Report ofMedia Training Workshop (Swat)

A three-day training workshop for mainstream media was conducted in Swat from 28th to 30 July 2017. This training was conductedas permanual developed for media training.All training sessions during training workshop were interactive and participatory.

Around twenty-sixmedia professionalsfrom various media outlets including electronic, print, online media and web blogs attended the training. Mr. JibranMehboob, KP Provincial Coordinator welcomed the workshop's participants. Mr. ShafqatMunir, President of JDHR,and a trainer of this workshop briefed the participants about the main objective of the training workshop.The trainer informed participants that this training aims to increase capacity of media professionals to improve the objectivity, responsibility, and inclusivity of their work.A round of introductions of the participants was conducted in the beginning of training session.

Day 1:

First Session:

Topic: Understanding National Action Plan 2015, Counter narrative for tolerance and Interfaith Harmony

The first session of the media training was around the topic of media content in line with the spirit of National Action Plan (NAP) 2015.Under this plan, the trainer discussed a number of media related NAP points. He informed the participants that Point 5 of the NAP emphasizes that state can take strict action against the literature, newspapers, and magazines, which promote hatred, decapitation, extremism, sectarianism, and intolerance. The trainer also stated that Point 11 declares ban on glorification of terrorists and terrorist organizations through print and electronic media.He commented that the provincial government and other authorities are already taking a number of steps to counter extremism. This plan envisaged countering hate speech and extremist material through the powers vested in the government authorities. PEMRA has banned all kinds of media coverage of banned outfits/organisations. Section 27 of the PEMRA Act prohibits broadcasting any programme, which promotes hatred among the people or disturbs public peace.

The media should support all the steps taken for implementation of national action plan so that we can defeat extremism and build peace in the society. We need to understand as to what is our role to implement NAP and how far we are fulfilling this responsibility.

MujahidTarwali, a senior journalist and Dawn Blogger, stated that the media

should leave the quest for ratings and work for devising code of ethics for self-accountability so that we can work together to promote and protect equal rights for everyone. He said that there is no doubt that the mainstream media has played an important role for effective implementation of NAP but we need to do more for building a peaceful and an inclusive society.

In the second half of the session 1, the trainer illustrated the definition, prospects, and challenges of interfaith harmony. The trainer urged that religious communities should embrace each other for the sake of achieving peace in the society.

The trainer was of the opinion that we need to recognize, preserve, and promote interfaith harmony. Harmony in the society can be attained through a principle of live and let live. All religions call for peace, tolerance, and harmony. The trainer emphasized that harmony is about co-existence; that means live and let others live. It is a way forward towards peace, and perhaps prosperity, as it builds diverse skills and capabilities of people from various faiths. Inter-faith harmony promotes peaceful co-existence among practitioners of various religious beliefs, aimed at eliminating the possibility of discord, violent or non-violent.

The major principle of interfaith harmony is that all religions are mutually acceptable per se in terms of their basic tenets as well as manifestations in human behaviour along with all ramifications of traditions and their evolution to the contemporary life. The trainer defined interfaith harmony dialogue as 'cooperative, constructive and positive interaction between people belonging to different faiths'. Interfaith harmony can be a pillar of social cohesion that is a key ingredient of a peaceful society. Major challenges in Pakistan regarding interfaith harmony were discussed in detail.

Mr. Shafqat explained a number of points related to interfaith dialogue, which contradicts withsupportive conditions of interfaith dialogue. He believed that interfaith dialogue is not an attempt of unifying the religions or producing a new religion by melting the religions in a pot.The trainer urged that dialogue is not a preaching activity as peaching refers a way of imposing teachingsrelated to any thoughts/ideas directly or indirectly. Dialogueisa state whereina follower of a

religion has a chance to express his/her own religion in a manner that he/she wants people to understand it rather than imposing any teachings but they alsooffer a similar chance toother members of religions. It is important for building a dialogue that people surrender a space for others so that people usethis space to practice or promote their own ideas/thoughts.

