Most people think that FM Radio is all about song and cheerful radio jockeys. Well, I thought that too (despite being in the profession) but not anymore. People know their issues but do not find much support for them on the media. But I am trying to change that.

Husnain Raza is Radio Producer at ‘Mast FM 103 - Multan’, he recently conducted a radio talk show on Water and Sanitation conflict in district Multan.

Ever thought of water and sanitation issues become a cause of a prevailing social conflict among communities? Seems farfetched but this is what a producer and presenter at Mast FM 103 experienced and it was because of the “Primary Peace Building Training for FM Radio Producers and Presenters” that Husnain become able to understand the dynamic of the conflict. More importantly, it was because of the training that he was able to design and deliver such programs that highlighted the issue with a view to using that conflict as a rather community binding force for a collect and better cause.

“Most people when talk about an FM radio program, they envisage a program that talks about weather, fashion, media and other popular trends. They think that the radio jockeys are the people who should always talk in cheerful voices about the popular issues and intermittently play songs,” Husnain says. He adds that prior to training, he had thought the same and never thought about a social dimension to what he has been doing for years. He says that there was hardly any discussion on the social issues and arising conflicts because of these on the radio media in Multan and talking about “petty issues like community conflicts, Water and Sanitation, and littering etc.” was considered “out of sync.” It is also true that most among the radio jockeys talked about nearly the same things over and over again, Husnain says.

“The training enabled me to see a prevailing conflict from all possible sides as reporting and adding a few editorial spins here and there are not greatly challenging and demanding tasks,” Husnain states. The real challenge is that “you approach all conflicts from a viewpoint of building peace and achieving the common ground on conflicting issues.” This is something what the training made possible for him.

Husnain picked up the issue of Water and Sanitation that was causing a huge stir in the city and people were protesting on the streets. There were also many clashes that the media reported. “Instead of merely reporting on the issue, I took a leadership role, reached out to the suffering communities, spoke with their leaders and convinced them for a discussion on my radio channel. In the meanwhile, I approached Water and Sanitation Authority (WASA) officials and asked them to present their side also,” he says. When both sides came and sat together, they were able to find a solution that helped both sides. The communities ended their protests and withdrew until a certain date while WASA assured to fix most of the problems by then. “This was like magic happening right before my eyes as the protesting communities were getting violent by the day while WASA was getting stubborn. But when both sides came together and I moderated based on the techniques from the Common Ground Approach, the dynamic simply got changed – for better,” he says. “Who says that peace is not possible when there’s a social conflict?” He questions.

For more information, please contact infopk@sfcg.com