



CENTRE FOR PUBLIC POLICY  
AND GOVERNANCE



FORMAN CHRISTIAN COLLEGE  
(A CHARTERED UNIVERSITY)

# POSITION PAPER

## Improving Governance: Reforming Provincial Civil Service in Punjab

### **Dr. Saeed Shafqat**

Professor and Founding Director,  
Centre for Public Policy and Governance  
Forman Christian College

### **Reem Hasan**

Project Manager  
Centre for Public Policy and Governance

### **Contextualizing Bureaucratic Reform**

Reforming bureaucracy continues to be a recurring theme for improving governance in Pakistan. However, the focus has remained on the higher civil service, which is federal in content and origin, whilst the provincial and local civil service-- the so-called 'real face of the state' rarely draws the attention that it deserves. This position paper seeks to explain this paradox. It calls for a paradigm shift in approaching the issue of civil service reform by center staging the subordinate provincial cadres in Punjab. This is both relevant and significant as once again in September 2015, the Ministry of Planning, Development and Reforms set forth its ambitious three year plan that outlined the government's civil service reform strategy in its attempt to replace the British-era system with a system that is more modern and in line with the modern economy. At its crux, the fresh draft of the proposed civil service reform strategy called for an overhaul of the recruitment, training and the manner in which bureaucrats in Pakistan are assigned career tracks and promotions.

Such reforms appear ambitious and could have far reaching consequences in terms of fostering accountability, transparency and possibly improving governance. The irony remains that despite a growing consensus on reforming the officer cadre, the overall civil service reforms hinge on reform of the provincial cadres, and the subordinate bureaucracy for improving governance and effective service delivery. It is also necessary to bridge the gap between the higher and lower levels of bureaucracy, which does not figure out prominently in the Ministry of Planning Development & Reform agenda<sup>1</sup>.

## Incomplete Reform Process

Within academia, policy circles and informed citizen perception it is widely acknowledged that the edifice of British colonial administration was built on the Imperial Civil Service<sup>2</sup> (ICS) in undivided India. The ICS was described as the 'steel frame' through which the colonial rulers governed India. On gaining independence in 1947, both India and Pakistan inherited this 'steel frame'. Over almost seven decades of Pakistan's existence, several reform commissions have been constituted to bend this 'steel frame'<sup>3</sup>. Thus, the primary focus of this reform effort had been the higher bureaucracy of Pakistan, particularly the Central Superior Services (CSS) and partially, if ever, the Provincial Civil Services (PCS). Given this context, the reform process has paid little or no attention to reforming the subordinate cadres, which actually deliver services. Resultantly, these reform commissions have contributed little in improving the efficacy of higher bureaucracy or in ensuring effective monitoring and evaluation of subordinate cadres. In this sense, the entire process of reforming bureaucracy in Pakistan and Punjab remain half-hearted, inadequate and incomplete.

## Reforming the Street Level Bureaucrats: the 'Face of the State'

The present study tries to address the hitherto ignored '*face of the state*': The *patwari*, *station house officer (SHO)*, *the school teacher and the nurse* -- the Street Level Bureaucrats<sup>4</sup>.

In his widely acclaimed book, Lipsky defines *street level bureaucrats (SLB)* as public service workers who interact directly with citizens in the course of their jobs, while exercising substantial discretion in the execution of their work. These are, for instance, the *patwari*, *station house officer (SHO)*, *a school teacher and a nurse*-- the street level bureaucrats who are the real face of the state. They are the actual decision makers for three broad reasons:

- i. *They interact directly with the citizen in the course of their jobs such as a school teacher, police official or a health worker, or a revenue collector thus becoming the first point of contact with the public;*
- ii. *They exercise substantial discretion in the execution of their work for provision of public services. This is due to the decision-making authority vested in their positions because of the situational or individual adaptability required in varied circumstances. This eventually translates into established routines – which in other words can be termed as 'policy making' at the street level.*
- iii. *Their attitude, conduct and performance affect's the delivery of services and shapes the perception about governance and effectiveness of administration.*

This study therefore argues that *street level bureaucrats* are one of the most important actors in the delivery of public services especially when governance and public administration expands and becomes more complex at the district and local levels. In the case of Punjab, these street

level bureaucrats make up more than 83.4% of the civil service cadre (BPS 1 – 16) (See Table 1). It is for this reason that these provincial and/or local public servants become the real face of the state, given a fair amount of discretion vested in the nature of their jobs. It is equally important to recognize the cultural context that many a times these street level bureaucrats are part of local kinship/political networks and do not neatly fit into the Weberian conceptualization of bureaucrats as ‘impersonal’ and ‘legal-rational’ state functionaries. The street level bureaucrats have access to and possess significant information from the direct sources on the ground, which is unavailable to the senior bureaucrats. Hence they can use/abuse this information in favor of one or another party depending upon their affiliation or in pursuit of financial interest. Their role is better understood as a policy enforcement function, which is why they are more aptly described as ‘street level policy makers’ rather than simply ‘policy implementers’.

