

**Workshop:** Importance of Access to Information in the Context of COVID-19 – Need for Improved Right to Information Law in Balochistan

**Date:** October 27, 2020

**Venue:** Circuit House Uthal, Lasbella, Balochistan

**Summary:**

Transparency International Pakistan successfully conducted a workshop on the ‘Importance of Access to Information in the context of COVID-19 – Need for Improved Right to Information Law in Balochistan’ in Tehsil Uthal, District Lasbella. More than 35 participants representing various civil society organizations, media personnel and members of general public, including 10 females attended the session.

The prime objective of the workshop was to raise awareness and understanding regarding the importance of free flow of information during COVID-19 pandemic and the need for the Balochistan province to revise its outdated Freedom of Information law.

The workshop commenced at 10:30 am with recitation of a verse from the Holy Quran. It was followed by the participants’ introduction. Mr. Qaiser from Welfare Association for New Generation (WANG) Balochistan kicked off the session by engaging participants into some ice breaker activities.

Moving on, Mr. Khalil from WANG organization gave a brief presentation on the work WANG is doing in Balochistan.

This was followed by a detailed presentation by Mr. Ashfaque Ahmed, Project Coordinator, TI Pakistan who described the work of TI Pakistan. He gave a detailed presentation on the history and evolution of Right to Information (RTI) laws in Pakistan and Balochistan Freedom of Information law. Later on, a complete session was dedicated to raising awareness about RTI application filing process in other provinces, complaints mechanism, role of Information Commission and importance of information in COVID-19 context. He further highlighted on the need for transparent procurement during COVID-19 by emphasizing that the Awarded Contracts along with Bill of Quantities (BOQs) of government emergency procurements in the pandemic should be made public so that citizens are able to compare prices across the provinces.

This was following by a breakout interactive session where participants engaged in an exercise of writing a sample RTI.

A Q&A session was held at the end of the workshop. Participants asked various questions regarding the RTI laws from the speakers. They also deliberated upon a collective advocacy by members of the civil society for an improved RTI law in Balochistan.

Towards, the conclusion of the workshop, participants appreciated TI Pakistan's efforts in promoting transparency and rule of law in the country. The workshop was covered in social and electronic media.