

Final Evaluation Report

Inspiring the Next Generation of Independent Media in Pakistan

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How to Cite this Report

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Key Themes

- #Pakistan
- #Gender&SocialInclusion
- #ConflictSensitivity
- #DigitalPeacebuilding
- #IndependentJournalism

Acronyms

CFWIJ	Coalition for Women in Journalism
CGA	Common Ground Approach
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
FN	Freedom Network
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HoD	Head of Department
IFJ	International Federation of Journalists
IP	Implementing Partner
JTP	Journalist Training Program
KII	Key Informant Interview
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
MC	Media Center
MTRC	Media Training and Research Center
NMD	Newly Merged Districts
OECD-DAC	Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
PEMRA	Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority
PIF	Peace Impact Framework
PC	Press Club
Search	Search for Common Ground
ToT	Training of Trainers

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1. CONTEXT

Introduction

The media sector in Pakistan has undergone a rapid transformation in recent decades, with the rise of private news channels and the establishment of the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) in 2002.¹ However, this growth has not come without challenges, particularly for women journalists who go through a multitude of challenges and impediments in the line of their duties. The growth of social media has provided new opportunities for women journalists, but it has also exposed them to cyberbullying, doxing, and trolling.² Besides, the gender gap in pay in the media sector is another hindrance that discourages women from pursuing careers in the media.³ Independent bodies such as the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and the Coalition for Women in Journalism (CFWJ) have raised their concerns about these challenges. Cultural inhibitions and a lack of training have also limited women's involvement in professional journalism, and they often face threats of sexual violence and online harassment.

The provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan are particularly challenging for women journalists owing to conflict, social-cultural barriers and limited opportunities. The lack of financial incentives often discourages women and youth from continuing their professional journey in journalism. These regions require support to develop an independent media sector and create an environment that promotes the expansion and safety of young aspiring journalists, including women. Press clubs in both provinces are in high need of training and reforms, as they often face forced closures, violent attacks, and targeted threats. In this regard, the lack of representation of women journalists as members of press clubs is also a major obstacle to their advancement.

Project Overview

Search for Common Ground (Search) supported the implementation of the project 'Inspiring the Next Generation of Independent Media in Pakistan,' to support the growth of independent and diverse media in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. With a planned project duration of two years, the project implementation period was cut short to one year to account for operational challenges resulting from government administrative regulations. The project focused its work on local universities and press clubs to support the next generation of independent journalists. This project supported the growth of independent and diverse media in these provinces by increasing the capacity of young journalists, particularly young women, in independent and conflict-sensitive reporting; and fostering an enabling environment for the professional advancement of women in media.

¹ <http://www.moib.gov.pk/Pages/178/PEMRA>

² <https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/blog/detail/category/labour-rights/article/pakistan-harassment-of-women-journalists-perspectives-politics-action>

³ <https://www.hilal.gov.pk/her-article/detail/NDQ1OA==.html>

The overall goal of the project is to advance women and youth-led independent media in these two provinces. It had two main objectives:

Objective 1: Promotion of practices of conflict-sensitive journalism by young journalists and university media departments. The **two outcome statements** for objective 1 aimed at institutionalizing conflict-sensitive journalism in the media departments' curricula of the targeted universities, increased access to resources for journalists, and capacity building of journalists to champion conflict-sensitive journalism. Five major activities under objective 1 are mostly related to the training of journalists and media mentorships and fellowships.

Objective 2: Fostering an enabling environment for the professional advancement of women in independent media. The **two outcome statements** for this objective focused on support for women in media, and making women journalists feel safer and confident at their workplaces. Different activities contributing to these outcomes were training on gender sensitivity, press club reform initiatives and women-focused networks.

From a geographical perspective, the project was implemented in nine districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and six districts of Balochistan. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, these nine districts included seven Newly Merged Districts (formally known as Federally Administered Tribal Areas) namely Bajaur, Khyber, Kurram, Mohmand, Orakzai, North Waziristan and South Waziristan as well as Peshawar and Dera Ismail Khan. In Balochistan, the six targeted districts were Quetta, Qilla Saifullah, Pashin, Khuzdar, Sibi and Chaghi.

To implement the project activities, Search worked with three implementing partners:

- Media Teaching Resource Center (MTRC);
- Media Center (MC); and
- Freedom Network (FN).

As part of the academic engagement, the project collaborated with three universities out of which two are based in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and one is in Balochistan. These are the University of Peshawar, Gomal University and the University of Balochistan.

Other key stakeholders engaged in the projects are the press clubs and media houses. These press clubs are based in the 15 targeted districts whereas media houses are mainly located in Peshawar, Dera Ismail Khan and Quetta.

Through its multi-prong engagement approach, Search successfully completed the project despite operational challenges faced at the project rollout time which was also catered through a nine-month extension till June 30, 2023.

Our Approach to the Assignment

The evaluation followed the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development - Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) evaluation criteria i.e., relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. The evaluation also collected information on three Peace Impact Framework (PIF) indicators under the themes of Physical Violence,

Personal Agency and Institutional Legitimacy. GLOW adopted a mixed-method approach involving both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The data collection employed participatory approaches, ensuring all marginalized groups including youth and women, and all other relevant stakeholders including beneficiaries, key government officials, partner staff such as Search, Freedom Network, Media Center, Media Training & Research Center, and trainers and mentors in the target hubs were included. The evaluation team interviewed a diverse and gender-inclusive group of respondents for the quantitative survey, key informant Interviews, and In-depth Interviews (see Section 2 - Methodology for details). Gender, disability, and Do No Harm remained cross-cutting themes and were carefully considered during data collection and reflected in every aspect of the analysis and reporting. The overall approach followed by GLOW adhered to Search's guiding principles of inclusive and effective participation, conflict sensitivity and Common Ground approaches. To avoid any communication barriers during interactions with the diverse participants speaking multiple languages, as part of this assignment, the research team included Balochi-speaking, Brahvi-speaking, and Pashto-speaking members as part of the data collection team. Overall, this approach helped to comprehensively cover all aspects of the evaluation.

2. METHODOLOGY

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the final evaluation was to document the project performance in terms of advancing women- and youth-led independent media in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan through this project. To serve this purpose, the key evaluation questions were based on OECD-DAC criteria, reflected in table 1 below:

Table 1: Key Evaluation Questions

Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent is the project relevant to the current conflict dynamics vis-a-vis the media landscape in KP and Balochistan? If needed, the scope of the evaluation may be further elaborated by the evaluator in the inception report. - To what extent the project interventions met the needs of women and youth journalists in the target areas? - How inclusive was the selection process (from gender, and ethnicity perspective) of the participating journalists?
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Did the activities achieve targeted results in relation to the stated objectives/results according to the log frame? - To what extent did the project affect the resources and capacity of press clubs, journalists and universities to practice and promote conflict sensitive journalism? - To what extent the project was able to promote the practice of conflict-sensitive journalism by participating young journalists and university media departments? - To what extent was the project able to foster an environment where women journalists can practice the media profession safely and independently? Is there any evidence of women journalists being supported by mainstream media actors, including their male counterparts? - What role did the project play to help women journalists feel more confident and safer in their work?
Intermediate Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent has the project or program generated, or is expected to generate, positive or negative, intended or unintended, high-level effects in the professional lives of women and youth journalists? - In what ways, if at all, has the project contributed to promoting the role of youth and women in the media in KP and Balochistan? - Is there any evidence of integration of conflict sensitivity in the journalism landscape in the target regions?
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have they taken steps to ensure sustainability of the results post-project? If yes, what does it include? If not, why not? - What are the signs that the program or its components will continue after external funding ends? - Is there any evidence of local partners, universities, press clubs or government actors taking ownership (on-going or planned) of the project initiatives and continuing in the post-project period? - Is there any evidence of institutionalization (formally or informally) of conflict sensitive journalism in the curriculum by the departments or professors in the target universities?
Lessons learned and good practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Were there any significant changes in the project design or the implementation context? - What were the reasons for these? - What were the major lessons learned from this project? - What were the innovative approaches/good practices used, If any? - Is there any potential of replicability and scaling-up (full or partial) of the project in the same locations or in other locations in Pakistan?

Data Collection and Analysis

The evaluators used a mixed methods approach for data collection. This consisted of collecting both secondary and primary data, as well as qualitative and quantitative data. The evaluators conducted a desk review, key informant interviews (KIIs), in-depth interviews (IDIs), and a survey with project beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. Additionally, evaluators developed case studies to better showcase the impact of the project. The data collection involved:

- Participating and Non-Participating Journalists
- Search team in Pakistan, MTRC staff, FN staff, and Media Center
- Trainers and mentors
- Media house owners
- Press club officials
- Media department faculty

The following figure 1 below summarizes the tasks that were performed under this evaluation:

All quantitative and qualitative data gathered from the field were triangulated to address the desired output and to develop meaningful conclusions and recommendations. Data analysis was conducted utilizing the relevant software including CSPRO, SPSS, and MS Excel. Analyzed data is presented in the forms of tables, charts and graphs. Through the analyzed data, critical observations are made, key findings are prioritized based on the OECD/DAC criteria, trends in data are spotted, and finally reasoned conclusions are arrived at and recommendations formulated. The data analysis focused on deriving results against the various research questions for this evaluation and informed the results for the log frame.