A group exercise related to inclusive society was carried out in the first session. In this exercise, participants were asked to identify challenges to inclusive media and how to overcome these challenges. Participants were divided into four groups. All the participants in their respective groups actively participated in this exercise. They pointed out a number of reasons/challenges to inclusive media. Media economy was thought to be oneone of the major challenges to inclusive media. Media economics are the media policies and practices of media industry. Media industry is more based on commercial/profit-based policies so they do not take care of people's interests that demand for role of media in promoting interfaith harmony.Focus on huge profit margins is also an obstacle for not serving minority issues. Media outlets are investing less in the quality of media content. The participants also identified various pressure groups including political parties as a challenge to media coverage of minorities.

Another challenge to inclusive media is lack of access of minorities to the media,

which creates a hurdle in gaining space in the media. Providing opportunities to minorities in the media is fundamental to creating aninclusive media. A group member said that lack of knowledge of minorities' religions among media producers, writers, and journalistscauses for limited representation of minority's voices. The participants expressed that our behavior associated with religious minorities in the form of stereotypes also reinforce and enhance negative portrayal of vulnerable segment of the society. Lack of resources is also a barrier in presenting true representation of minority population.

While sharing some solutions, participants stated that media organizations should raise professional standards, improve skills and promote fact-based reporting. Media should extend their outreach to each part of Pakistan where minorities are largely ignored. Journalists are in dire need of training in how to increase space of marginalized segments of society. There are some organizations that offer training of media workers but the number of such trainings is on spotty basis. Newsroom managers must support reporters who want to work on minority issues. Education system in Pakistan should also take part in this noble cause and encourage future journalists to find out the ways to raise the voice of marginalized groups.

Second Session: Inclusive and Objective Media reporting - Creating media space for minorities and marginalized groups

In the second session of media training, the topic under discussion was 'Inclusive and objective media reporting and role of Media for creating representation of marginalized groups'.

The trainer informed the participants that a critical role of the press is to disseminate factual information but it is being eaten away by news stories of elite class. Over the years, a few hundred elites consume 80% of media space and rest of the people are excluded from the media space.The remaining 20% space is ideally supposed to be utilised by media professionals to cater to the needs of common people. The trainer stressed on providinginclusive media, a media

space that includes all segments of Society. Inclusive media offers space for representation of marginalised or minority communities, women, children and people with disabilities. But it has been observed that in today's 24/7 media and race for rating, media professionals hardly care for people's space and hence the elites consume most of the remaining 20% space as well.

Another topic under discussion in the training was a media term 'Spinning/twisting'. The focus has been on how media professional use this approach for the vested interests. 'Spinning/twisting' is a technique that is used to make media discourse in favour of one's point of view.Sometime the public relations practitioners and media relations professional use this technique to protect their company's interests in the media if they face any crisis or any campaign in the media and otherwise. The trainer argued that media use this technique for the construction of false reality so it is important to avoid spinning or twisting the facts in media coverage of minority groups.

Day 2:

MsUzmaLatif was the trainer for the second day of the media training. She covered two important topics, **1) "Understanding identities" and 2) 'Stereotypes'**
In the first session, Ms. Uzma discussed in detail about the term 'Identity' and issues faced by the minorities on the basis of their identities. She explained the importance of identities in our society as they affect our personal and professional life style. She argued that people holdmultiple Identities at different points in time. She stated that people have multiple identitiesinternalized through socialization.She shared a number of common used stereotypes related to minorities, which are harmful for a peaceful society. Moreover, she also discussed several issues faced by religious minorities in Pakistan. She acknowledged that it is important to build upon commonalities rather than focusing on difference for peaceful Pakistan.

Day 3:

In the first session, MsUzmafocused on a topic of **'Understanding conflict, violence and Context for Sensitive Journalism.** The session was started with the discussion how the media contributes to conflict situation. On this topic, the trainer conducted an activity. In this activity, participants were divided into four groups**.**The participants were asked to analyze the role of media in a situation where they faced conflict in their area. Each group presented their work.

Second Session:

Topic: 'Interfaith harmony and role of Media for promoting a peaceful society'

In the first session of the training, the topic under discussion was 'interfaith harmony and role of Media for promoting a peaceful society'. Mr. Khalid Jamil and Mr. ShafqatMunir highlighted the significance of the role of media for achieving peace in society. Mr. ShafqatMunirinformed that it is important to learn different approaches for objective and accurate reporting which is useful for promoting interfaith harmony and respect for diversity in Pakistani society.The training participants agreed that the media can play a vital role in promoting dialogue that helps people to understand and respect different religions and cultures.

