Key Findings
Baseline Study of the Perception of Youth about the role of Media in Promoting Dialogue for Peacebuilding

Search for Common Ground - Pakistan
BACKGROUND

Search for Common Ground commissioned a baseline study of the perception of youth about the role of Media in Promoting Dialogue for Peacebuilding. This is an edited version of the report that includes the key findings of the study.

Although the term Media caters for TV, radio as well as newspapers, however, for the purpose of the present research, it essentially refers to those sections of news media alone which are involved in opinion making. The data for the research was collected via a multi pronged approach which included content analysis of selected media outputs, key informant interviews, in-depth interviews as well as a survey from a sample of 500. The research was conducted between March and May 2012.

The key objectives of the study were to:

- Provide a qualitative & quantitative analysis of selected opinion pieces in TV, radio and newspapers to find out whether they are promoting peace, co-existence and non-adversarial approaches.
- Gauge the understanding of Media Professionals (Electronic & Print) about all the issues related to peace building.
- Determine the attitude of youth about the effectiveness of media in promoting a dialogue for peace building through in depth interviews of youth leaders.
- Determine the attitude of youth about the effectiveness of media in promoting a dialogue for peace building through a survey from a sample comprising of youth from all over the country.

The content analysis focused on the time period November 2010- November 2011 and focused on three forms of Mass Media i.e. television, radio and newspapers. The newspaper section comprised of a qualitative as well as quantitative content analysis of features in four leading Pakistani newspapers including, Dawn, The News, Jung and Nawai-Waqt. The final sample that was collected comprised of only 187 features which is a very minimal number considering the number of newspapers and their frequency. The content analysis of TV talkshows consisted of the assessment of prime time talk shows from the 8 leading TV news channels aired during the period 1/11/10 till 30/10/11. The programs included 50 Minutes (Geo News), News Night with Talat (Dawn News), Policy Matters (Duniya News), Faisla Aap Ka (Samaa TV), Such Tou Yeh hai (PTV), Bolta Pakistan (Aaj News), Front Line (Express News) and Off the record (ARY News). The total population of
the shows was 1223 which were not viewed in entirety. First, a data set was created and only those programs were viewed in entirety which covered any or all of the relevant aspects of conflict and youth. Thus, the final sample containing 60 programs was created.

The content analysis of radio programs focused on FM station because of their relative popularity amongst the youth and included FM 101, City FM 89, Radio ONE FM 91 and Power Radio FM 99. The analysis was based on the schedule of programming as the recordings of the shows were unavailable. Interestingly, almost 95% of the programming content is entirely composed of music.

The research also included interviews from key informants from amongst journalists as well as prominent youth representatives. The key informants belonging to the media included Aasma Sherazi (Samaa TV), Mazhar Abbas (ARY News), Syed Anwar-ul-Hasan (PTV), Najib Ahmad (FM 99), Javed Siddique (Nawa-i-Waqt) and Amir Waseem (Daily Dawn), and the key informants from amongst the youth were all office bearers of the Youth Parliament and included Sara Abdul Wadood Khan, Usama Riaz, Sahar Iqbal and Dr. Ali Raza.

The research also included a survey from youth belonging to the age group 18-29 to find out their perspectives of the peacebuilding efforts of the media. Using the non-probability quota sampling method, 500 respondents were selected on the basis of their domicile. The sample was taken from the educated youth currently staying in the federal capital for the purpose of education or employment and the quotas were formed on the basis of the percentage of total population from each province or region. The instrument comprised of 30 statements based on the 5 point Likert scale which was re-coded into a three-point scale for the final analysis to gauge clearer results.

The variables that were analyzed during the course of the research were the **Common Ground Principles** as developed by SFCG which include the principles of uniqueness and creativity, a solution oriented approach, respect for diversity, empathy generation, truth and objectivity, empowerment of all, positive behavior modeling, being issue centered rather than people centered. The CGA principles also encourage being grounded in grassroots community, being realistic and meaningful as well as being engaging, inspiring collaboration, being process oriented, providing a safe and inclusive space for discussion of difficult issues and finally, constantly striving to rise up to challenges, and at the same time evaluating and evolving oneself.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Keeping in mind the quota, 280 respondents were from Punjab (56%), 111 respondents were from Sindh (22%), 75 were from KPK (15%), 26 were from Baluchistan (5%) while 12 were from the Azad Jammu & Kashmir (2%).