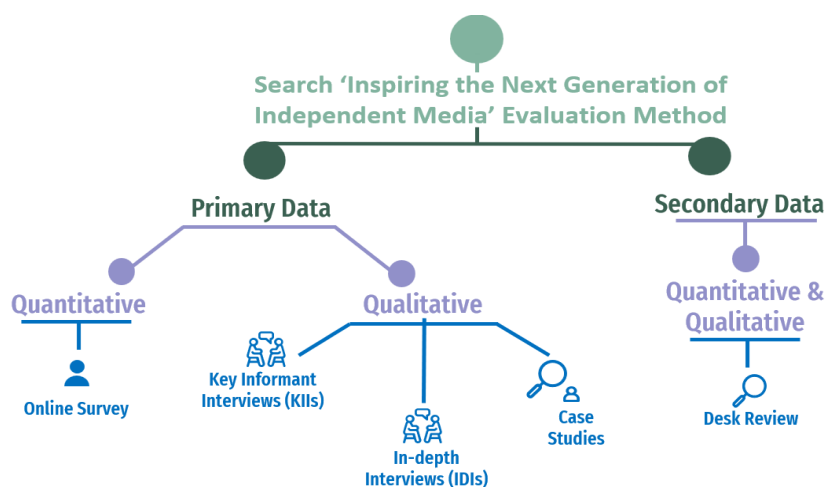


Figure 1: Data Collection Approaches

Sampling and Representation: The sampling approach ensured that the sample was diversified and representative. The sample covered all 15 project districts from both the provinces. From a gender perspective, both women and men were included in the evaluation. The qualitative data covered all the stakeholders including all of the Search's partners, universities and press clubs as well as mentors and trainers who were part of the project. From a quantitative data perspective, the evaluation was fully representative of the target beneficiaries where survey findings yielded statistically significant results at a 95 percent confidence level and a 5 percent margin of error. A screening question was added to the survey tool to differentiate between participating and non-participating

journalists. For this purpose, an online survey was conducted with participating journalists who were part of the journalist training program. Further, a statistically representative sample was drawn from non-participating journalists who were affiliated with the three universities. The survey also gathered quantitative information about the project from the participants and the evaluation team ensured the relevant indicators from PIF were covered as part of the survey questionnaire.

Table 2: Sample Size Achieved During Evaluation

Data Collection Tool	Participants	Description	Number
Qualitative ((KII)	Search and Partners	Search and all three partners (MTRC, FN and MC) were interviewed	7
Qualitative (KII)	Academia	All three universities (University of Balochistan, University of Peshawar, and Gomal University) were interviewed	3
Qualitative (KII)	Press Club Leadership	All press clubs covered with one interviewee per press club per district	15
Qualitative (IDI)	Trainers / Mentors	Over half of the trainers/mentors interviewed	5 (3 women)
Qualitative (IDI)	Press Club Members	All press clubs covered with one interviewee per press club per district	15 (1 women)
Qualitative (Case Study)	Participating Journalists	Case studies from both provinces collected	5 (2 women)
Quantitative (Survey)	Participating Journalists	Of a total of 60 journalists, the survey sample presented 95 percent confidence and a 5 percent margin of error.	54 (26 women)
Quantitative (Survey)	Non -Participating Journalists	Of an estimated 5,000 media students/journalists in the target districts, the survey sample presented 95 percent confidence and a 5 percent margin of error.	360 (97 women)

Limitations

Except for some minor operational limitations (see Table 3 below), there were no major limitations that could have affected the evaluation findings and scope. Table 3 below shows three minor operational challenges and their mitigation measures.

Table 3: Limitations and Mitigation Measures

LIMITATIONS		MITIGATION MEASURE	
Geographical Spread of the Beneficiaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The project target areas were far away from each other, making it difficult to do face-to-face data collection from the beneficiaries. 	Remote data collection modalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » To cover distance-related challenges, KIIs and the end-line survey were conducted via online modes including phone, WhatsApp and Zoom.
Data collection delays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Some of the participating journalists were not available at the proposed time/date, making it more challenging to collect data from them. » Universities were closed for summer vacation making it difficult to reach students from media and journalism departments. 	Flexibility of data collection coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Multiple follow-ups were made to ensure their views are captured and included as part of the study. » The data collection period was extended and the snowball technique was employed to reach students from media and journalism departments ensuring their participation in the evaluation.

EVALUATION REACH

DIRECT PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS IN EVALUATION

104

MEN: 72

WOMEN: 32

NON-PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS⁴ IN THE EVALUATION

360

MEN: 263

WOMEN: 97

TOTAL PARTICIPANTS IN EVALUATION

464

MEN: 335

WOMEN: 129

⁴ In the case of this evaluation, all 360 non-program participants who were surveyed were young media students from the three targeted universities.

3. FINDINGS

As stated earlier, the project had two objectives, whereas each of the two objectives had two outcomes. The findings are presented for each of these four outcomes.

Finding 1 – Outcome Statement 1.1 (Institutionalizing conflict-sensitive journalist)

(Outcome Statement 1.1: Targeted local universities institutionalize conflict-sensitive journalism in their media department curricula.)

To achieve this outcome, the project conducted three main sets of activities which included: (i) consultative workshops with the three partner universities, (ii) Training of Trainers (ToT) on conflict-sensitive journalism and (iii) a journalist training program. All three activities were completed.

All activities as part of outcome 1.1 were found to be highly relevant. The targeting of the project by focusing on women journalists makes this relevance even more prominent, where the Barrier Analysis⁵ that was conducted at the start of this project by the project reported around 20,000 working journalists in Pakistan of which only 750 (or 3.75%) were women across the country while only seven women were present in Balochistan– where this project alone produced 28 women journalists in the 15 target districts who have the potential to become working journalists. During key informant interviews, the participants from the press clubs mentioned the very difficult context for journalists' work in these two provinces. These key informants mentioned it is very challenging to report independently while not increasing risk to personal safety. Women and young journalists are at higher risk because of their gender or lack of experience and training or both. The very absence of women from the field of journalism is due to these barriers and difficulties, hindering their participation. The respondents confirmed that this project helped to cater for the needs of both young and women journalists making it highly relevant from the perspective of conflict dynamics in these two provinces. More so, the project was inclusive, as reflected during the key informant interviews with representation from all 15 districts, linguistic groups (Pashto, Balochi and Brahi) and women journalists as part of the project. This not only provided an opportunity for these young journalists to learn through formal engagements but also mingle with each other thus helping them create new professional networks.

From an effectiveness perspective, the project achieved targeted results (See Table 7 – log frame targets and results) concerning the outcome 1 stated objectives and results as mentioned in the log frame. There are also clear signs the project positively affected the capacity of press clubs, journalists and universities to practice and promote conflict sensitive journalism. For example, there are early indications of progress achieved towards institutionalizing changes in the curricula which, in the evaluators' opinion, even at best of times is a difficult, time-consuming and long process. This was most visible in

⁵ Barrier Analysis Inspiring the Next Generation of Intendent Media in Pakistan, Search for Common Ground (July 2021)

the case of the University of Balochistan. Some encouraging signs were observed when the University of Balochistan started integrating conflict sensitive journalism as part of their teaching approach to students in the 8th semester. This was formalized once it was reviewed at the Board of Studies Meeting⁶. This initiative was spearheaded by the Head of the Mass Communications Department (HoD) who was also a participant in the ToT. Overall, the project worked closely with the mass communications and journalism departments of all three universities to leverage their expertise and outreach to young journalists. Senior staff of the implementing partner reported that similar efforts were being pursued with Gomal University in Dera Ismail Khan. Formal integration of the course within university curricula may likely happen in the future. It is also important to mention that the project experienced start-up delays due to several factors such as COVID-19 and delay in securing necessary administrative permissions, which impacted the pace of implementation and activities were squeezed into a shorter implementation span. Hence, limited time was available for engagement with the universities. The incorporation of conflict-sensitive journalism in the media department curricula of local universities has significantly enhanced the quality and relevance of journalism education, fostering a new generation of journalists who approach their work with greater awareness and sensitivity to conflict-related issues. This strategic initiative not only equips students with essential skills but also instils a sense of responsibility in reporting on conflict, contributing to a more informed and ethical media landscape.

The project was able to promote the practice of conflict-sensitive journalism by participating in young journalists and university media departments. The survey findings show the overall success of the Conflict Sensitive Journalism Training which is further supplemented by the desk review of monitoring and project data. As a result of the training, based on the post-test results, an increase of 118.9 percent was observed as compared to the pre-test value of 34.3 percent, among the participating journalists' knowledge of conflict sensitive journalism⁷. The endeavor to institutionalize conflict-sensitive journalism within local universities has created a palpable shift in the attitudes and practices of faculty and students alike. As a qualitative finding, it is evident that this inclusion has led to more engaged and critical discourse within academic settings, promoting a culture of responsible reporting. The commitment of universities to this initiative signifies a lasting impact on the future of journalism, as students graduate with a deep understanding of the importance of conflict sensitivity in their profession.

“Everything about the training was based on practical aspects and has given me confidence that pursuing journalism is the right decision for me. This training boosted my skill and confidence in interacting with the senior journalists. I was earlier afraid of what the future holds for a student of journalism like me who lives in a tribal area, whereas now due to this platform, I have confidence in my skills and I am sure that I will be able to flourish in the field of journalism” A participating journalist from KP sharing her experience⁸

⁶ Key-Informant Interview, IPs.

