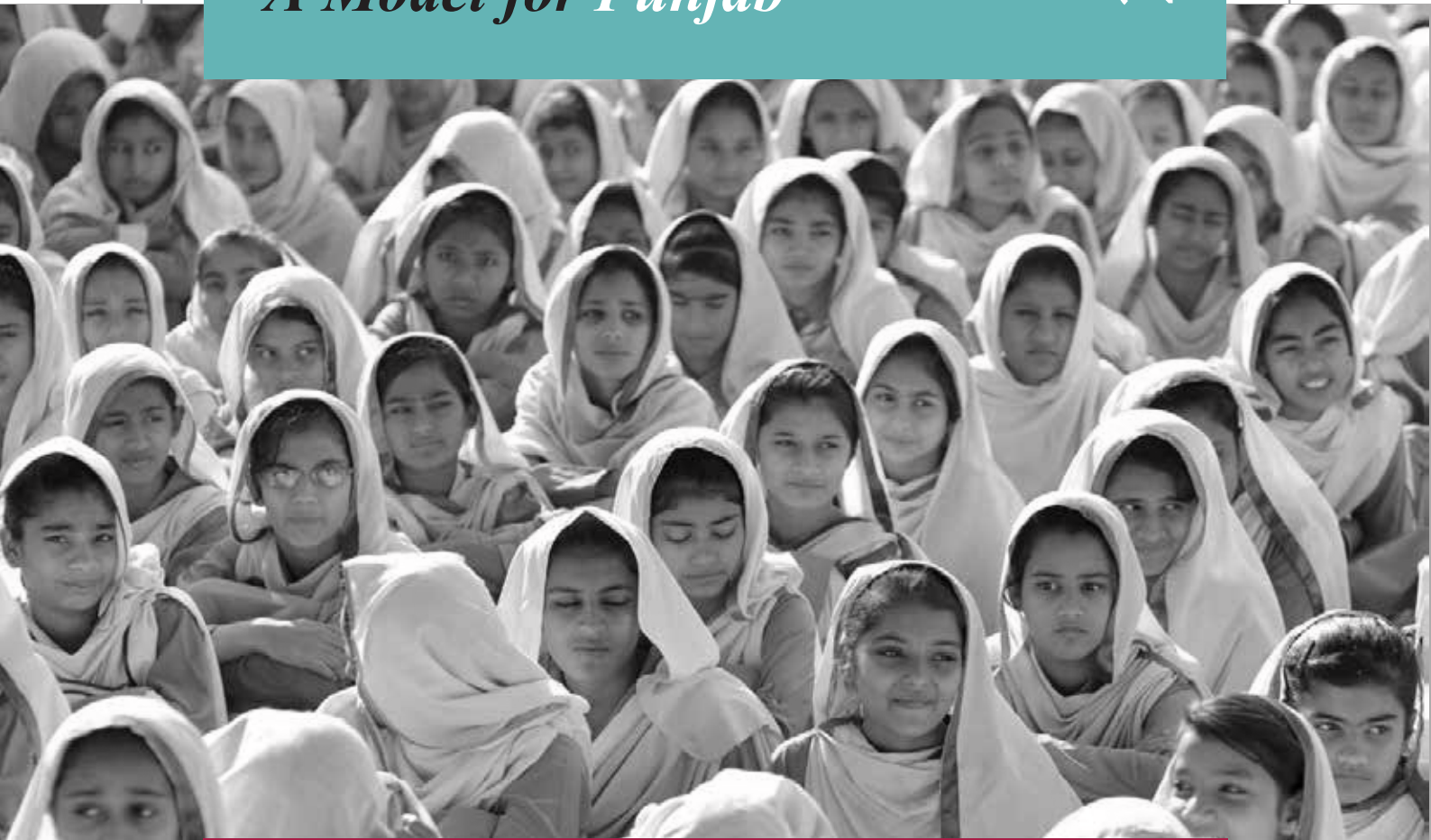




Parental Engagement Groups for Education

A Model for Punjab

2023



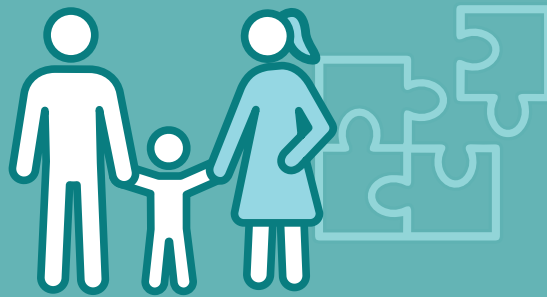
**Institute of
Social and Policy Sciences**
Informing Policies, Reforming Practices

