cornerstone of participatory governance. For instance, the Youth Parliament under PILDAT has identified policy gaps in government's service-oriented projects.

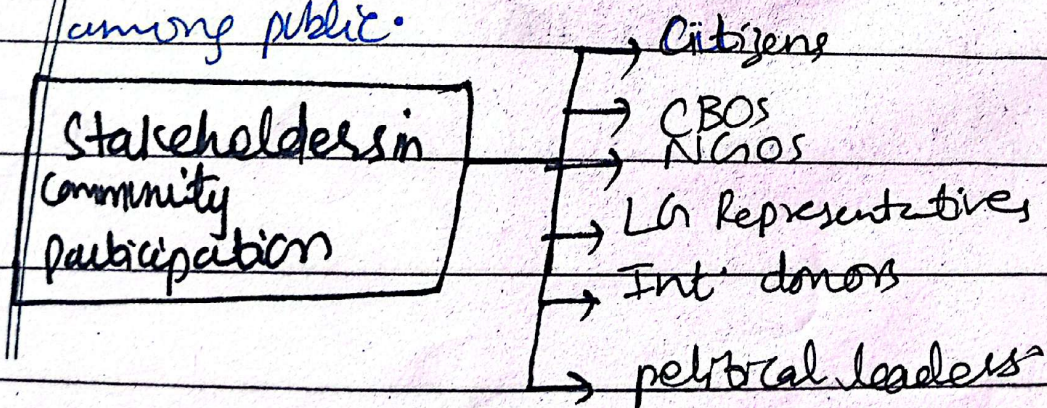
① Grant Legal Powers to Community

Participation Platforms

Integrate community participation into laws to empower citizens. They should have open access to public information under Article 19-A of the constitution. For instance, RTI law, 2019 must be implemented in true letter and spirit.

② Need for Multi-Stakeholder Engagement

Without government support, community Citizen Boards (CCBs) remain underfunded and ineffective. It is only through broad-based engagement that policies become people-centric. Otherwise, it becomes tokenistic if any one stakeholder is sidelined. For instance, in the 2023 Digital census, mistrust and lack of consultation made it controversial among public.



③ Critical Analysis

The traditional role of state does not decrease with increasing community participation. Also, it should be dynamically reinforced to co-design and co-create policies with citizens, not just for citizens. This makes governance more participatory and less predatory. They must participate more than just via the ballot box.

④ Conclusion

Community participation is a must as a policy-making tool to enhance citizen output in governance. Thus, it should be institutionalized and professionalized as an integral step of the policy cycle, rather than just an after-phase. This is how community participation can evolve as an effective policy-making tool for efficient public service delivery.