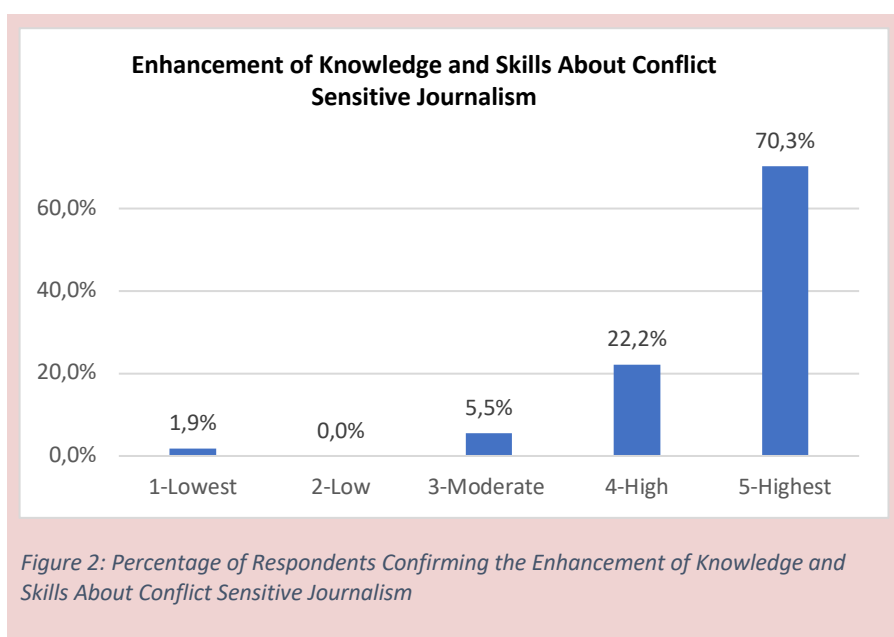
⁷ Source: Final JTP report, and Final Monitoring Report

⁸ Source: Final Monitoring Report

The activity covered five themes and each theme was covered over a period of two days and consecutive training events were organized. It was a challenge to organize a 10-day training, while at the same time, it was not practically possible to split the training into smaller components due to the very short timeframe of the project. The on-the-ground situation related to the presence of female journalists in the press clubs in the 15 districts was worse than expected with most press clubs having no active female journalists. Hence, the project was to make additional efforts to identify young journalists from the target districts, including from the university departments. One respondent from the press clubs mentioned that it is very difficult for anyone to work as a journalist in the conflict zones in Pakistan, let alone women journalists. As a result, there are very few women journalists who work in this field. To overcome the challenge, the project increased the age limit from 35 years to 40 years for participants to take part in the activities, which helped to reach the intended numbers among the target groups. This led to a challenge by having some journalists with more experience as part of the selected group while others were new to the field. Maintaining the right balance between theory and practice was another challenge that the trainers had to juggle during the training modules. This challenge was overcome by following a consultative process engaging all implementing partners, Search staff, and relevant universities and press clubs during the module development.

“There was no mention of conflict-sensitive journalism throughout my university journey, even informally. Now our professors speak about it in the training. Since leaving the university, I have been working as a journalist in the field for a few years but this training was the first time I came to learn about this concept.” A study participant from Balochistan shared his experience

The success of all these efforts is reflected in the survey findings. As can be seen in Figure 2, 92 percent of the participating journalists confirmed the enhancement of knowledge and skills related to conflict-sensitive journalism. This is reflective of the fact that the training courses consisted of both theoretical and practical teaching methods, both of which were equally effective. Moreover, it is also reflective of the expertise of the trainers which allowed the participants to gain a clear understanding followed by correct application. One training participant



mentioned that even though she formally studied journalism, most of the content in the training was new to her. She mentioned that she was not even introduced to these concepts highlighting the relevance of the project capacity building activities.

Figure 3 shows 77.8 percent of the participating journalists believed that the project promoted the practice of conflict-sensitive journalism highlighting their understanding of both the relevance and importance of this concept, especially about the contextual needs of Pakistan. They confirmed that the project helped them to promote the practice of conflict sensitive journalism. According to them, this was mainly made possible as they were never exposed to the idea of reporting from a conflict-sensitive perspective. Similarly, 74 percent of the participants confirmed their increased ability to analyze and interpret conflict-related information. One of the training participants shared that their formal education mainly focused on memorizing concepts only. However, the training helped him to develop his ability to analyze and interpret data and information, especially keeping in view the conflict dynamics. Thus, the project was successful in producing conflict-literate journalists who are now equipped to analyze information through a conflict-sensitive lens. This aligns also with the outcome level findings reflected from project and monitoring documents, where 88.6 percent of the media products produced by the participating journalists meet the minimum standard⁹ of conflict sensitivity.

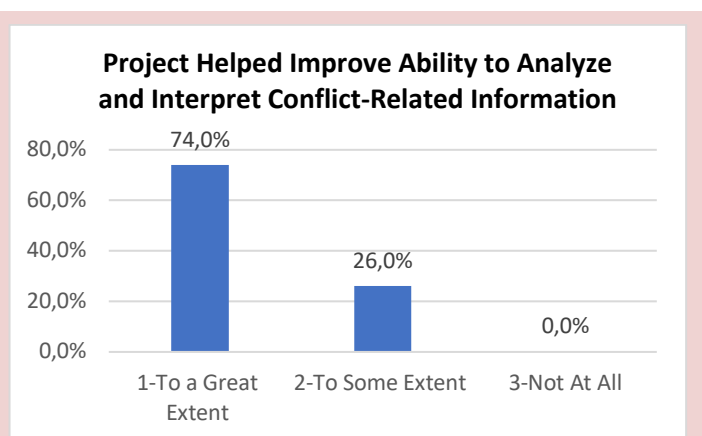
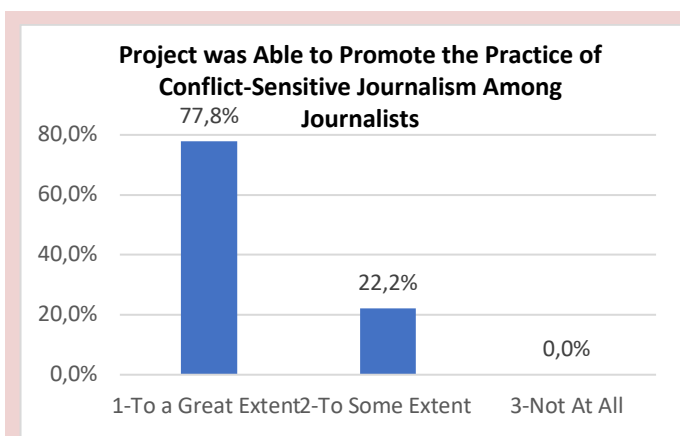
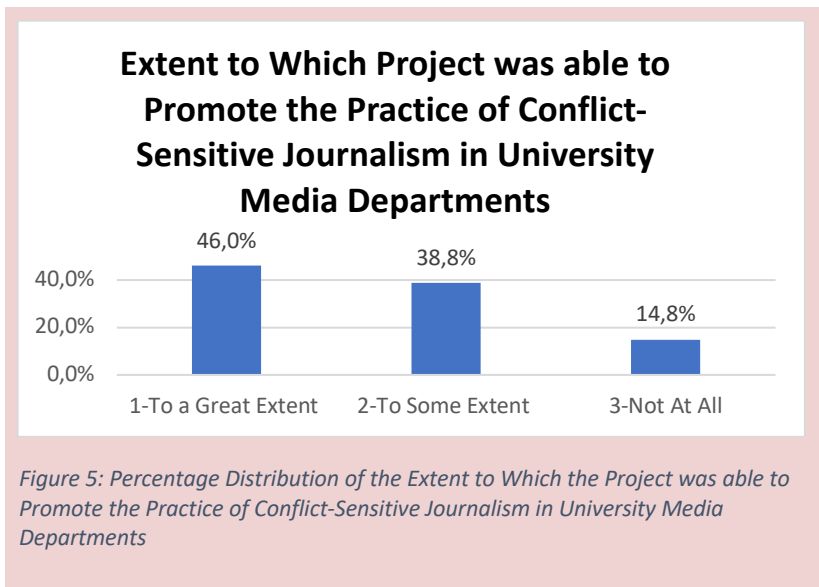


Figure 3: Percentage Distribution of the Extent to which the Project was able to Promote the Practice of Conflict-Sensitive Journalism Among Journalists

Figure 4: Percentage Distribution of the Extent to Which the Project was able to Improve the Ability to Analyze and Interpret Conflict-Related Information

⁹ These five standards are (i) Truth and Accuracy, (ii) Independence, (iii) Fairness and Impartiality, (iv) Humanity, and (v) Accountability.

Additionally, figure 5 illustrates the extent to which the project was able to promote the practice of conflict sensitive journalism in university media departments. According to one student, the media departments focus on content which does not include conflict-sensitive journalism into account. As a result, the graduating students are not equipped to operate and report safely in the sensitive environment. The evaluation findings indicate that 46 percent of the respondents mentioned that the project promoted the practice of conflict sensitive journalism 'to a great extent' while 38.8 percent said it 'to some extent'. Around 14.8 percent of the respondents stated that the project was not able to promote conflict sensitive journalism.