Brigging Technical Assistance for the Governments (B-TAG)



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1

Context And Rationale

- I. Research across various disciplines underscores the critical role of parental engagement at the school level in fostering quality teaching and learning processes, ultimately leading to improved student performance¹. While the Punjab school system has seen remarkable progress in recent decades regarding students, teachers, and schools, a notable gap remains regarding effective parental participation and engagement. A review of the best practices in school education recognises that parental engagement fosters

conducive learning environments by improving teacher presence, resource access, and collaboration, ultimately enhancing educational outcomes and promoting equity². Despite attempts to increase parental participation at the school level, limitations persist regarding their access to and engagement in decision-making processes beyond the school setting. Parental voices are often absent from the broader discourse surrounding public-sector education reform.

Defining 'Parental Engagement'

Parental engagement builds upon the conventional participation of parents at the school level to create a more dynamic partnership between parents, teachers, communities and education officials. It refers to a dynamic partnership to nurture children's academic achievement and holistic well-being and advocate for better education policies and practices. Through this engagement, parents are empowered to collectively raise their voices at local, sub-district, and district levels, informing and influencing policy and decision-making for improved education service delivery. Parental engagement allows parents to become active partners in their children's education, building a supportive ecosystem that fosters lifelong learning and success

¹ Matthew van Poortvliet, Nick Axford, and Jenny Lloyd. 2018. *Working with Parents to Support Children's Learning, Guidance Report*. Education Endowment Foundation

² Janet Goodall and John Vorhaus. 2011. *Review of Best Practice in Parental Engagement*. Institute of Education. UK.

- II. In Pakistan, parental participation at the school level began in 1994 as part of the Social Action Plan (SAP). The SAP aimed at community-led development, integrating parents into the educational landscape by creating School Management Committees (SMCs) and School Repair Committees (SRCs) for primary and elementary schools³. SMCs had primary objectives, including facilitating enrollment, monitoring teacher attendance, and improving education quality with available funds. In 2007, SMCs were rebranded as School Councils (SC)⁴. However, until 2013-14, resource constraints limited SCs' meaningful contributions at the school level. The scope of SCs was augmented with the introduction of the Non-Salary Budget (NSB) Scheme in 2013. SCs were entrusted with planning, utilising, and monitoring NSB funds. However, challenges persist, including deficient financial independence and insufficient training of the SC members. Evidence suggests mixed parental engagement, with active participation in specific domains like enrollment drives and fundraising but lower participation in monitoring teachers' attendance and student performance and engaging in school-level planning with education officials at various levels⁵.
- III. The quality and level of this engagement have limitations at many levels, foremost at the individual level and even through the medium of the school council; their voice struggles to extend vertically, reaching the relevant education managers at district or sub-district tiers⁶. There are severe limitations in the composition, election processes, and stipulated functions of the School Councils. Moreover, the representation of parents on the School Council is significantly low⁷. SC's limited scope and ability to influence decisions beyond the confines of individual schools remains a principal impediment to its effectiveness. While their mandate is designed for operation at the school level, the decision-making processes impacting their and their respective schools' functions and perfor-

mance extend to the school, district, and provincial levels. The limited vertical integration of school councils diminishes its effectiveness. In cases where the respective education field formations intervene in matters related to school councils, it tends to undermine their role. Often, challenges and impediments highlighted by parents or school councils at the school level fail to get traction from the relevant offices despite requiring prompt attention. In essence, no systematic mechanism exists to aggregate parental interests and voice into a public demand directed at decision-makers.

