



Ref: PILAP/HO/2020/474

Dated: 09 December, 2020

**The Secretary,
Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training,
Block C, Pakistan Secretariat,
Islamabad**

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION UNDER THE RIGHT OF ACCESS TO EDUCATION ACT, 2017

Dear Sir,

The Public Interest Law Association of Pakistan (PILAP) is a public interest association concerned with the primary objective of enabling the citizens of Pakistan to attain the realization of their civil, human, economic, social and political rights, as guaranteed by the Fundamental Rights laid down in the Constitution of Pakistan. PILAP addresses matters of public interest by means of advocacy and by seeking redress for the people of Pakistan through the justice system. It respectfully submits as under:

1. That PILAP seeks information on the management and dissemination of remote education in Pakistan during the global Covid19 pandemic. According to UNICEF, 22.8 million children between the ages of 5 and 16 are out of school. Given the lack of resources available to many families with school-going children, including internet access, laptops and computers and even smartphones and other internet devices, the number of out-of-school children is expected to have gone up owing to the shift in online learning forced by the pandemic.
2. That according to the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority, only one-million school-age children have regular access to internet services and digital devices ("The Coronavirus Effect on Pakistan's Digital Divide" by Mehreen Zahra Malik, 14th July, 2020, BBC Worklife). While the Federal Government has been aiming to end "educational apartheid", as long as there is a significant digital divide of the kind that exists in the country today, reaching this goal will be an uphill task. There is a dire need now, more than ever before, to attempt to bridge this gap. Without addressing this pressing concern, more and more children will be forced to give up education or miss out on a significant part of schooling.
3. That the provision of free and compulsory education for all children between the ages of 5 and 16 is a Fundamental Right guaranteed by the Constitution under Article 25A of the Constitution. The fulfillment of this Fundamental Right includes not just provision of education in name but in quality as well. The Lahore High Court has held

PUBLIC INTEREST LAW ASSOCIATION OF PAKISTAN

Plot # 18-C, 2nd Floor, Office # 202, Zamzama Lane # 2, Phase-5, DHA, Karachi.
Phone: +9221 32417049, +9221 32417087, +9221-35304110 Email: info@pilap.pk

that if "a child had a right to free education, he also had a right to good education....said two elements existed in tandem with each other (2018 PLD 509 Lahore).

4. That, in view of the above, PILAP respectfully submits this application under the right granted by the Right of Access to Information Act, 2017 as under:
- i) How many students between the ages of 5 and 16 are currently enrolled in school nationwide? What is the percentage of students who have been forced to drop out of school due to inaccessibility to internet services and devices?
 - ii) What measures is the Federal Government taking to bridge the digital divide for school-going children to ensure their education is not disrupted?
 - iii) What measures is the Federal Government taking to ensure that school-age children continue to receive an education during the Covid19 pandemic?
 - iv) What measures is the Federal Government taking to ensure that public school teachers receive the requisite training in order to be able to teach effectively during the pandemic?
5. That in the circumstances, PILAP would be grateful for a reply at the earliest.

Thank you.

Best Regards,



Public Interest Law Association of Pakistan (PILAP)
Through its Chief Executive Officer
Pervez Said

Address for reply:

Public Interest Law Association of Pakistan (PILAP),
Office No.202, 2nd Floor, Zamzama Commercial Lane # 2,
Defence Housing Authority, Phase-5,
Karachi.

PUBLIC INTEREST LAW ASSOCIATION OF PAKISTAN

Plot # 18-C, 2nd Floor, Office # 202, Zamzama Lane # 2, Phase-5, DHA, Karachi.
Phone: +9221 32417049, +9221 32417087, +9221-35304110 Email: info@pilap.pk