Capacity building of media Professionals in Inclusive, Responsible & Objective Journalism, 8th – 10th July 2017 Peshawar-KyberPakhutoonkhua

A three-day training on "Capacity building of media professionals in inclusive journalism" was organized by Journalists for Democracy and Human Rights (JDHR) Pakistan in collaboration with International Alert in Peshawar from 8th to 10th July 2017.

The main objective of this training was to enhance the capacity of journalists to see their societies as diverse, multicultural, and pluralistic rather than homogeneous monocultures.

DAY 1: Training started with the welcome address by Mr. ShafqatMunir, he briefed the participants about the 3 day agenda and objectives of the training and then the introduction of participants was preceded by Mr. Khalid Jamil.

Session 1:
Topic: Understanding National Action Plan 2015, Counter narrative for tolerance and interfaith and Intercultural Harmony.

First session was conducted by Mr. ShafqatMunir who started off with a briefsummary of the National Action Plan 2015 (NAP2015). He highlighted the importance of points 5, 11 and 18 of the NAP and generated a group discussion among participants on these points.

Mr. Munir, stated that freedom of media is always subject to responsibility and media professionals need to abide by media ethics in the form of self-imposed restrictions, and self-regulation, keeping in view religious values, norms and traditions of a society. He voiced that while the media has contributed no doubt positively in society as per its basic functions of information, awareness and education of the people; however, the arms race of rating and unhealthy competition to break the news first and giving coverage to terrorists or serving their agenda indirectly is imparting a largely negative perception of media in society.

On the importance of Interfaith Dialogue, Mr Munir stated that this is a means for members of all religions to have the chance to express their own religion in the manner that they want people to understand it and to provide the members of other religions with the same opportunity. There exist common, broad fields for people to work together without violating their own religions, which are their most precious treasures. Everyone can cooperate with others in various fields of the daily life and have an absolute conviction about the truthfulness of his religion. Mr. Munir discussed the ways how to cover the issues around interfaith harmony and peace building among all citizens which will bring the grounds for inclusive and objective media to include minorities in mainstream and digital media spaces.

The above statements generated a lengthy discussion among participants which focused on interfaith harmony among majority and minority groups in the country and the role of journalists in balancing freedom of expression with the people's right to be treated with equality and not to be discriminated.

Mr Munir emphasized the need to highlight the positive aspects of minorities in media for peaceful coexistence and to promote a narrative of 'Acceptance' instead of mere 'Tolerance' because former is more effective in establishing pluralism. The debates also focused on negating the hate towards minorities and particularly on the way journalists should balance freedom of expression with people's right to be treated with equality and not to be discriminated.

While discussing news reporting in relation to interfaith harmony, he explained that objectivity is an absolute value and a journalist should not be biased towards any groups, they have to present the true perspective of the issue. Dispute-Sensitive reporting is based on rigorous adherence to the essential core standards of journalism, which are often cited as accuracy in truth-seeking, objectivity or fair balance, and responsibility or ethical conduct. Combined, these attributes, plus media independence and diversity constitute what can be called a reliable news media.

Session 3:

The final session of the day was covered by Mr Khalid Jamil. He provided participants with advice on how to ensure their physical safety as well. To this end, the journalists were instructed to always know beforehand where they are going and what to expect, i-e: they should do pre-assignment security assessment and risk analysis and take into consideration some measures to minimize risks. He thoroughly explained the followings points:

- Hostile environments: dictatorships, zones of dispute, insurgency, or high crime, and also regions of extreme climate or terrain (jungle, polar regions, desert).
- Dangerous events, such as violent demonstrations, riots, terrorist attacks, or chemical, biological, or nuclear accidents, natural disasters (earthquakes, hurricanes, floods) or pandemics.
- High-risk activities such as investigations into terrorist groups, mafias or violent extremists and/or working under cover.

The trainer stressed on before setting off on an assignment in a dangerous area, journalist must be prepared physically, mentally and logistically. This means gathering information, assessing risks, choosing "fixers" and trustworthy contacts, and working out safety and communications procedures for use while travelling. Find out as much as you can about the place where you intend to go, such as security and social, political and health conditions, as well as the climate, media and infrastructure. Familiarize yourself with the culture, customs and codes of dress and behaviour. This will help you better understand your surroundings and integrate more   easily.