- IV. The parents lack the authority and voice to engage and influence the education design and delivery processes, receive information about their children's education, and hold schools accountable. Government schools do not engage them meaningfully because they operate in a non-competitive environment. In private schools, the possibility of "exit" acts as an accountability pressure. However, this does not work for government schools because the public education services are neither funded by student fees nor do the schools function as commercial entities. Thus, "voice" is the only option for parents in government schools, i.e., they need to engage proactively with the schools and education managers to be more responsive to their needs and expectations. Additionally, unlike the teachers, parents do not have a formal organisation to represent their collective interests. There is a lack of forums for parents to advocate for their children's better education, thus undermining the potential of the parental voice to improve the quality and equity of education⁸. Aggregating parental voices can fill this void, fostering informed and meaningful engagement at various education levels. A representative parental collective has the potential to create a positive learning environment, driving changes in policies and practices at local, district, and provincial levels. This empowerment will benefit parents and contribute to a more effective and equitable education system.

³ School Education Department, Notification No. SO SAP/2-2/94, dated 26th September 1994

⁴ Behlol, M. G., Akbar, R. A., & Shahid, M. (2017). Capacity Building of School Councils: A Study of Government Primary Schools in District Bhakkar. *Bulletin of Education and Research*, Vol. 39, No. 1 pp. 17-32.

⁵ Behlol, M. G., Akbar, R. A., & Shahid, M. (2017). Capacity Building of School Councils: A Study of Government Primary Schools in District Bhakkar. *Bulletin of Education and Research*, Vol. 39, No. 1 pp. 17-32; I-SAPS. 2021. Empowerment of School Councils in Punjab. Institute of Social and Policy Sciences. Islamabad.

⁶ Assistant Education Officers (AEOs), Deputy District Education Officers (DDEOs), District Education Officers (DEOs), and Chief Executive Officers (CEOs)

⁷ School Council is constituted with at least 9 members distributed across three categories – School category, Parents' Category and General Member Category. Section 3.12 of School Council Policy 2007 (amended 2013)

V. Unlike some international best practices where formal mechanisms exist for aggregating parental voices and concerns at various administrative levels, there is a conspicuous absence of an institutionalised forum for systematically aggregating the voices of parents and communities⁹. The lack of a structured conduit hinders the articulation of parents' collective demands and concerns at higher administrative levels. Without such mechanisms, individual school councils struggle to address tasks beyond the influence of their immediate school environment. A common platform for parents within a tehsil and district could facilitate a more efficient resolution of shared issues by providing a unified voice when engaging with education authorities and decision-makers.

VI. **Need for Parental Voice Aggregation:** Evidence from international practice suggests that formal mechanisms for amplifying parental and community concerns can significantly contribute to the educational landscape¹⁰. However, there is a conspicuous absence of a systematised forum in Punjab for aggregating these voices. The lack of a structured conduit hinders the articulation of parents' collective demands and concerns at higher administrative levels (Sub-district, District, Province). Individual school councils, confined to their immediate school environment, struggle to articulate collective concerns at

higher administrative levels. Establishing a common platform for parents at the school and district tiers could facilitate a more efficient resolution of shared issues by providing a unified voice when engaging with education authorities, enabling more efficient resolution of shared challenges.

VII. **Rationale:** Given the existing challenges parents face in influencing school education and the lack of a formal organisation to represent their collective interests, the Parental Engagement Groups for Education (PEGE) model is designed to address these gaps proactively. This comprehensive guide aims to enhance parental engagement in school education at multiple tiers, creating a supportive ecosystem for collaboration. By providing a structured framework for parental engagement groups, including their composition, formation methods, and overarching roles, it seeks to empower parents to reclaim their fundamental role in the education ecosystem. While doing this it ensures alignment with existing education policies, illustrating how parental engagement groups can complement and support the education department in ensuring equitable access to quality education. It provides a framework that facilitates vertical integration of school councils/parent-teacher councils, promoting a seamless flow of communication and collaboration from local to sub-district and district levels

WHO SHOULD USE THIS DOCUMENT?