This study calls for a bottom up approach to civil service reforms in Punjab, focusing primarily on the subordinate cadre or the “*street level bureaucrat*” (BPS 1-16) (see table, 1). For clarity, this study focuses on the four most important sectors education; health; police and revenue, given the huge size of these departments and the fact that a bulk of civil servants in Punjab are serving in the aforementioned departments.

**Table 1: Total Sanctioned Strength of Bureaucracy in Punjab**

Pay Scale	Positions	Percentage of Total
BPS 1 – 15	903,274	83.4
BPS 5 – 16	503,144	49.41
BPS 16 – 22	115,305	16.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,018,579</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Training and Strategy Report for Government of Punjab -Management and Professional Development Department (MPDD) Report 2010.

While postulating reforms, for such a diverse group of public sector employees is a challenging task, this study argues that in order to reform the bloated and heavily politicized lower level bureaucracy of the Punjab, the sequencing of reform effort should adopt a bottom up approach. To improve citizen-state trust level and governance at all tiers, it is imperative that a lower level civil service reform plan become part of the Government’s reform agenda since, in real terms, it is the street level bureaucrat who is the real face of policy execution. Also, the 18th Constitutional Amendment has facilitated the environment for providing legislative and regulatory framework to empower the lower tiers for effective public service delivery. In this regard, civil service reforms are in fact a support strategy for effective decentralization<sup>5</sup>. The irony is that the real politicization of the Health, Education, Police and Revenue departments starts from these levels as most people believe that a patwari, SHO or dispenser may be posted or may continue serving, in an area with the patronage and backing of a local politician who ensures this through the MPA/MNA of the area. Thus the street level bureaucrat has to align himself/herself with some politician.

Dysfunctional governments undermine their own capacity to govern and subsequently, fail to deliver to the public. Years of corruption, mismanagement and political manipulation has led to the provincial civil service being perceived as irresponsible and highly incapable of delivering effective public service delivery. In the public perception, the civil service is seen as corrupt, inefficient and irresponsible. On the contrary, these subordinate cadres or “*street level bureaucrats*” suffer from state neglect and lack of resources and opportunities within the service structure. In the case of

Punjab, police stations still face problems of being severely understaffed, with occupancy rate of approximately 75% across the province. As far as buildings and amenities are concerned, almost 24% of the police stations in Punjab are not housed in a proper building while 40% operate in buildings that are in dilapidated conditions<sup>6</sup>.

**Table 2: Matrix of Grades Against Positions in Punjab Government Departments**

Basic Pay Scale	Education	Health	Police	Revenue
5	N/A	Lady Health Worker	Constable	N/A
9	Primary School Teacher	LHV/Junior Technician	Assistant Sub-Inspector	Patwari
14	Elementary School Teacher	Senior Technician	Sub-Inspector	Naib-Tehsildar
16	Secondary School Teacher	Charge Nurse	Inspector	Tehsildar

A School Teacher, Patwari and Naib-Tehsildar, Police Inspector and Charge Nurse play a pivotal role in terms of public service delivery. Some of these *street level bureaucrats* such as a *patwari* or an *SHO* are not just individuals but are also powerful institutions given the authority vested in their position. In Punjab, these front liners continue to face immense pressure. This pressure is borne out of a gap between the demand for their services and the limited resources available to them. The existing general nurse to patient ratio in Punjab is 1:11. The shortage in the nursing cadre for BPS 16 (i.e. Charge Nurse) alone can be observed from the fact that against the sanctioned posts, 21.45% remain vacant while the current sanctioned strength can only fulfill 55.4% of the current health care needs in the province. According to the Pakistan Nursing Council (PNC), there is still a need for an additional 8,925 nurses to match the demand supply gap<sup>7</sup>.