“Even after my experience of over 35-40 years working as a journalist, I was unable to define ‘conflict’ or relate its role in ‘reporting’. Therefore, you can well imagine the significance of this training, especially for the younger lot of journalists. I’d say these project activities have helped fill a huge void that existed within the current media landscape of KPK.” Male Press Club Leadership KII

Overall, evaluation findings reflect the results achieved as part of the outcome 1.1 achieved the intended purpose. As part of the intermediate impact linked with the key activities as part of this outcome, it is likely more young journalists, including women, will practice conflict sensitive journalism in the two provinces experiencing conflict. These participating women and youth journalists are better capacitated and hence more likely to succeed in their professional lives. The universities have integrated conflict sensitivity into their learning frameworks thus promoting conflict-sensitive journalism among media students. This is also a key sustainability feature that will help to ensure the sustainability of the results post-project even when external funding ends. This is also reflective of the fact that local actors especially universities are taking ownership of the project initiatives. These universities in the post-project period are institutionalizing, both formally or informally, conflict sensitive journalism in their curriculum. Even at the personal level, the participating journalists will continue to employ the skills they learnt in their professional lives making it more likely for them to operate in the demanding and conflict-affected environment of the two provinces.

Finding 2 – Outcome Statement 1.2 (access to resource and capacity building)

(Outcome Statement 1.2: Young journalists in the target districts have increased access to resources and capacity building to champion conflict-sensitive journalism in their work.)

The project provided 64 media mentorships to the participating journalists while 45 of them were provided with fellowship opportunities. Further, 60 journalists developed stories during the mentorship and 45 journalists developed stories during the fellowship, following responsible journalistic practices and reviewed and approved by the mentors. The conflict-sensitive criteria were developed in consultation with mentors and provided to the journalists for the development of all media stories. This set of criteria will help to promote conflict-sensitive journalism even after the project's closure. Out of the stories developed, 53 stories of the mentorship and 40 stories of the fellowship conformed to conflict-sensitive journalism criteria under the project, as referenced earlier, amounting to 88.6 percent of all stories¹⁰. These project interventions, as part of this outcome, were highly relevant as they met the needs of women and youth journalists in the target areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan where they had limited capacity-building opportunities related to conflict-sensitive journalism. The mentorship support to the targeted journalists was provided through five mentors. The media mentorship allowed the young journalists to learn from senior journalists, a feat otherwise not available to them as shared by the young journalist during the evaluation. Further, the media fellowship opportunities equipped the participating youth to have the necessary tools to develop stories. The project participants confirmed both mentorship and fellowship activities increased access to resources and capacity-building opportunities to them. It is important to consider only 26 percent of female students in the Barrier Analysis reported to be to practice journalism, thus by having these opportunities, they are now more likely to join the field of journalism.

Overall, the project activities were effective and have been widely appreciated by the project beneficiaries. There were no dropouts and training participants acknowledged gains in terms of new ideas, concepts, and skills. Figure 6 below further supports these findings as 94.4 percent of participants said the project contributed to their overall growth as a journalist. This suggests that the project was both relevant to the needs of journalists working in the target areas as well as highlighting the effectiveness of project interventions in contributing towards the overall development of participating journalists. This is an important finding given in the Barrier Analysis 71 percent of the journalist mentioned that they have not received any kind of training for their career growth and professional development. With both target provinces being major conflict zones, this project was the need of time, as 87 percent (See figure 7) of the participating journalists confirmed having all or a significant part of their needs as a journalist met through project activities. This also explains the negligible dropout rate, which emphasizes the innovative nature of the activities due to which participant engagement remained consistent and active. One such innovative aspect according to one IP, was the teaching of safety and security during the journalist training program. The post-test carried out among participants of the safety and security training (for example), resulted in a significant

¹⁰ Source: Final Monitoring Report

increase in knowledge¹¹, with an increase of 55.5 percentage points, with 88.2 percent of participants answering correctly during the post-test (pre-test value 32.7%). This training resulted in the highest increase in knowledge as compared to the other themes under the training and was also highlighted by the participants as being the topic, they found most useful¹². Some of the aspects that these journalists mentioned could have been further strengthened were their linkages with international media such as BCC, CNN, DW or recruiters and orientation on the use of artificial intelligence tools in journalism. Based on the key informants' interviews with the training participants, engagement with the experienced and senior mentor journalists helped them to discuss ideas for their stories, refined and reassured them that they were doing the right things and proceeded with confidence in their pursuits concerning their stories. The qualitative findings also confirm that the provision of increased access to resources and capacity-building opportunities for young journalists in the target districts has nurtured a transformative shift in their approach to journalism. These young professionals have demonstrated an enhanced ability to report on conflict-related issues with nuance, ethical responsibility, and a keen understanding of local dynamics. This qualitative finding underscores the profound impact of investing in the next generation of journalists, empowering them to play a pivotal role in fostering more informed and peace-oriented media narratives.

“To create one of the three stories I’ve produced so far, I travelled to Sohrab Road by myself, which is a highly conservative area where you’d hardly find any women. Moreover, even though I lost my way a little, I managed to locate the library where I confidently interviewed, interacted and photographed men as there were hardly two or three women present there. I remember I was trembling on the inside, but I remained cognizant of what our mentors had told us about never letting fear be apparent on our faces.” Female participants from Balochistan

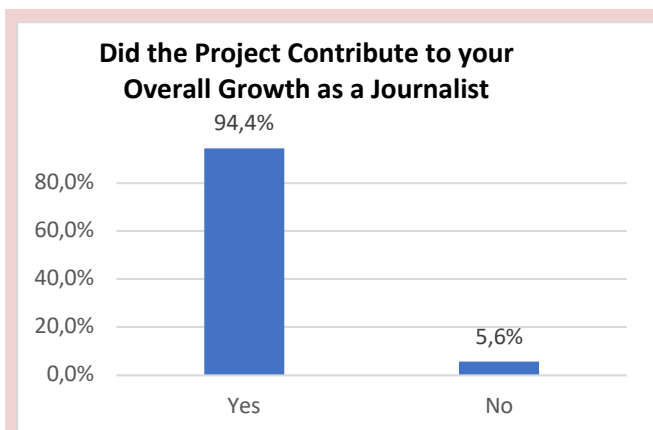


Figure 6: Percentage of Respondents Confirming/Negating Project Contribution Towards the Overall Growth of Journalists

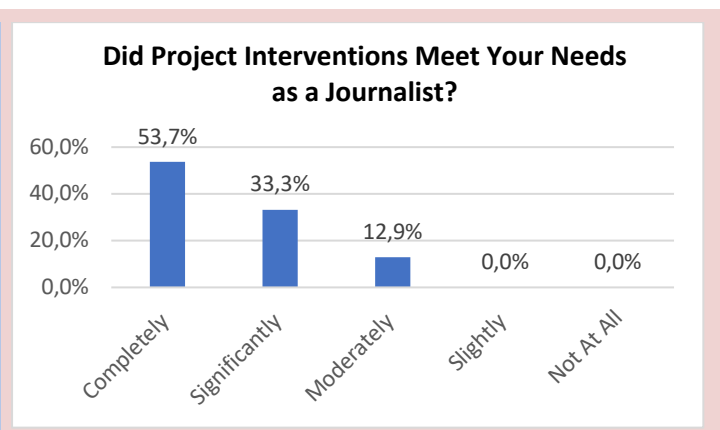


Figure 7: Percentage of Respondents Confirming Having Their Needs Met Through Project Interventions

Overall, the findings indicate that 92.6 percent (see Figure 8) of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that the project has been able to increase the opportunities to

¹¹ Key-Informant Interview, IPs.

¹² Source: Final Monitoring Report

practice and grow as independent journalists. This was made possible as a result of mentoring opportunities with established journalists thus providing networking opportunities for the participating journalists and supporting them in developing their own stories during the mentorship program. The fellowship also meant these journalists could produce stories independently with necessary equipment in hand, such as microphones, and phones for videography and recording. Having already gone through the mentorship, these journalists now have more opportunities to practice and grow as independent journalists. The participating journalists produced stories and published them through print, electronic and social media. Discussions with these participating journalists confirmed that this would not have been possible without their engagement in the project, which once again reflects the effectiveness of the project activities. Recipients of the equipment were highly satisfied and have used these gadgets to create various media products at both local and international levels.¹³ From a conflict sensitivity perspective, a decision was also taken to provide the same assistance to all targeted fellows to avoid any conflict among recipients. Through the targeted efforts to provide resources and capacity-building initiatives, the young journalists in the specified districts have not only gained valuable technical skills but have also evolved into advocates of conflict-sensitive journalism. This qualitative insight reveals a positive change in their perspectives and practices, as they actively embrace the principles of responsible reporting. The result is a more profound and sustainable impact on their communities, as these journalists emerge as catalysts for positive change within the media landscape

From an intermediate impact perspective, the findings illustrated in Figure 9 indicate that 64.8 percent of the participating journalists shared that they felt equipped and supported 'to a great extent' to advance conflict sensitive journalism. The results indicate that the project interventions have been successful at improving the understanding of journalists regarding