The document is intended for a diverse audience encompassing individuals and entities dedicated to working for the collaboration among parents, communities, public schools, and education departments across local, district, and provincial levels. Specifically, the intended readership includes trainers, facilitators, and mobilisers engaged with parental groups, school councils, parent teacher councils, etc. Moreover, the document is also valuable for the education policy and decision-makers operating at the provincial and district levels. It is also relevant for organisations actively working on and advocating for inclusive and participatory education systems, with a specific emphasis on parental engagement. Lastly, the document also serves the needs of researchers and practitioners delving into the intricate dynamics of parental involvement in education, providing theoretical models for in-depth analysis and discussion

⁸ Jason Elsom. 2023. *The Voice of Parents in Education: Why Parents Need a Stronger Voice in Their Child's Education*. London: ParentKind

⁹ National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) in the United States, the National Parents' Association in Finland, the Parent Support Group Singapore and the National Parents Council (NPC) in Ireland demonstrate the efficacy of formal platforms that aggregate parental voices and contribute to a more streamlined and effective communication channel with education authorities

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Objectives of the PEGE Model



A

AGGREGATING PARENTAL VOICE

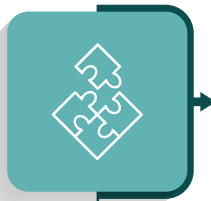
Aggregating voices at the sub-district and district levels will facilitate coordination among schools within a geographical area. This level of a parental group will allow for the identification of common issues transcending individual schools, areas, towns, etc., promoting collaborative problem-solving and resource-sharing.



B

BRIDGING VERTICAL LINKAGES

The School Councils, while impactful at the school level, lack a conduit for parents to connect with relevant education officials at Sub-district and district levels. The PEGEs will address the gap in vertical linkages of parental engagement with education officials at the relevant tiers.



C

COMPLEMENTING ROLE OF EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

PEGEs will be performing a complementary role to augment the education department's role at district, sub-district, and local levels through enhancing participation in enrollment drives, improving quality of education, measures for remedial learning, resource mobilisation, Schools improvement initiatives, community participation, conflict resolution, etc.



D

EDUCATION ADVOCACY FORUM

The district-level parental group will serve as an advocacy platform where representatives from sub-district forums contribute to comprehensively understanding challenges across a broader spectrum.



E

EMPOWERING GRASSROOT VOICES

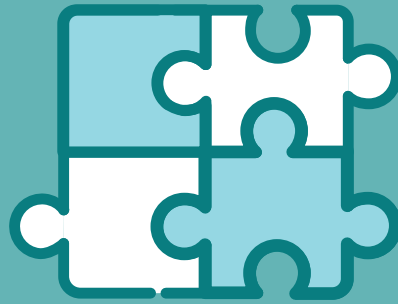
The hierarchical structure, with higher-level forums being populated by representatives from lower forums, will establish a direct link between grassroots concerns and decision-makers at higher administrative levels.



F

FOSTERING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

By involving parents in decision-making processes at multiple levels, the forums will foster a sense of ownership and accountability within the community.



2

PEGE: Structure And Framework

VIII. The PEGE (Parental Engagement Groups for Education) Model is designed to serve as a cohesive platform, strategically aligning and amplifying the voices of parents and communities at both the Sub-district (tehsil) and District levels. The model comprises Tehsil Parental Engagement Groups for Education (T-PEGE) and District Parental Engagement Group for Education (D-PEGE), each playing a pivotal role in aggregating and articulating parents and communities' concerns at a distinct administrative tier.

a. **Tehsil Parental Engagement Groups for Education (T-PEGE)**

Positioned at the Sub-district (tehsil) level, T-PEGE will serve as a localised nexus for parents and community members. It creates common ground for aggregating concerns, facilitating collaborative problem-solving,

and offering insights into schools' unique challenges within a specific tehsil.

b. **District Parental Engagement Groups for Education (D-PEGE)**

Operating at the District level, D-PEGE acts as a comprehensive assembly that brings together representatives from T-PEGEs. This higher-level forum ensures a broader perspective, addressing issues across multiple tehsils and fostering a district-wide approach to education governance.

The PEGE Model, through its innovative structure, seeks to create a dynamic and collaborative ecosystem where the collective voice of parents and communities catalyses positive change in education service delivery.