### Anomalies of Service Structure

Given the current service structure, the street level bureaucrat can neither meet the quantity of public demand nor can they cope with the substance of an individual citizen's demand, and this often results in unfavorable situations or coping mechanisms. Given the deteriorating citizen and state trust levels, the need to reform the structure, policies and processes in the key four areas – Education, Health, Police and Revenue/Land Administration cannot be overlooked. Street level bureaucrats such as teachers, SHO's, patwaris and health workers are individuals that the citizens interact with on a daily basis (see table 2) and thus the need for reforming the institutional structures, appointments, promotions, transfers, trainings, career paths and performance evaluations for these subordinate cadres (BPS 5 -16) cannot be overstated.

There is some realization of this condition in the case of Punjab, and in the last decade or so at least two pertinent reports have drawn attention to reforming the provincial cadres. These studies have been insightful and informative, providing a framework on recruitment, training, and career planning which has propounded reform of the Punjab Civil Service (PCS) and Punjab Management service (PMS). Another study reflecting on the provincial bureaucracy in haste lumped BPS-1 to 16 under the district service without fully taking into account their modes of recruitment, needs, capacity building and skill sets, career planning, authority and official conduct<sup>8</sup>. These studies have glossed over the recruitment, training and career planning concerns of the subordinate cadres (BPS-5- 16)<sup>9</sup>.

## Routines of Implementation

In public policy literature there is a growing recognition that the front line practitioners such as teachers in the public sector schools, a patwari (land registrar) in land administration, a station house officer (SHO) in a police station or a nurse/health worker in a public hospital, impact the implementation of policies through their actions and decisions. In this sense these cadres are not simply policy takers but the efficacy of policies hinges on their performance. Since these street level bureaucrats interact with citizens on an ongoing basis, it raises a critical question; that do they have the competence to make the right local decision? On a daily basis, these are the interface of state-citizen relationship since an overwhelming majority of the public sector interaction with citizens can be traced to either an individual instance or a set of specific circumstances. Most often decisions are made at the local level, on a continuous basis, and the need for situational adaptation is so high that front liner street level bureaucrats such as an SHO or a patwari exercises the authority to deal with decision making at that level. In such cases, governing bodies at the higher levels lack the access to make decisions at a local level, as most of the interaction with the ordinary citizen takes place at the district/local level. This, in turn, means that these *street level bureaucrats* in fact becomes even more important given the decision-making authority instituted in them and their knowledge of the situational information.

Unfortunately, in the case of Punjab, the present functionaries representing the subordinate cadres at the district level are poorly paid, ill-trained, irresponsible and often discourteous individuals who exercise power in an arbitrary fashion, given the flawed system of governance. As a result, the policy performance gap is widening and there is an increasing level of trust deficit between the state and its citizens. The real test for the Punjab Government is to undertake civil service reforms that are essential to improve service delivery, reshape the state-society relationship, and sustain the provincial roles and responsibilities envisioned by the 18th Constitutional Amendment. With this in view, the only appropriate action for the Punjab government would be to consider adopting a bottom up approach to reform the provincial civil services.

## Recommendations to the Government of Punjab:

### Bottom-up Reform Agenda

- i. The provincial government's reform agenda should take a bottom up approach, focusing on the *street level bureaucrats* (BPS 5-16) as the SLBs interact with the citizens on a daily basis and also have the authority to manage local functions at the district and tehsil levels. Following the local government elections and the eventual formation of local governments, the current institutional arrangements need to be upgraded whereby job descriptions, qualifications, channelized recruitments, trainings, performance appraisals and promotions are part of the larger framework for *street level bureaucrats* at the subordinate level. This, by no means prorogates that a uniform approach should be taken across all departments. However, variation should take place given the diversification of roles, the needs of the job role, the nature of work and the required space and resources available to initiate sector specific reforms.

### Devolve Administrative Functions

- ii. Following the 18th Amendment and the formation of local governments with the enactment of the Punjab's Local Government Act 2013 (PLGA 2013), it is important that delegation

(administrative, financial and legal) occurs to the lowest tiers of the government for more effective governance. The PLGA 2013 is more centralizing as compared to LGO 2001, which favored decentralization. The recent PLGA 2013 has brought about significant changes in the structures, rules, reporting, administrative and financial powers, which manifests provincial autonomy but also constrains devolution and local autonomy and that needs to change. For instance, the proposed formation and composition of the Provincial Finance Commission, District Education Authority, and District Health Authority is a good proposition. However, financial and administrative powers of the local governments rest with the province, such that even the appointments of education and health authorities have been vested with the provincial chief executive. At the same time, financial autonomy seems to be restricted with the Punjab Finance Commission and the Government of the Punjab controlling the prioritization, dispensing and auditing of all funds at the provincial level and leaving little for the district. In this case, devolved democracy is not truly devolved in spirit as it must entail administrative, fiscal and political devolution to the lowest level in the district.