It was found that 47% of the respondents often watched TV talkshows, 23% listened to radio talkshows while 42% read newspaper articles.

The entire data comprising of the content analysis, interviews and the surveys suggested that the following principles were being followed by the media to a large extent.

- Although most of the time media content repeats itself and follows fixed pattern however, it does contain some elements of uniqueness.
- Media on the whole is successful in generating empathy with Television being slightly more successful in this regard.
- Media is empowering to all if only to increase their own ratings by sensationalizing the problems of others.
- Media is involved in positive behavior modeling.
- Although national media has delegated the task of grassroots representation to smaller local media organizations yet the audiences are fairly satisfied with their performance.
- The media content is meaningful and effective in promoting thought.
- Media content is very entertaining and engaging.
- Although there were differences in the perceptions of the audiences and the media practitioners but as the audience is the final authority in this regard, it can be assumed that media has fairly realistic content.
- Further, although there were conflicting opinions yet in accordance with the audience’s opinions, it can be concluded that the media content is perceived as constantly, challenging, evaluating and evolving itself.
- The Media practitioners agree that they have not done enough but the audiences tend to disagree showing that the Media might have unwittingly led towards inspiring collaboration.
- Again there were conflicting findings but the survey respondents perceive media as is process oriented particularly with reference to the focus on healthy dialogue.
Greater emphasis has been placed on audience responses because the sample for content analysis was very small. In television, out of all the talkshows on TV, 8 of the most relevant programs had been selected but out of these only 5% had specific programs that contained aspects related to peace and conflict and their influence on youth. Similarly, out of all the articles in the newspapers, only 187 such articles could be found indicating that issues of conflict find little room in our mainstream media. Keeping in view this situation, greater focus was placed on audience surveys and key informant interviews.

Further, the data comprising of the content analysis, interviews and the surveys suggested that the following principles were not being followed by the media:

- **Media does not provide effective solutions to conflicts.**
- **Although the electronic media does bring diverse sections of the population to the forefront yet media’s overall role suggest that the media has not been completely successful in respecting diversity.**
- **The media does not truly follow the principles of truth and objectivity.**
- **Media is more focused on personalities as compared to issues.**
- **The media has not been very successful in providing a safe and inclusive environment for discussion of sensitive subjects.**
- **The data is inconclusive but there is evidence to suggest that the media has not been very effective in educating people about how to end conflict.**

Findings of the content analysis suggested that TV was more successful in promoting peacebuilding as compared to the newspaper and radio lagged even further behind. Further, all the key respondents pointed out that media was plagued by sensationalism and the ratings game but they were still very hopeful on the whole.

Computing all the responses of the respondents about all the variables, it was found that 65% of the respondents believe that media has been successful in promoting peace amongst its audiences.
MAIN FINDINGS

Media Usage

It was found that 47% of the respondents often watched TV talkshows, 23% listened to radio talkshows while 42% read newspaper articles.

Table 1: Youth’s Media Consumption Patterns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TV Talkshows</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Talkshows</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper Columns</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings of the Content Analysis

1. Both TV talkshows (36%) and newspaper features (9%) were not very much effective in building bridges, focusing on the commonalities between adversaries and inspiring collaboration.
2. TV talk shows (89%) appear to be better at capacity building and educating people on the process of conflict resolution as compared to newspapers features (9%).
3. TV Talk shows (69%) exhibited far more professional and high quality work as well as acknowledging that it needs to learn and reflect as compared to newspaper features (16%) showing that they were constantly evolving and evaluating.
4. It was found that more TV talkshows (89%) were far more solution oriented as compared to Newspapers (16%) because they were framing issues in terms of a potential, possible win-win outcomes.

5. Results showed that that TV talkshows (70%) were more often involved in humanizing all issues and parties and breaking down stereotypes and myths as compared to Newspaper features (17%) and were thus generating more empathy.