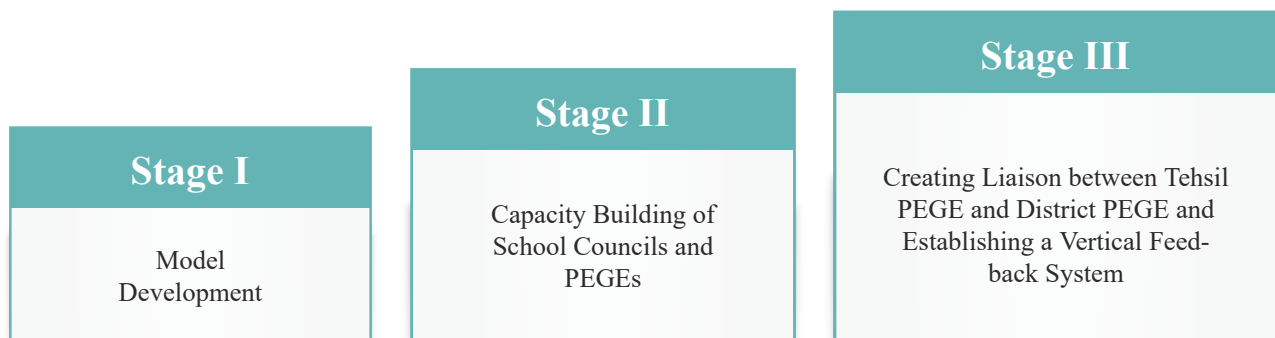


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PEGE: Operationalisation

The PEGE Model is based on principles of inclusion, accountability and responsiveness. Based on an iterative process of learning and relationship building, its design aims to build a common ground on which concerns and demands of parents and communities converge to demand action from education management and policymakers.

The process for operationalisation is divided into three distinct stages, which are:



Stage I

Model Development & Establishment Of PEGEs At Multiple Tiers

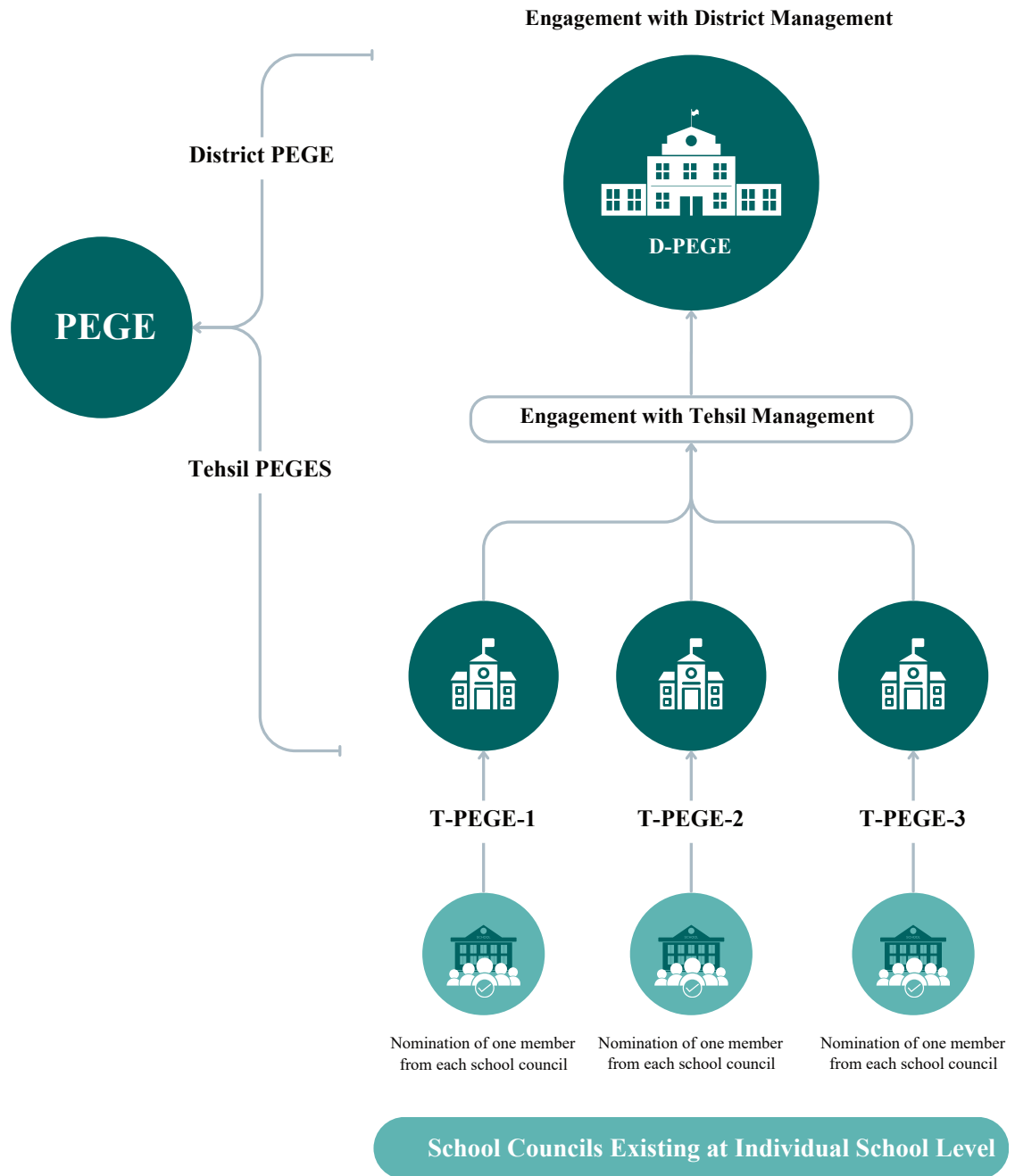
In the initial phase, the focus will be on crafting the foundation of the PEGE Model, which will involve meticulous planning and structural development to create parental groups at the tehsil and district levels that will serve as the nucleus for aggregating parental voices.