- iii. It is proposed that the education and health authorities (already devolved to the provinces) should be further devolved to local councils. In order to do so, Government of the Punjab, should form District Planning Committees (DPCs) to map out the rural and urban needs keeping in mind the population growth rate challenge, before education and health are devolved at local levels. The District Planning Committees (DPC), which besides, locally elected public officials---Mayor/district Nazim, should have the authority to nominate members drawn from experts and social activists, its number should not increase than 1/5th of the total number. This at the rural and urban level could help in institutionalizing decentralized planning. Merely proposing a shift of health and education functions to district authorities is not really empowerment of local governments as power sharing mechanisms between provincial and local governments need urgent reform. The current reality of the PLGA is centralizing and offers little incentive for decentralization. Ideally, the review and amendments in PLGA could be the starting point for empowering the citizens and the local government.

### **Revisit Recruitment Regulations**

- iv. The Punjab Public Service Commission (PPSC) is the premier recruiting institution for the employees of the provincial government. Its structure and functions need to be reassessed and redesigned. It is invariably headed by a retired military officer or retired federal civil servants. Increasingly, the PPSC is perceived as 'rewarding the retired civil servants'. The composition of the commission needs change and space should be created for eminent persons from the academia, civil society, provincial service, media, business and information technology to serve as members.
- v. The PPSC recruits for all positions in and above BPS 16 and often undertakes appointments for BPS 9 – 15, depending on the demands of the respective departments and as notified by the Government of Punjab. The reason why PPSC often recruits for positions in and below BPS 15 is due to the institution's transparent and merit driven recruitment system, which is increasingly important given the importance of positions even at BPS 15 and below. However it must be recognized that workload of PPSC is driven by the volume of applications and not by the requisitions from the departments or the number of vacancies<sup>10</sup>. It is therefore suggested that recruitment for BPS 15 and below must be streamlined such that PPSC should only become the regulator of all such appointments. The Government of Punjab should develop a

code of conduct for recruitment at all grades, whereby the role of the PPSC is that of a monitoring body at all recruitment levels. Amendments should be made in the 1978 Ordinance and the Rules of Business and all recruitment in and below BPS 15 should gradually be devolved to the Department Recruitment Committees.

- vi. At present, however the challenge would be that these committees do not have the resource capabilities to undertake the recruitment challenge. Government of the Punjab should therefore play an active role in the development of fair and transparent recruitment procedures, rules and code of conducts for the departments, and PPSC should oversee and regulate the selection process for BPS 15 and below. In the future, this will not only empower the district committees but also streamline the recruitment process for BPS 15 and below, contributing to the development of more effective and impartial recruitment bodies such as the PPSC, at the district levels.
- vii. It is also important that entry into Provincial Civil Service Cadres (PCS) is strictly through competitive examination conducted by the PPSC. Occasionally, handpicked officials are nominated and inducted directly into the PCS cadre, without the appointees going through the competitive recruitment process. This, while on the one hand reflects serious lack of professionalism, on the other, causes serious demotivation among those recruited through the competitive process. The elected and appointed public officials should stop treating government jobs as disguised unemployment allowance for their voters/loyalists. Restructuring of the existing work force based on proportionate salary structure for the skilled and competent officials along with other benefits could lead to the improvement of governance as a consequence of these reforms and enhanced salaries, and subsequently to job satisfaction.
- viii. To ensure effective governance, it is important that fairness, equality, transparency and accountability be ensured in terms of recruitment, promotion and transfers regardless of grades/pay scales. Following the formation of local governments in Punjab soon, the new system needs to evolve at the district level for all employees in BPS 5-16. These cadres must have the rights to choose the districts which they belong to or that of their choice, and in the case of transfers, they should be fairly compensated for any opportunity cost. In this case, the importance of the role of the District Recruitment Committees (DRCs) for all departments cannot be overemphasized. While DRCs already exist, there is a need to expand their role, facilitate and streamline the recruitment process at district levels, following the local bodies elections.