Table 2: Findings of the Content Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TV Talkshows</th>
<th>Newspaper Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inspires Collaboration</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constantly Evolving &amp; Evaluating</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solution Oriented</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy Generating</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respects Diversity</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour Modeling</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowering to All</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process Oriented</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grass roots</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue Centered</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe &amp; Inclusive</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Element of Uniqueness</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaningful</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truth Seeking &amp; Objective</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Again, there were greater instances where TV talkshows (75%) showed respect for and celebration of diversity present in a society as compared to newspapers (18%).

7. TV Talkshows (89%) are better at behaviour modeling by being able to provide positive role models who have successfully faced challenges and conflicts as compared to the newspaper features (22%).

8. It was found that TV Talk shows (76%) are better able to provide a forum for voices that are often left unheard and empowering the underprivileged as compared to newspapers (26%).

9. TV is a visual medium and is thus better able to engage and entertain the audience as compared to print thus TV talkshows were engaging 95% of the time while print features were engaging 30% of the time.

10. Newspaper features (33%) were found to be more process-oriented showing greater emphasis on the value of dialogue as compared to their electronic counterparts (9%).

11. It was found that TV talk shows (71%) by their very nature of being visual allow for a better and more effective projection of the grassroots levels in a community as compared to Newspaper features (36%).

12. TV talk (71%) shows were found to be more likely to be issue centered rather than people centered as compared to the newspaper features (39%).

13. Television talk shows (71%) have provided a far safer environment for discussion of issues and promoting mutual respect as compared to the newspapers (41%).

14. TV talkshows (64%) showed a greater desire and willingness to take risks, be unorthodox and unique while 47% newspaper articles had this quality.

15. It was found that TV shows (82%) were more active in raising consciousness and engaging in provoking thought without being judgmental or threatening as compared to newspaper articles (75%).

16. Newspaper features (84%) were found to be more truth seeking and objective as compared to TV Talk shows (67%) by using well-researched, accurate material, identifying issues and also maintaining a balanced approach.

17. It was found that 86% of the Newspaper features contained material which was relevant to the lives of the audiences while 85% of the sample TV Shows were realistic.
Findings of the Key Informant Interviews:

1. Journalists as well as the youth agreed that most of the media content did not contain aspects of uniqueness with the later asserting that media content mostly follows fixed patterns.

2. Most journalists agreed that media content does not often provide effective solutions to conflicts and the youth representatives agreeing with them went so far as to say that the media is actually creating conflicts rather than finding solutions for them.

3. There were divergent views about respect for diversity in media, the journalists agreed that although the picture is not very rosy at the moment, things are moving in the right direction while the youth leaders pointed out that media groups have their own set of biases.

4. Both the journalists and the youth leaders agreed that media generates empathy to increase ratings and although there are a few instances of stereotyping, they occur because of lack of training for the journalists.

5. There was a unanimous decision on the part of the journalists as well as the youth that the media was not properly following the principles of truth and objectivity.

6. Both the journalists and the youth agreed that the media empowers the underprivileged but some pointed out that the public does not want to see them or read about them very often which is why they are not brought to the forefront.

7. As far as behaviour modeling is concerned, both the journalists and the youth leaders were of the opinion that the media has by and large provided positive role models to the country.

8. A majority of the journalists as well as the youth leaders agreed that that media content often focused on personalities rather than on issues because of commercial pressures.

9. There were mixed views about grassroots representation, the youth leaders and the radio journalist agreed that there was adequate representation in this regard while the print and TV journalists stated that the market demands do not allow them to cover local community and culture effectively.

10. A majority of journalists and the youth leaders agreed that media content is meaningful and thought provoking though the issue of ratings does hamper their workings occasionally.
11. The journalists were of the opinion that the media cannot fully inspire collaboration for fear of aggravating the situation while the youth leaders also agreed that the media does highlight conflict areas but does not ensure that a common ground between adversaries is reached.

12. Again, it was found that both the journalists and the youth leaders were dissatisfied with media’s role in educating the masses about the consequences of conflict as well as the possible avenues for conflict resolution.

13. As far as being process oriented is concerned it was found that the journalists were satisfied with their own performance but believe that the fault lies with the parties involved in the conflict who are not willing to budge an inch and therefore make dialogue impossible. The youth leaders were of the opinion that the media is in a state of transition and the importance of dialogue has not been fully realized.