1. *Initiating Engagement at the Local Level*

- a. The first operational stage involves visiting School Councils in selected districts of Punjab. These visits aim to familiarise the local School Councils with the new model of District and Tehsil Level Parental Engagement Groups for Education (PEGEs).
- b. Meetings will be convened with local/tehsil/district School Education Department (SED) officials to introduce and discuss the PEGE Model. The objective is to secure their support and guidance for effective implementation before the model is put into practice.

2. *Nomination of PEGE Candidates from School Councils*

- a. Members of School Councils, already functioning at the school level, will actively participate in the nomination process. One member from the parent or general member category will be nominated to contest elections for Tehsil Parental Engagement Groups for Education (T-PEGEs).
- b. This nomination process aims to identify individuals who will represent the School Councils at the higher Tehsil level within the PEGE structure.



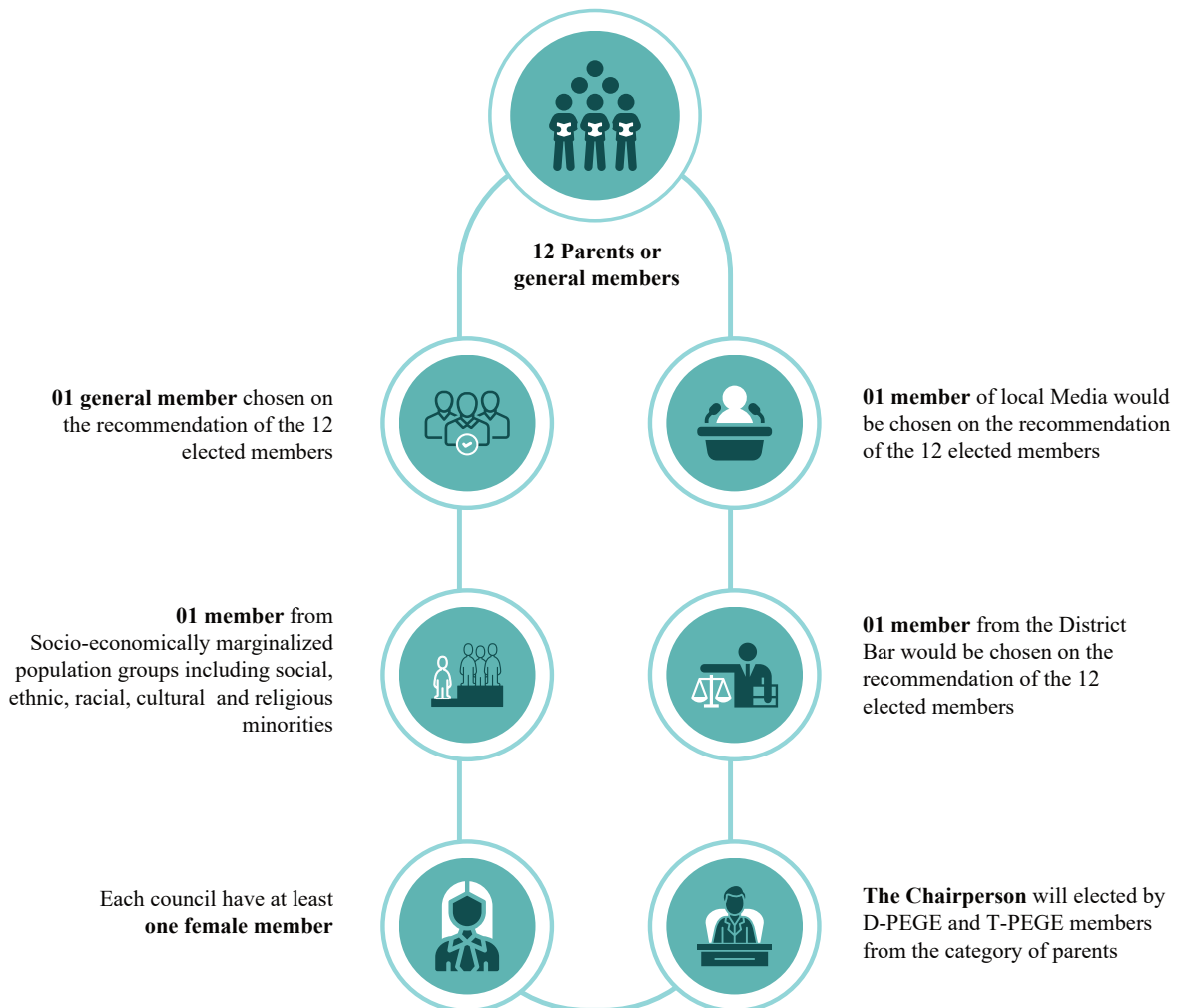
Criteria for nominating School Council members

- ◆ Active and regular participation in the School Council meetings and activities.
- ◆ Esteemed within the community for their transparency and credibility.
- ◆ Should not be a holder of a public office.
- ◆ Should not be a holder of office in political or religious parties.

Composition of T-PEGEs and D-PEGE

The members of the Tehsil and District PEGEs will be drawn from the existing school councils. Each Tehsil and District PEGE will consist of 16 members.

The composition will be as following



3. *Election Process for Tehsil PEGEs*

- a. Subsequently, a meeting will be organised for School Council members to conduct elections for Tehsil PEGEs. The election process will involve a

'show of hands' to democratically select representatives for the Tehsil level, ensuring fair and transparent representation.

4. *Nomination and Election Process for District PEGEs*