### **Establish Accountability, Performance and Promotion Link**

- ix. The formation of local governments also raises the question if the government has capacity to manage local functions; given all local offices have civil servants across all cadres. There is thus a pressing need to strengthen the institutional framework within the current structure for the subordinate bureaucrats and elaborate on the rules and regulations with reference to job descriptions, trainings, promotions and transfers for the subordinate bureaucrats. Promotions should strictly be time-scaled and this must be clearly spelled out in the job descriptions and the promotion policies at all levels/grades. This is to both formalize the promotion service structure for those below BPS 16 and incentivize the street level bureaucrats so that those delivering essential public services are not a group of demotivated public officials with their only incentive being 'job security' and 'pension' after retirement. Accountability, time scale and performance and promotion links need to be established.

## Comprehensive Training Strategy

- x. It is important that regular training, including refresher courses is conducted at all levels of the bureaucracy. At present, there is almost no training provided to BPS 5-15. There are very few training institutes, and those that exist lack capacity in terms of infrastructure, staffing and budgets as compared to the size of the civil servants at both provincial, and district levels. To this end, MPDD could be strengthened. Other training institutions also need to be revived. However the need for a comprehensive *training strategy* at the provincial and district levels cannot be overemphasized. Given the volume of civil servants in the current infrastructure, this at present should take place in the form of '*on the job training*' at regular intervals and these trainings should directly be linked with promotions. Through training-promotion linkage, competitive and high performing subordinate cadres reaching the upper echelons of civil service could serve as a reward and incentive to improve delivery of services. In circumstances where the government lacks resources; partnership with academia and the private sector should be used to facilitate and fill in for any gaps.

## Integrate Information Technology

- xi. With the introduction of e-governance across various departments in an attempt to modernize the civil service system, the provincial government and departments should coordinate to impart compulsory training in basic information technology to all civil servants belonging to BPS 5 and above. For any innovation to be successful, it is important that a bottom-up approach is adopted to match the compatibility of the technology to the needs and capacity of those using it. Simultaneously, rules of business and procedures would need corresponding amendments for effective utilization of information technology services. In particular there is a need to simplify procedures and processes that are relevant for efficient functioning of police, revenue, education and health programs.

## Conclusion

To summarize and conclude, while deducing from the debate on civil service reform, it is reiterated that the *street level bureaucrats* are pivotal for improving governance and delivery of services: The 18th amendment has given new salience to the provincial civil service, its recruitment, training and career prospects. This puts onus on streamlining and reforming the subordinate cadres for improving governance and delivery of services. We need to take into cognizance that reform effort has to be broader and inclusive of all cadres. It must be recognized that civil service reforms cannot take place in isolation and by reforming only the higher level of service (BPS-17 and above), or exclusively the subordinate cadres. These have to be inclusive, holistic and syncretic—reforming political system, policing and criminal justice system and the civil service across all levels federal, provincial and local. In that spirit, civil service reform must entail political system reform (electoral system, reshaping provincial-local government power sharing mechanisms etc.), judicial reform, inclusive of policing and criminal justice system.



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***Any errors of facts/omissions or interpretation are the sole responsibility of the authors.***

## Notes

1. Pc.gov.pk, (2015). Ministry Of Planning, Development & Reforms – The Minister for Planning, Development and Reform presented on civil service reform agenda to the Prime Minister of Pakistan on 12th February, 2015. [online] Available at: <http://www.pc.gov.pk/?p=3655> [Accessed 17 Feb. 2016].
2. Officially known as the Imperial Civil Service from 1857-1909 in British India. This was renamed the Indian Civil Service in 1909.
3. Kennedy, C. (1987). *Bureaucracy in Pakistan*, Karachi: Oxford University Press. Also see, Saeed Shafqat, 'Reforming Punjab Government: An Evaluation Report' (an unpublished report, in which the author provides a review and evaluation of eight commissions and reports set up by the Government of Pakistan from 1972 till 2009).
4. Lipsky, M. (1983). *Street-Level Bureaucracy: The Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Service*. Russell Sage Foundation. (30th Anniversary expanded edition in 2010) pp 3-25. The irony is that many in the higher civil service are dismissive and do not consider street level bureaucrats as civil servants, as according to them, they are not recruited through transparent and competitive process.
5. World Bank (2004). 'Civil Service Reform and Decentralisation'. <http://www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/civilservice/june2004seminar/CSReformDecentralisation.pdf> ( Accessed on 15.02.2016.)
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8. Shahid Kardar, 'Civil Service Reforms in Pakistan' (PRMP II), November 2007. Also see, Rob, Laking, 'International Civil Service Reform: Lessons for Punjab' (PRMP II), November 2007.
9. See, Adnan Qadir, 'Punjab Capacity Building Framework: Draft for Discussion' (Lahore: PRMP, November 24, 2006) unpublished paper. Also see, Musharraf, Rasool, 'Calibrating the Civil Service Institutions for People's Wellbeing in Punjab: Analysis and Reform Options' (2009) (Asian Development Bank).
10. In 2014, the PPSC recorded 393,853 applications against 3470 posts, the highest in 5 years. In the same year, the PPSC processed a total of 13 requisitions from BPS 15 and below. See Ppsc.gov.pk, (2016). *Copy of Annual Report 2014*. [online] Available at: [http://www.ppsc.gov.pk/\(S\(5aaqduqjdjti4n0daocj23\)\)/ppsc\\_publications/Annual%20Report%202014/index.html](http://www.ppsc.gov.pk/(S(5aaqduqjdjti4n0daocj23))/ppsc_publications/Annual%20Report%202014/index.html) [Accessed 19 Feb. 2016].