To ensure safety, journalists were suggested by the trainer to know where they are going and what to expect. They should do pre assignment security assessment and risk analysis and take into consideration some measures to minimize risks.

Participants appreciated the trainer's knowledge and information greatly and considered them useful for their routine professional work.

The trainer focused briefly explaining the **digital security** and how media workers and journalists can protect their online data and how to undertake safecommunication using digital space as Internet connectivity and online smart phones expose them and their data to vulnerability and risks, which may harm them physically and digitally.

The participants were also made aware of the types of risks involved in using digital devices, especially those with internet connectivity. Security protocols for using Smart phones were also highlighted along with the need of using strong passwords. The journalists were recommended to secure their PC, laptops and all online accounts by installing anti-virus software, updating systems and applications, enabling automatic updates option, making sure the PC's firewall is on, by using strong passwords having alphanumerical and signs.

Training attendants had the chance to develop their professional skills to better represent diversity in society through fair, well-researched and inclusive coverage, as well as to develop ideas for features that reflect the diversity of life experience throughout the region.

The participants were agreed on promoting and acting on inclusive and diverse media coverage around the province where they are working and on the promotion of respect, tolerance, fellowship, solidarity and collaboration of people of different faiths and cultures.

Day 2:
Session 1
Day 2 activities started with the formal introduction between participants and the trainer Ms. UzmaLatif. She started the session with the topic "**Understanding identities".**

She briefly discussed the concept of 'Identity' and how it affects our personal and professional working environment. An Exercise was carried out to understand the phenomenon of identity; participants were told to describe themselves to others with particular aspects of qualities, hobbies and specialties.

She described that people are socialized by the very system they are trying to change. And we all can have multiple identities, from them some give us power and some identities make us vulnerable in the society and in our professional environment.

Multiple identities were described with the help of the identity game "WHO AM I". Participants were divided into four groups to work on identity game "Guess the identity". The basic aim of the game was to explore multiple identities of that hidden personality which collectively guess the person's full identity.

After tea break experience sharing session on participant's identities that make them vulnerable in the society was conducted. Few of them are as follows:

- One of the participants told that being a Pathan, he was considered suspicious while his job tenure in Karachi that is place where Pathans are in minority.
- Being a sunni and working in Shia community, he was mistrusted and considered biased towards them.
- A female reporter (who was a participant of this training) was harassed while reporting on religious delegation meeting in their madrasa.
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It was observed that the session was very productive and it was agreed by the participants that individuals have multiple identities butsometimes, similar experiences, which are the result of different processes of socialization. There are some identities, which face violence and exclusion based on their gender, religion/faith and social status soit is important towork on commonalities based on multiple identities rather than differences.

Session 2: This session was started with the general concept of 'Stereotypes'. The trainer explained the participants that stereotypes are commonly used within our daily life. While brain storming in this session, participants were asked about their knowledge related to stereotypes and then later they were showed a multimedia presentation about different statements regarding stereotypes and the trainer asked for responses from the participants onwhether they are stereotyped or not. This activity was useful in helping the participants to understand the concept of everyday stereotypes.

Ms.Uzma described that while working on ourselves to un-learn and then reconstruct the politics of identity, we have to do a critical thinking on issues related to religious minorities and for that it is important to explore and highlight relationships and differences or specifications that leads to social exclusion and denial of the rights of religious minorities which creates divisions in the society.

The trainerdiscussed some statements regarding issues faced by religious minorities in Pakistan.Participants shared their views about those statements and viewed that

the religious minorities of Pakistan believe that they are not part of the country's larger social and cultural mainstream and the discrimination against minorities is connected with overall inequality. When we ignore minority issues, it creates physical insecurity among minorities apart from increased social vulnerability such as lack of access to education, jobs and health care. Inconsistent state protection, stereotypes and stigmatization have added to their social exclusion and vulnerability. These discussions and dialogues concluded with a clear message that, injustice and discrimination is about condition and position and if we are to bring an end to violence then we have to focus on uplifting both the aspects and the solution lies in improving good governance and ensuring the state's writ so that minorities and other vulnerable communities are protected and all minorities are to be treated as equal citizen of country.