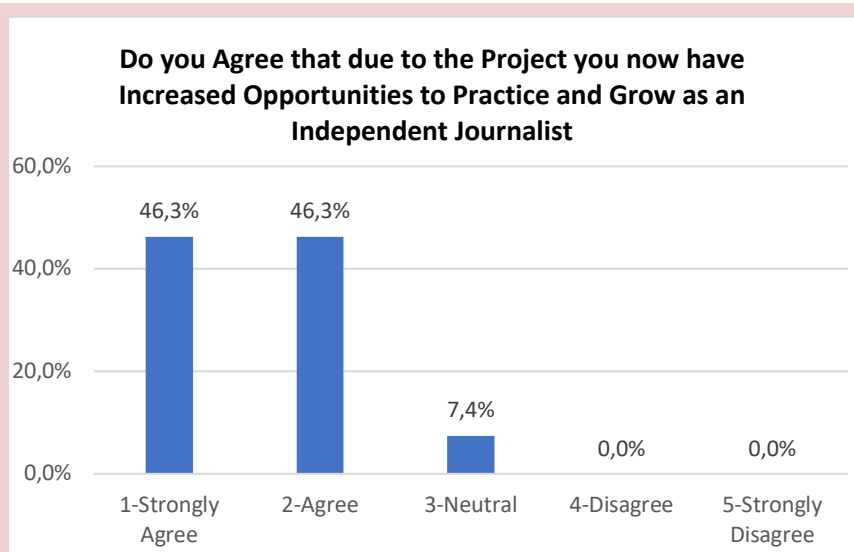


Figure 8: Percentage Distribution of Respondents affirming/negating having Increased Opportunities to Practice and Grow as Independent Journalists due to Project Intervention

conflict-related information and have empowered and supported them to promote conflict-sensitive journalism. During key informants' interviews, the women journalists mentioned that they were alone in their struggle to succeed in professional life before taking part in the project activities. They neither have the equipment, skills, networks, nor

¹³ Nasir Hussain from Para Chinaar Press Club is creating a series of 10 stories for a local media house

any seniors to help them to succeed in professional life. These challenges were addressed comprehensively by the project making them better equipped and more confident to pursue their dreams.

Overall, the project contributed to promoting the role of youth and women in the media in both Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. The stories produced by the 60 participating journalists adhered to the principles of conflict-sensitive journalism by avoiding reporting on one side of the conflict and including the interests and opinions of other affected individuals and groups as well. This included

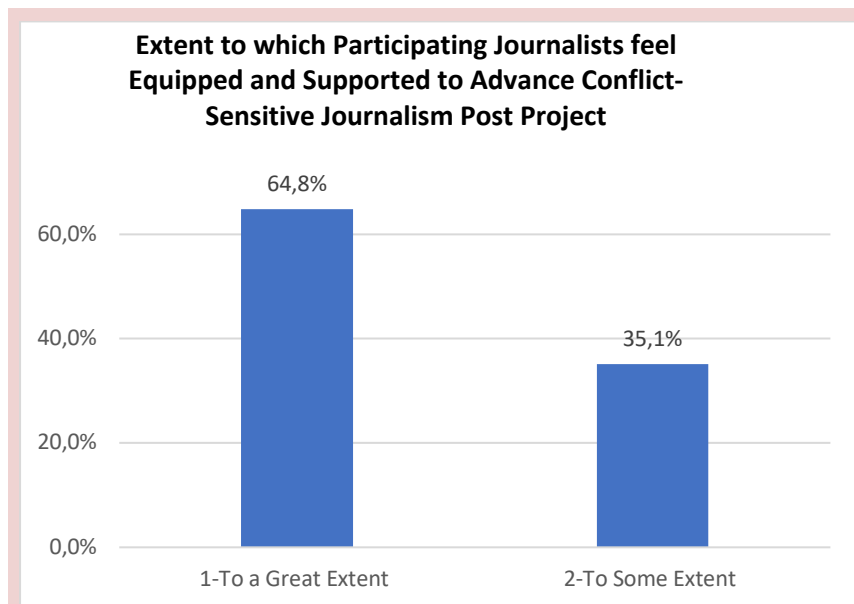


Figure 9: Percentage Distribution of Respondents Confirming the Extent to which they feel Equipped and Supported to Advance Conflict-Sensitive Journalism post-project

women, transgender, and school-going children among others who were all affected by conflicts in the two provinces. The participating journalists went beyond the known leaders and reported the perspective of ordinary people. More so, the project participants wrote stories that would unite people around common ground, rather than promoting factors that divide communities. From a sustainability perspective, the project also made specific efforts to ensure the benefit of its activities as part of this outcome continues beyond its lifespan. For example, there are WhatsApp groups of mentors and mentees who are functional even at the end of the project. The participating journalists are better connected and can publish their stories. Further, the equipment/items provided as part of participating journalists were sourced keeping in perspective that they should last longer. All these factors thus contribute to project sustainability as part of this outcome.

Finding 3 – Outcome Statement 2.1 (better support to women in media)

(Outcome Statement 2.1: Targeted local independent media actors better support women in media.)

In major cities i.e., Quetta and Peshawar, there were comparatively more women journalists, while in rural areas, the situation in both provinces was far worse. The Barrier Analysis reported a higher dropout rate among women journalists, a trend this project tried to change. The Barrier Analysis further reported 90% percent of the respondents stated that they chose to study journalism by choice, thus in the face of such a high interest in journalism studies, it is ironic that these students leave their journey of journalism at the education stage only and do not continue practicing journalism. During the same Barrier Analysis, 52 percent of the respondents mentioned that there are restrictions and identified family, society, culture, and social pressures as the restricting factors affecting their choice to continue journalism practice. Keeping in view all these factors, the evaluation found that the project activities were relevant where they helped to address the immediate needs of women journalists in the target areas. This has resulted in an enabling environment for the professional advancement of women in media. In general, this was made possible through gender sensitization training for press clubs and engagements and workshops with media houses. For example, Freedom Network, one of the partners, conducted eight sessions of two days each for gender sensitization training in all 15 districts at the end of which the Press Clubs developed 15 (one per Press Club) gender action plans (GAPs). The project documents show that 14 initiatives identified in different GAPs have been implemented by the Press Clubs¹⁴ by the end of the project and seven internal Press Club policies have been changed to make the press clubs more gender-sensitive/inclusive. The evaluation also notes additional efforts required to make these gender action plans more realistic, as some of them were in draft forms and seemed ambitious and required further rethinking around them. During the KIs, it was reported that even after project closure press clubs were engaged in a “constitutional review and reform” process where they were discussing different measures such as eligibility criteria for inclusion as a member in the press clubs, available facilities for women journalists at the press clubs and sensitizing male members towards women journalists in the press clubs. As a result of GAPs, Press Clubs are committed to taking affirmative action such as the inclusion of women members and bringing them into leadership roles in the clubs. There was a consensus among the Press Club members that it was difficult for women in the targeted districts, including in large cities, to join them and the reform process initiated by the project was the right step in the right direction. The collaborative efforts to empower local independent media actors in providing better support for women in media have yielded a qualitative shift in the gender dynamics of the media landscape. Women in media now report a heightened sense of inclusion, respect, and opportunities for professional growth. This finding underscores the importance of fostering gender diversity and inclusivity within the media sector, which not only benefits the women directly involved but also contributes to a more balanced and representative portrayal of issues in the community.

¹⁴ Based on the Final Monitoring Report, press clubs of Quetta, Sibi, Pashin, Chaghi, Khuzdar, Qilla Saif Ullah Dera Ismail Khan, North Waziristan and South Waziristan are yet to implement their initiatives.

“In my entire professional experience, I never paid attention to the barriers female journalists face both in their personal as well as professional lives. I wasn’t consciously aware of these barriers nor was I sensitized to them. It was almost like an alien concept. However, after participating in this project, I am now actively trying to provide a conducive environment for women journalists in our press club, to the best of my ability and within the resources we’ve available.” Male Press Club Member IDI

Further, the project held workshops with media houses which were also joined by participating journalists and their mentors who helped to generate ideas and establish professional linkages. It also resulted in potential jobs/paid opportunities for participating journalists. Some of the attendees at these workshops such as representatives from Radio Pakistan offered monetary compensation¹⁵ for quality stories to all the participants, reflecting the strengths of journalists’ stories. The project’s initiatives aimed at enhancing support for women in media by local independent media actors have resulted in a qualitative improvement in the professional environment. Women journalists and media practitioners now describe an increased level of mentorship, networking, and recognition of their contributions. This shift signifies a growing sense of community and solidarity, promoting women’s roles in shaping media narratives.