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## Project Information

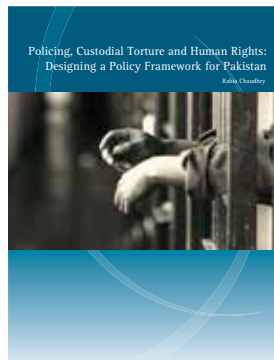
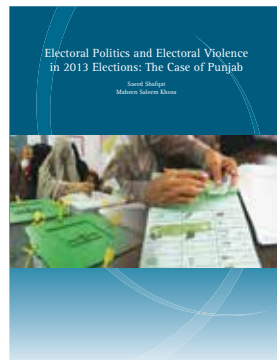
The “Improving Governance: Reforming Provincial Services in Punjab” project was funded through the Citizen Voice Project of USAID. The overall objectives of this study were to:

- Strengthen the citizens’ voice through, among others, oversight of public bodies that leads to advocacy for policy/legislative reforms and improved performance in terms of reducing corruption and strengthening transparency and accountability mechanisms.
- Increase public-private connections or linkages between and among the state and non-state actors for more effective accountability.
- Assess the job needs and responsibilities; identify the challenges and issues in recruitment, training and promotions of subordinate civil servants in the respective departments.
- Identify capacity building needs, career planning challenges and prospects of career advancement/promotion.

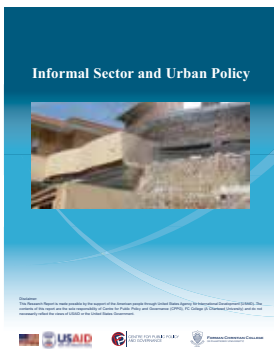
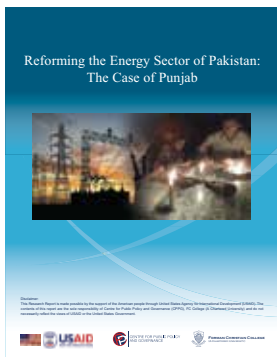
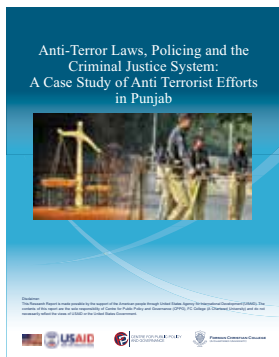
Focusing on Punjab, this study contends, the opportunity exists if the reform effort focuses on the Street Level Bureaucrats—the Patwari, Station House Officer (SHO), Nurse, a primary school Teacher, these are the first respondents and their actions and responses manifest the ‘face of the state’. The research team conducted a total of 217 interviews from the four departments, encompassing the provincial bureaucracy (segregated according to BPS 9, 14 and 16 and 17) and BPS 5, 7, 9, 11 and 16 in the police, BPS 9, 12, 14 and 16 in the health, BPS 11-13, BPS 14-15 and BPS 16-17 for revenue and BPS 6 – 15 in the education department. Besides an Action survey report, the study has produced three Working Papers on Recruitment, Capacity Building and Career Progression challenges in the Punjab Provincial Service, particularly the subordinate cadres. This Position Paper, while making specific recommendations, provides an assessment of key recruitment, training and career planning opportunities for the subordinate civil servants.

## CPPG Publications

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