14. The journalists believe that they do their best to provide a safe and inclusive space for discussion of sensitive issues while the youth leaders vehemently disagree.

15. There was a unanimous decision on the part of the journalists as well as the youth that media content was extremely engaging and interesting for its audience, the only difference being that TV found to be the most engaging.

16. There were conflicting responses to the question about media content being realistic or not, some of the interviewees strongly agreed while others strongly disagreed.

17. Finally, there were conflicting responses from both the media professionals and the youth leaders to the question that the media content was constantly challenging, evaluating and evolving.

**Findings of the Survey:**

**Youth’s perception of Peacebuilding Principles Present in Media content**

1. A majority of the youth respondents (40%) were of the opinion that media does portray grass roots issues of the local community and culture effectively while 33% disagreed.

2. Further, a majority (40%) also agreed that media empowers all especially the under privileged.

3. A majority of the survey respondents (41%) also agreed that media content does generate empathy through its content while 35% disagreed.
4. 43% of the survey respondents agreed with the notion of positive behaviour modeling on the part of the media while 27% disagreed.
5. 46% of the respondents agree that the media is process oriented with appropriate focus being placed on constructive dialogue while 29% disagreed.
6. Survey findings also indicated that 48% of the respondents find the media content to be unique as compared to the 32% who stated that it is not so.
7. As for being challenging, evaluating and evolving, it was found that 53% of the survey respondents agreed that the media acts responsibly and professionally.
8. A majority of the survey respondents (54%) were also of the view that media does inspire collaboration by facilitating communication between conflicting parties while 20% disagreed.

Table 3: Youth Perception of Peacebuilding Principles Present in Media content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grass roots</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowering to All</td>
<td>41%</td>
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<td>Empathy Generating</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour Modeling</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process Oriented</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Element of Uniqueness</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constantly Evolving &amp; Evaluating</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspires Collaboration</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaningful</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>8%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
9. Further, a majority of the respondents (57%) are of the opinion that the media content is realistic as opposed to the 18% who disagreed.

10. Similarly, a vast majority of the survey respondents (66%) agreed that media includes meaningful and thoughtful content while only 14% disagreed.

11. A vast majority of the survey respondents (73%) agreed that media content was engaging and entertaining while only 10% disagreed.

Youth’s perception of Peacebuilding Principles Missing in Media content

12. Further, there was no conclusive evidence to support or reject the notion that the media respects diversity or not, with 31% thinking it does and 33% think it doesn’t.

13. According to 39% of the respondents, the media has not provided a safe and inclusive environment for effective dialogue to take place while 35% think otherwise.

14. Interestingly, 40% of the survey respondents believe that media content does not follow the principles of truth and objectivity while 33% have an opposing viewpoint.

15. 41% of the survey respondents also believe that media content is not solution oriented while 33% think otherwise.

Table 4: Youth Perception of Peacebuilding Principles Missing in Media content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respects Diversity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>39%</td>
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<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue Centered</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
16. Similarly, 52% of the respondent’s negated the notion that the media has performed effectively in educating people about conflict resolution while 28% believed that it has performed adequately.

17. A vast majority of the survey respondents (55%) disagreed with the notion that media content is issue centered rather than people centered while only 25% agreed with this notion.
CONCLUSION:
Successful peacebuilding can be said to be an amalgamation of all the common ground principles. Any form of media which encompasses most of those aspects would be said to be successful in this regard. Cumulating all the CGA principles focused during the content analysis, indicated that TV talk shows (84%) tend to be far more successful at peacebuilding as compared to their print counterparts (12%). Computing all the responses of the respondents about all the variables also gave a very strong and clear answer, 65% of the respondents believe that media has been successful in promoting a dialogue of peace amongst its audiences. This indicates that although majority feels the media outlets are in a state of infancy, yet they are moving in the right direction in terms of bringing about a positive change in society.

RECOMMENDATIONS
The findings of the present research have pointed out a few problem areas in the Pakistani context. In order to rectify them, the project needs to adopt a two pronged approach, firstly media professionals need to be provided training about how to handle conflict and how best to utilize their resources towards conflict resolution. On the other hand, media literacy trainings should be organized for the youth to enable them to analyze, evaluate, as well as create messages.