Figure 10 below underscores that a significant majority of the women respondents (73.08%) believe that

the project has addressed the hurdles faced by female journalists to a great extent as compared to 60.7 percent of men. This reflects women felt the project was more beneficial for them which highlights the project’s effectiveness. The participating journalists mentioned that this was made possible due to structural changes such as relaxed membership criteria for women

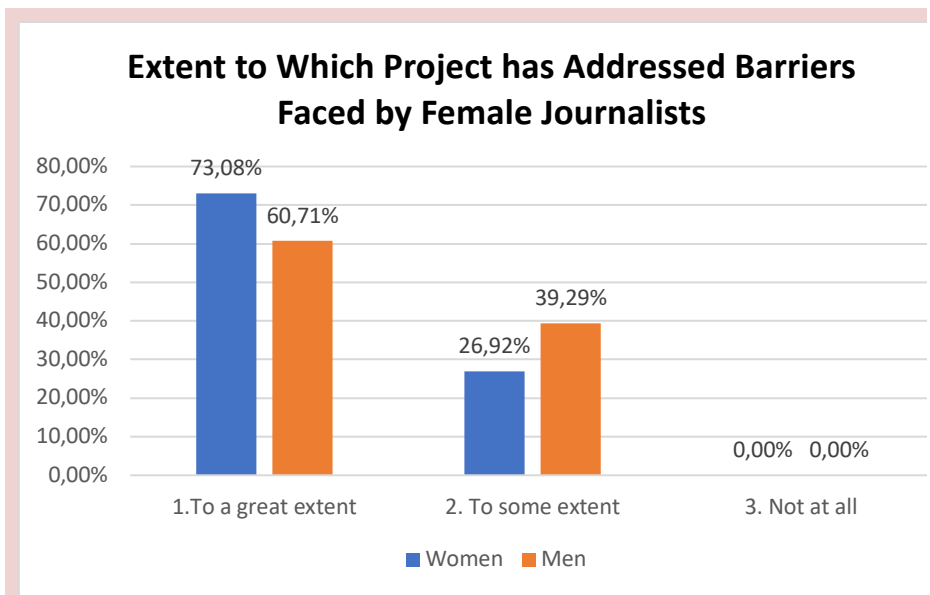


Figure 10: Percentage Distribution of Respondents Confirming the Extent to Which the Project Has Addressed Barriers Faced by Female Journalists

journalists in the press clubs as well as increased awareness amongst media houses. However, it will require sustained efforts for these changes to be fully realized as (for example) new female members are inducted into the press clubs and they are given executive positions. This is one of the reasons some of the respondents (33.4%) believed that the project has addressed barriers but only ‘to some extent’. All these opinions are

¹⁵ Amount for compensations varies from PKR 5,000 to PKR 20,000 per story depending on length of the story.

to be read in the context that Barrier Analysis identified there were only 30 women (or 5%) in Press Clubs in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa while this number was even smaller at only three (or 2%) women journalists as Press Club members in Balochistan. Through targeted interventions to empower local independent media actors, the qualitative transformation in the support provided to women in media is evident in their increased confidence and visibility. Women journalists now assert their voices more prominently, share their perspectives on critical issues, and serve as role models for aspiring female professionals. This finding underscores the long-term impact of such efforts, not only on the individual women but on the broader media ecosystem, where diversity and gender equity have become integral components of effective storytelling and journalism.

When the evaluation team further probed (Figure 11), 18.4 percent of the respondents confirmed that all the structural and policy-level barriers for women in media were addressed by the project.

These barriers included aspects such as maternity leave, protection, health insurance, and separate toilets for women. About these barriers, 26.5 percent of the women respondents stated that the barrier related to no protection¹⁶ policy was addressed and

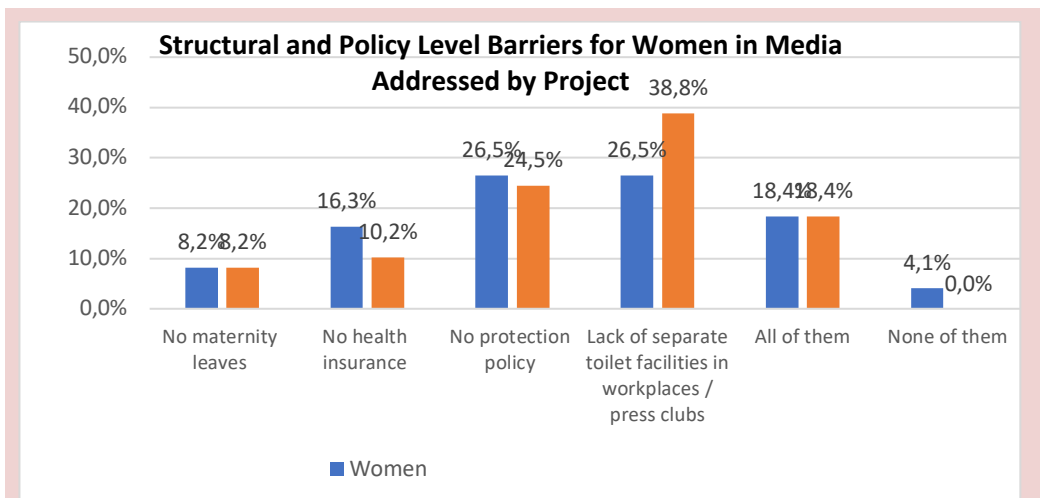


Figure 11: Percentage Distribution of Respondents Confirming the Different Structural and Policy Barriers for Women in Media Addressed by Project

16.3 percent of the women respondents confirmed that the barrier related to no health insurance policy was addressed. These are important findings given these barriers hinder women's participation in journalism. Even basic factors such as the absence of toilets for women mean they could not come to the Press Clubs or workplaces. Similarly, no maternity leave means a woman would lose her job when she is away from work during childbirth.

The key social barriers for women in media included prejudice against women, predefined roles for women based on gender, lack of trust in women's journalistic abilities and family restrictions. As reflected in Figure 12, 26.7 percent of the women respondents said that all social barriers for women in media were addressed whereas 9.7 percent of men said this is the case. At the same time, 24.4 percent of the women respondents said that the issue of lack of trust in women's journalistic abilities was addressed by the project. Further, 13.3 percent of the women respondents also mentioned that the barrier related to predefined roles based on gender and ethnicity was addressed. It is important

¹⁶ This is related to physical protection policy for journalists including measures related to security details.

to mention that there is a significant difference in the responses from men and women, highlighting both look into these social barriers from two different perspectives. The different nature of barriers provides an opportunity to focus future interventions making it more likely for women and young journalists to take journalism as a profession, and will require different interventions. For example, future interventions may focus on introducing

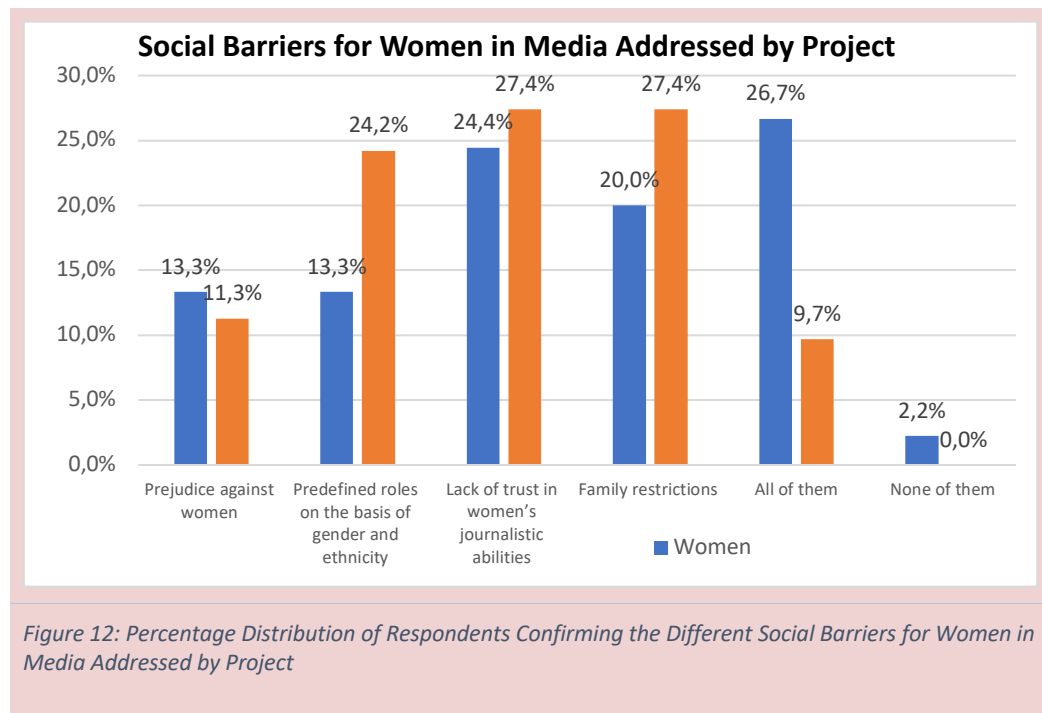


Figure 12: Percentage Distribution of Respondents Confirming the Different Social Barriers for Women in Media Addressed by Project

women to journalist roles which are generally not associated with them, such as the role of field reporter. The participants mentioned that women journalists have to fight multiple battles to succeed in professional life including at home to get permission to work, at the workplace to be treated equally as fellow male journalists, and at the societal level to be accepted as a journalist and at a personal level by fulfilling both households responsibilities like cooking and taking care of children and meeting expectation at work like working at odd times and travelling alone in remote areas or the battlefield. The project engagement with media houses and participating journalists helped to overcome some of these challenges.