- a. Simultaneously, members of Tehsil School Councils will nominate individuals (from parent or general member categories) to contest elections for Tehsil Parental Engagement Groups for Education (T-PEGEs).

- b. A general meeting of tehsil nominees will then be conducted to elect members for the District Parental Engagement Groups for Education (D-PEGEs) through a 'show of hands.' This standardised election process will be implemented consistently across selected districts.

This meticulously designed process will ensure a systematic and inclusive approach to establishing and populating the Parental Engagement Groups at both Tehsil and District levels in the selected districts.



Stage II

Capacity Building Of School Councils And PEGEs

Building on the formation of tehsil and district groups, Stage II will initiate with the articulation of the engagement protocol for Tehsil PEGE and District PEGE with the District Education Authorities, the School Councils and Parents. This will be followed by enhancing the School Councils' and Tehsil's Parental Engagement Groups for

Education's (T-PEGE) capacity. This phase will include training initiatives, skill development, and knowledge enhancement for members of these groups, ensuring they are well-equipped to participate actively and effectively voice concerns within the PEGE Model.

1. *Using Education Data*

- a. Participants will undergo training sessions on the Education data and how to use it; the sessions will equip them with the skills to navigate and utilise educational data effectively.
- b. The training will cover aspects such as data collection, management, and interpretation, ensuring PEGE members are proficient in leveraging EMIS for informed decision-making.

2. *Data Interpretation*

- a. A specific focus will be placed on enhancing the participants' ability to interpret educational data accurately. This includes understanding key indicators, identifying trends, and extracting actionable insights from available data sources.