Due to diverse religio-ethnic composition of population of Pakistan, peace and interfaith harmony are the lynchpin to make our society inclusive. To bring peace in the society, the trainer said that it is important to learn how to betolerant, friendly, polite, and kind to each other irrespective of which faith we hail from. Moreover, peace is only possible if we are able to learn how to respect each other's religions. The trainer urged that there is dire need of a collective effort from all segments of life to promote tolerance and peaceful traditions for bringing radical changes in the society.

The trainer also shared some tips for media reporting on interfaith or minorities' issuesduring the training session.The members were of the view that we need to

understand that racial and ethnic stereotypes in media reporting may build negative perception aboutminorities, which may create hurdles in peace building. Media professionals should always abide by the ethical rules of accuracy, impartiality, humanity, and transparency. Media organizations should set up a monitoring system to check false or misleading information.

The trainer discussed that there is a gap between media and minorities, media don't know much about their festivals. Minorities have some complaints about the media that it gives low coverage to their festivals. So, newspapers should assign reporters to cover minorities' festivals and programs. The media should provide proper coverage to them according to their population.

The trainer also stated that journalists should avoid offending a minority group.Sometimes they don't aim to offend anyone purposely but it happens unknowingly. Some minorities have complaints that the media use slurs and derogatory phrases in their coverage. Journalists should not use someone's identity as a derogatory remark.

Third Session:

Topic: Skills and writing techniques

The third day of the training workshopcovered an important topic of "Skills and Writing techniques".The trainer explained that writing for media is different from common use writing style. There are some important writing techniques, which need to understand and adopt in daily media writings. For example, a news storyshould be written in an inverted pyramid style thatincludes two ingredients; i.e. Intro and Body. The most important part of any news story is 'Intro' as it offers a chance to hook the editors' eye but at the same intro should answer the readers' questions and hint at what's to come.The Editorial staffdoes have only thirty seconds for selection of any story. However, the trainer also discussed there are many other reasons for selection of any story, e.g. vested interest of the owner. Therefore, it is significant to learn some techniques how to write a new story.

In the inverted pyramid style of writing, an initial paragraph should contain all

the important and relevant details of the articles, followed by supporting or explanatory information. This writing style focuses on 5 W's and one 1 H, *i.e.* Who, What, Where, When, Why, *and* How. By using this style, journalist can summarize the article in a few sentences.

The trainer described that before writing any article, a journalist should do a comprehensive brainstorming exercise and collect all the information related to article. The trainer defined that a news story is a factual story about a person, place or event. He explained a difference between lapdog and watchdog journalism. Lapdog journalism refers news media as a conduit for the agenda of elite class of society, supporting and perpetuating social inequalities for their own profit. While watchdog journalism is a style of socially responsible journalists who inform the public about their rights. So, the trainer suggested for adopting watchdog journalism. The trainer said that neutrality was often considered as a basic journalism principle but at the same time, journalists should view reporting as a serious social responsibility.

The trainer stated that an ideal news story should range between 500-700 words and convey full message about the information. A news should be a fresh piece of information that interests the audience, and impact their life. The basic principles of news writing include 'Accuracy, Brevity and Clarity'. A false news story with unnecessary details undercuts public interest and trust.

The trainer said that media holds a unique position to inform the audience and has the ability to contribute towards peace building through direct or indirect initiatives by providing balanced and accurate information.Moreover, coverage of positive stories is also important step for peace building. Furthermore, there are some other ways for taking step towards peace building such as allocating some extra space to letters to the editor wherein organizations and general public can raise their views for interfaith harmony.

An exercise for learning various tips regardingmedia reporting of minorities and marginalized groups was conducted in the last session of the third day.This exercise replicated a news desk so that participants could work and learn at he same time. Four groups of the participants were made based on their working

experience in media organizations. For example, participants with working experience in print media were grouped together. All the groups presented their news products. Khalid Jamil gave hisanalytical views on the presentations along with the advice that the use of appropriate words is very important in the media And the use of inflammatory and provocative words should be avoided.

At the end of the media training, a certificate distribution ceremony was conducted. The journalists appreciated the JDHR's efforts for providing a platform where media professionals from various newspapers are trying to promote peace and harmony. The participants pledged to work together for increasing tolerance, respect, and mutual understanding among all faiths in Pakistan.