“Gender inequality is prevalent in our field. Many of us senior officials often discourage female participation from reporting in certain areas due to sensitivity and security issues, even though the female journalists themselves are willing to do so. However, now our views have changed and instead of discouraging them, we will be trying to facilitate them by improving the working conditions to encourage them to go to the field.” Male Press Club Leadership KII

Similarly, the data shows that 39 percent of the women respondents and 29.7 percent of the men respondents confirmed that all professional barriers for women in the media were addressed by the project (Figure 13). At the same time, 19.5 percent of the women respondents and 25.9 percent of the male respondents confirmed project helped to address the issue of late working hours by advocating for flexible working hours, work planning and work-for-home modalities. Furthermore, none of the women respondents and 12.1 percent of the male respondents stated the project contributed to addressing the issue of poor working conditions where these women thought that these were major

issues to be addressed and would take longer time to Change. At the same time, 19.5 percent of the women respondents and 19 percent of the male respondents believed that the project contributed to addressing the security threats faced by women. This was achieved by incorporating safety and security-related aspects in the training as well as making media houses aware of how risks for journalists could be reduced. Both these measures helped to

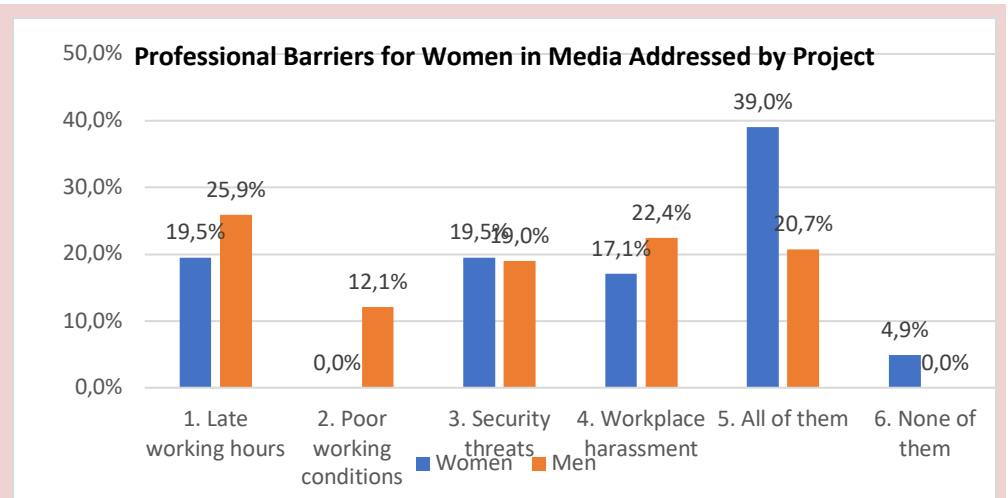


Figure 13: Percentage Distribution of Respondents Confirming the Different Professional Barriers for Women in Media Addressed by Project

address security threats faced by women. Lastly, 17.1 percent of the women respondents and 22.4 percent of the men respondents mentioned the project contributed to addressing the issue of workplace harassment by training women how to deal with any harassment in the first place as well as helping media houses to address these issues at their offices. It is important to highlight women were almost twice the number of men who thought the project helped to address all these issues. This progress was achieved by close engagement of the project with media houses and press clubs as well as capacitating women journalists on key skills required to overcome these barriers which ranged from demanding a conducive work environment from their employers to navigating odd working hours. However, there are still a few (4.9%) women respondents who think that the project has not addressed any of these issues. This highlights the importance of continued focus on these core issues that hinder women's participation in journalism. During KII, the women participants mentioned that unless there are united efforts by all stakeholders including a push from regulators to address professional barriers for women in the journalism field, there would always be some kind of issue that would prevent their participation.

Figure 14 shows that 46.2 percent of women respondents mentioned that the project was able to promote an environment where women journalists could practice the media profession safely and independently 'to a great extent' while 53.8 percent of women respondents mentioned they could do it 'to some extent'. This was made possible due to the project's holistic approach for example, 29 percent of the women respondents mentioned the project addressed all professional barriers including security while 19.5 percent of the women respondents specifically mentioned security (Figure 13). It is important to mention as highlighted during the Barrier Analysis, 40% of the respondents mentioned that working in the two provinces' context involves "politicized and conflict sensitive media reporting which is more likely to hinder the process of independent

media, and lead security concerns. One of the KII respondents mentioned that she learned how to remain composed and low profile while travelling from home to the workplace and vice-versa. Another respondent mentioned a key takeaway for her was to ensure she does not become personal while reporting a story as this leads to higher risk for her as a practicing journalist.

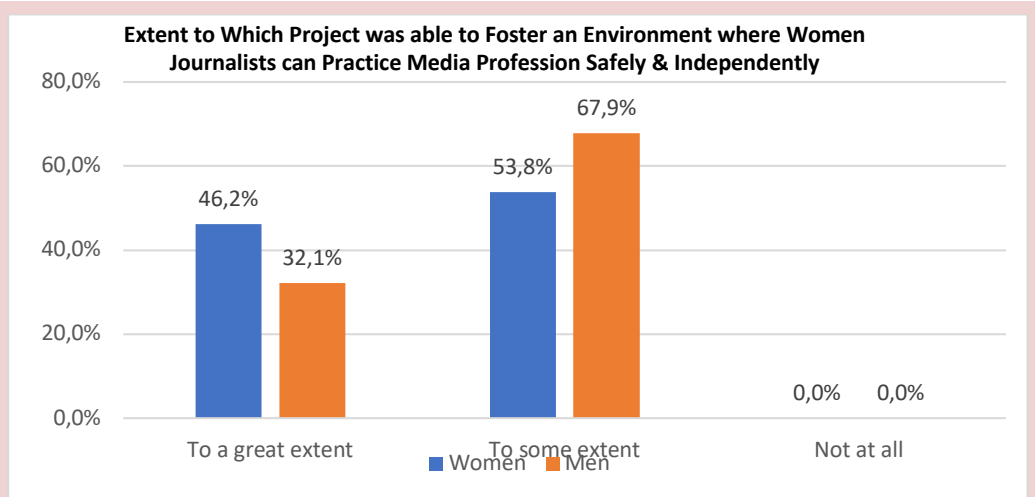


Figure 14: Percentage Distribution of the Extent to Which the Project was able to Foster an Environment where Women Journalists can Practice the Media Profession Safely and independently

Further, 76.9 percent of the women respondents said that due to the project interventions, mainstream media actors, including their male counterparts have started to support women journalists (Figure 15). There were more male respondents than women who thought this was the case. Overall, due to its ability to work with key stakeholders, the project made meaningful contributions by highlighting the need for similar interventions in the future as well. One women participant highlighted that her male counterparts were willing to accommodate her request for the morning shift at work. Another women journalist mentioned that they were provided with a separate toilet when they requested their management for it.

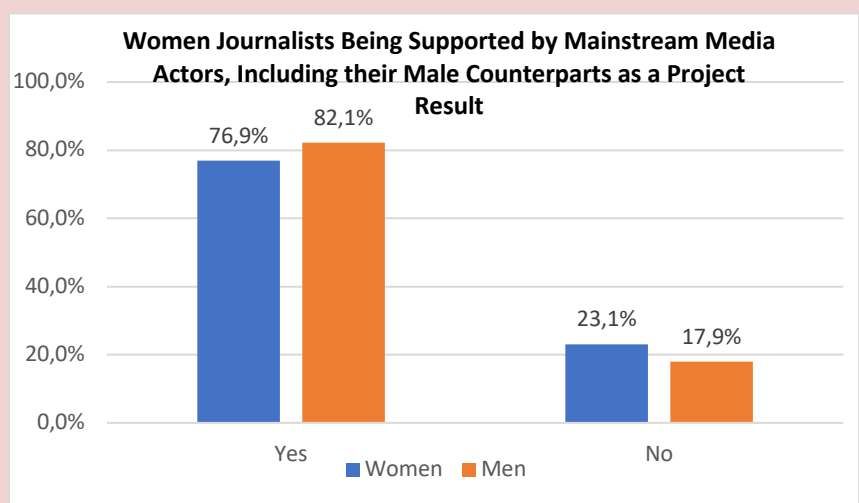


Figure 15: Percentage Distribution of Respondents Confirming the Support/Lack of Support Women Journalists Are Receiving from Mainstream Media Actors, Including their Male Counterparts as a Project Result

Overall, the project interventions generated positive and intended results by advancing women in journalism. It helped to address the issues identified in the Barrier Analysis at the start of the project that led to the abysmally low participation of women journalists as a result of structural, economic, political, and personal safety and security barriers that bar them from practicing this challenging profession. As a result of the project, there is a

better working environment available for women now to pursue a career in journalism which was not the case before this project. The media houses are more sensitive to considering the security and well-being of women when making management decisions such as shift timing or facilities at the workplace. It is likely the steps taken by the project will continue even after the project closure where media houses believe this support will also strengthen their work, helping them to attract and retain qualified women journalists in the high-demanding context of the two provinces.

Finding 4 – Outcome Statement 2.2 (feeling more confident and safer)

(Outcome Statement 2.2: Independent women journalists in the target districts feel more confident and safer in their workplaces.)