Session 3: Topic: Understanding conflict, violence and Context for Sensitive Journalism.
Group work on Case study:
Before formal beginning of the session, an activity was conducted. In this activity, participants were divided into four groups comprising of 4 or 5 members. Handouts of the case study were given to the participants and were asked to work on followings:
· Is it extremely critical to only align with the principals of neutrality and objectivity while reporting on such issues?
· Is peace journalism a viable option in today's context?
· What are the key challenges of people in media while reporting in a conflict situation?
· Share examples from your work life when you faced this situation; what were your choices? And why you made those choices?
· While reporting on issues involving vulnerable groups it is crucial to remain objective but at the same time presenting the exclusion and injustices faced by these groups in our context through a comprehensive analysis.

After the group discussion, group representatives shared the followings points with all the participants:
In conflict zones, the reporters have certain limitations where they cannot follow the same criteria of determining the impartiality, which has been used in non-conflicting areas. There is a lack of effective media policies to have check on the process of information gathering, information processing and information distributing. Physical and mental abuse of reporters is not uncommon in conflict zones, some times reporters were harassed, threatened and kidnaped. Lack of access is also widespread among higher official levels who are necessary to be questioned, mainly to seek their side of a story or merely for balancing the story. Reporting from a conflict zone and for conflicting groups may not be compared with the reporting from peaceful zones. The journalist should assure the conflicting parties that he/she is impartial because any sort of distrust may harm the access and flow of information in crisis laden areas. Effective internal policies within media organization to analyze and judge the information can build the objectivity while reporting and the media

organizations should give up the culture and competition of breaking news because it may affect the credibility of the information.

Day 3:

Day 3 started with the recap of day 2 and the main focus of the trainer was on the topic "Understanding conflict, violence and Context for Sensitive Journalism". She defined the concept of 'conflict' and in plenary discussion, participants gave following responses about it.

The trainer discussed that conflict is a situation where two groups try to pursue goals or motivations, which they believe they cannot share. Some people want change, but others disagree. If their disagreement or their conflict is managed peacefully, it can be a positive process. But when conflict is not manageable properly, it becomes violence. In violent conflict, people fear for their safety and survival. Not all conflicts are violent as it is normal when there is change through difference in opinions. Conflict arises where groups have incorrect ideas and beliefs about each other and the unresolved grievances exist from the past and Power is unevenly distributed. Professional journalists do not set out to reduce conflict. They seek to present accurate and impartial news. But it is often through good reporting that conflict is reduced.

The trainer explained the theory of Johan Galtung who defined peace, using the conflict triangle, as the absence of physical violence, cultural violence and structural violence. For using that ABC triangle model group work was assigned to participants **'Conflict Analyses for Reporting'.**

Participants were divided into four groups and were asked the groups to decide on the type of conflict that they will work on, it needs to be a current conflict. But with joint consensus of participants it was decided to work on the conflict situation which had previously observed and reported by them. The aim of the group work was to:

1. Identify the forms of violence happening in that situation e.g. domestic violence, hate speech,

2. Identify the major actors in that conflict and discus their power, position interest and needs in the said conflict.

3. Based on the discussion done on actors; make an ABC triangle for the said conflict after forming small groups with six to eight persons to list the key issues related to attitude, behaviors and contradictions from the view point of that party.

4. In the middle of each triangle, write what the party sees as their most important needs and fears.

5. Compare the triangles, noticing similarities and differences between A, B and C.

6. Fort his exercise use only ABC triangle and types of violence only.

After the group work a group representative from each group presented a report on it.It was concluded that journalist should report reliable and unbiased information in a time of conflict and keep in mind that reporting is about "what" to report and "how" to report, which involves selection and responsibility and hence, high standards of ethics and principles especially when reporting on conflicts. Exploration

of the backgrounds and contexts of conflict formation of all the sides involved in the conflict, giving voice to the views of all parties from all levels, concepts of balance, fairness and accuracy in news reporting is necessary.

The trainer emphasised that the visible and invisible (minority) groups in society should receive proper coverage in the media with unbiased manner, journalists have to raise the issues of minorities and address collective issues of common interests and concern, which can contribute in building peaceful society. Peace journalism reminds them that they are doing a good work, and thus playing a positive role in their societies, by being ethical, responsible and unbiased.

It is important when covering hard news; reporters don't convey their own feelings, biases or prejudices in their stories. They accomplish this by using words or language that is neutral and avoids characterizing people or institutions in ways good or bad.

The reporter may have strong feelings about the subject. Nevertheless, they should interview or report supporters of the issues and those who oppose it and when he writes his story, they should convey both arguments in a neutral language, giving both sides roughly equal space.