3. *Education Financing*

- a. Capacity building will extend to the domain of budget advocacy, providing PEGE members with insights into budgetary processes related to education
- b. Participants will be equipped with the skills to analyse education budgets, advocate for resource allocation, and understand the financial implications of policy decisions.

4. *School Improvement Plan (SIP)*

Sessions dedicated to School Improvement Plans (SIP) will guide PEGE members in developing and implementing effective plans to enhance school perfor-

mance. Participants will gain insights into the elements of a robust SIP, including goal setting, resource allocation, and monitoring mechanisms to drive tangible improvements.

These targeted capacity-building sessions aim to enhance the proficiency of PEGE members and enable them to actively contribute to improving education service delivery at the grassroots level. The emphasis on practical skills related to EMIS, data interpretation, budget advocacy, and SIP underscores the commitment to fostering informed and impactful parental engagement.

Stage III

Creating Operational Linkages between Tehsil PEGE and District PEGE and Establishing a Vertical Feedback System

In the final phase, the focus shifts towards establishing a dynamic interface between members of District Parental Engagement Groups for Education (D-PEGEs) and Tehsil Parental Engagement Groups for Education (T-PEGEs) with the respective district

governments and officials from the School Education Department (SED). The primary objective is to facilitate in-depth discussions on education-related issues and collaboratively address these concerns through collective efforts.

Key components of stage III will include

1. *Vibrant Interface Establishment*

- a. Foster a vibrant and interactive interface between D-PEGEs, T-PEGEs, and key district officials.
- b. This interface will serve as a platform for constructive dialogue, enabling members of PEGEs to express their concerns, articulate demands, and engage in collaborative problem-solving with relevant authorities.

2. *Identification of Critical Issues and Engagement with District Education Officials*

- a. PEGE members will actively participate in submitting applications to the district education management, outlining their demands and expectations for quality education and the provision of essential facilities within their respective tehsils and districts.
- b. These applications will serve as formal mechanisms for expressing the collective voice of parents and communities, thereby ensuring that the educational priorities at the grassroots level are accurately conveyed to the authorities.

3. *Creation of Vertical Feedback System*

- a. A robust vertical feedback system will be established to facilitate the seamless transmission of concerns and public demands raised by District Parental Engagement Groups for Education (D-PEGEs) and Tehsil Parental Engagement Groups for Education (T-PEGEs).
- b. This system will cascade feedback and demands from Area Education Officers (AEOs) to Deputy District Officers (DDOs) and further upward to District Officers (DOs) and Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), ensuring that the chain of communication remains transparent and responsive.

This stage aims to bridge the communication gap between grassroots concerns and higher-tier decision-makers in School Education. The envisioned interface will empower PEGE members to participate actively in decision-making processes, fostering a collaborative approach for sustained improvement.

PEGE: Looking Ahead

4



Addressing Institutional Gaps

The PEGE model strategically addresses a critical gap in the existing institutional framework by providing a structured avenue for directly channelling parental and community voices into education-related decisions. By bridging this gap, the model ensures a more inclusive and participatory approach towards shaping the educational landscape.



Incentives for the Education Department

A structured and informed parental engagement with relevant education department officials at district and subdistrict levels can yield numerous benefits and enhance the effectiveness, reach and quality of education at the school level. It remains critical to underscore that instead of introducing an additional layer of accountability, these groups will complement the Education Department's role by fostering collaboration and community involvement. Additionally, the model is designed to enhance trust between education officials and parents by providing structured and more effective communication mediums.



Evaluation and Learning

A comprehensive evaluation strategy will be employed to gather quantitative and qualitative data to assess the model's efficacy in delivering substantial benefits to public sector schools. The focus will be on understanding how the model, when scaled up across all districts, can generate enhanced outcomes and contribute to the overall improvement of the education sector



Anticipating the Future

The PEGE initiative aims to address immediate gaps and lay the groundwork for a more comprehensive, participatory, and impactful educational ecosystem. As the model unfolds, the government's commitment to fostering inclusive education and amplifying parental engagement will become increasingly evident. The success of this model will set a precedent for sustained improvements across the education sector, signalling a positive trajectory for the future