Feeling confident and safer in workplaces is an issue women face as part of their everyday challenges. Both these aspects were addressed by this project, thus making it relevant to the needs of women journalists. Overall, women journalists in the target districts were feeling more confident and safer in their workplaces, where 39 percent of the women respondents confirmed that all professional barriers (including security) for women in the media were addressed by the project. At the same time, 19.5 percent of the women respondents mentioned the project addressed the issue of security threats faced by training them on how to reduce their risk exposure such as not following the same travel routine or working neutrally by focusing on issues rather than individuals in their stories. Other factors like training and availability of facilities at the workplace also helped women feel more confident. All these aspects are explained in detail in the preceding paragraphs. The obstacles to working female (and male) journalists in the target locations are huge and recognized/duly emphasized by all stakeholders in the KIIs. The addition of female membership in press clubs is a key indicator that women were beginning to feel more confident about entering the workforce. One women participant mentioned that before this project she never thought of joining the Press Club as it was more of a men's club rather than a place where both women and men journalists would come and gather together. She thought this was no longer the case as the Press Clubs are now more open to accepting women members. This was possible after the project where all the 15 targeted Press Clubs have eased their membership criteria leading to three new members joining these Press Clubs as well and media houses provided a work-from-home option for female journalists to facilitate the addition of women journalists into their workforce. For example, 84 percent of the women surveyed were actively engaged as working journalists where 50 percent of them were employed and 34 percent engaged as freelance journalists. Moreover, most of the action plans list the addition of extra room and washroom facilities,¹⁷ for women as key actions to be implemented which underscores the importance of safe workplaces for women journalists. However, it would take more time before these rooms and toilets could be built in all Press Clubs as per the need on the ground. The project's focus on empowering independent women journalists in the target districts has led to a qualitative shift in their sense of confidence and safety within the workplace. Participants express a greater level of self-assuredness in pursuing their journalistic roles and reporting on sensitive issues. This increased confidence

¹⁷ Based on a review of gender action plans developed for Bajaur, Pishin, Qilla Saifullah, Landi Kotal and Quetta.

directly correlates with a more vibrant and fearless media landscape where women journalists are key contributors.

According to MC, who is one of the IPs, the facility of having separate female rooms was proposed as a project to their donor. The same IP has also mentioned that the sensitization of the training participants to the existing laws, “Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010” led them to consider reviewing the Press Club constitution and making necessary arrangements for the implementation of the Act by making it part of the constitution. The completion dates mentioned for most actions in the GAPS are mostly the end of 2023-early 2024. A rapid needs assessment conducted by the Media Center formed the basis for the engagements with the press clubs where the assessment focused on making these press clubs more gender sensitive. The interventions designed to enhance the security and confidence of independent women journalists in the target districts have resulted in a noticeable qualitative change. Participants report feeling safer both physically and professionally in their work environments. This newfound sense of security is reflected in their willingness to tackle previously challenging or risky topics, contributing to a more robust and inclusive media narrative. The project's efforts to improve the working conditions and safety for independent women journalists in the target districts have produced qualitative improvements. These journalists now express a heightened level of assurance and comfort in their roles, enabling them to focus on their reporting with reduced concerns about personal safety. This positive change not only promotes the growth and effectiveness of individual journalists but also bolsters the overall media landscape by diversifying perspectives and increasing coverage of a wider range of issues.

“To facilitate our women counterparts as well as to increase women participation within our press clubs, we have eased the criteria for membership related to required experience as a journalist. We were asking for several years of experience and a relevant degree before women could join the Press Club membership, which is no longer current. We are also working on providing a separate working space within our press club along with separate washroom facilities for women journalists, within the limited resources available to us. We’ve also set a goal to bring in at least two women journalists by the end of 2023 as members of our press club. Even if only two females join our press club, they will each bring in two more female journalists and this will create a ripple effect.”
Male Press Club Leadership KII

During the Barrier Analysis, 72 percent of the respondents mentioned that they had never been sent to an exposure visit by the universities such as to press clubs to attend meetings, media houses newsrooms, and private TV channels. To expand networks for women in media, there were seven supported activities designed to promote and strengthen the civic participation of women. These were physical visits of women journalists to media houses. Further, 20 women were supported by the project to engage in networking opportunities. These exposure visits and networking opportunities have been highly useful in soliciting greater interest from trainees and expanding horizons for working female and male journalists through interaction with Radio Pakistan, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Pakistan Television Corporation (PTV), National Commission of Human Rights¹⁸, Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority, and with Dunya News (a media house). One women participant said she never thought she would ever get a chance to visit these places, where entry to the media houses and getting to know them and network with them add value to their work. As earlier mentioned, 50 percent of the surveyed women journalists were on the job. During the Media Houses Workshop in Islamabad, a declaration articulating the demands to provide gender-positive and women-friendly places for women in media in both provinces was endorsed by participants and was shared with the Ministry of Information. Freedom Network, a project partner, will continue to advocate with the government for its implementation.

Freedom Network, the partner responsible for the gender component, has mentioned ongoing efforts being made to expand networks for women in media. Women journalists have been connected with existing “Safety Hub Coordinators” in both provinces and WhatsApp Groups are functional for information sharing and coordination. These Safety Hubs provide protection, shelter and advice to a journalist who is at risk as a result of performing their jobs. All partners were also of the opinion that this project was particularly effective in improving coordination and networking amongst the academia and press clubs which was absent or negligible earlier.

Overall, the project under outcome 2.2 addressed the critical challenges of confidence and safety faced by women journalists in their workplaces, making it highly relevant to their needs. The project has had a notable impact on women journalists in the designated districts. It has boosted their confidence and improved their sense of security in their workplaces. Moreover, the project's initiatives, such as exposure visits and networking events, have been advantageous in creating a stronger bond among women in the media industry, igniting a greater passion for their work and promoting professional development. Additionally, the project's advocacy for gender-friendly work environments and its ongoing efforts to connect women journalists with safety resources and support contributed to its success. In summary, the project has bolstered the self-assurance, safety, and inclusivity of women journalists, clearly demonstrating its positive influence on the media landscape.

¹⁸ Established by Government of Pakistan, the National Commission for Human Rights Pakistan is mandated to work for the promotion and protection of human rights with the powers to take action on cases of human rights violation. It is important to note it is a separate entity than the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan which is a not-for-profit organization.

Finding 5 – PIF Indicators (Prevalence of Violence, Personal Agency and Institutional Legitimacy)

Violence: The participating journalists were asked **how safe they felt walking alone around the area they lived in**, particularly in the context of the safety of journalists and media workers. Based on the evaluation findings, 11.1 percent of the respondents felt very safe while 31.5 percent of the respondents felt moderately safe. More women respondents reported feeling very safe and moderately safe as compared to men. This could be linked to the fact currently men are more engaged in field reporting as compared to women, hence they are more exposed to risks. Journalists play a pivotal role in upholding democratic values, informing the public, and holding those in power accountable. One crucial aspect of their work is the ability to move freely within their communities, conducting interviews, gathering information, and reporting on events without fear of harm or reprisal. Unfortunately, the safety of journalists has become a pressing global concern in recent years. As a result of this project, there is an improvement in safety both for women and men which included flexible work hours, and ways to reduce risk such as through changing travel routines and making stories more issue-specific rather than targeting individuals. The key informants mentioned that the safety of journalists and media workers is important for their freedom to work without intimidation or violence is essential for promoting transparency, democracy, and the rule of law. One of the key indicators to assess progress toward this goal is the percentage of the population that feels safe walking alone around the area they live in, which has improved. This PIF indicator reflects the broader societal environment in which journalists operate and can serve as a barometer of the overall level of safety and freedom of expression in the two models. The key informants said that journalists are not just passive participants in this indicator; they actively contribute to creating safer communities. They shed light on issues such as crime, corruption, and human rights abuses, which can ultimately lead to policy changes and improvements in the rule of law.

Table 4: PIF Indicator # 1(Violence)

PIF Indicator # 1 (Violence)			
% of the population feels safe walking alone around the area where they live (SDG 16.1.4). (Participating journalists)			Percentage of participants and non-participants by their feelings while walking alone around the area they live/work in (Both participating and non-participating journalists)
	Men	Women	Overall
Very Safe	3.6%	19.2%	11.11%
Moderately Safe	25%	38.5%	31.48%
Moderately Unsafe	32.2%	19.2%	25.93%
Very Unsafe	39.2%	23.1%	31.48%
Unsure / No Answer	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
	Participants	Non-participants	
Very Safe	11.11%	10.56%	
Moderately Safe	31.48%	39.44%	
Moderately Unsafe	25.93%	24.44%	
Very Unsafe	31.48%	24.72%	
Unsure / No Answer	0.00%	0.83%	

Personal Agency: One of the PIF indicators is the **percentage of the population that believes they can make a positive difference in the area they live in.** The survey data shows that 69.4 percent of the respondents completely agreed while 26.9 percent of the respondents agreed that they feel they could make a positive difference in the area they live in. More women respondents reported completely agreeing to make a positive difference in the area they live in as compared to men. Participating journalists, who were actively engaged in reporting and storytelling, often possessed a unique and powerful platform to influence public opinion, raise awareness, and drive positive change within the areas they cover. This influence extends not only to reporting on issues but also to inspiring and mobilizing communities to take action. Hence, they believe in their capacity to make a positive difference to intersect with the work of journalists. Journalists have the potential to serve as catalysts for change by shedding light on critical social, economic, and political issues that affect their communities. Whether they are covering, environmental degradation, social inequality, or human rights concerns, journalists could amplify the voices of marginalized communities, expose injustices, and advocate for solutions. Thus, this Search project helped to improve the impactful reporting where the participating journalists fostered a sense of agency and empowerment among the population they serve through their reporting. When they highlighted local success stories, community initiatives, and individuals who have made a positive difference, they would not only inspire hope but also provide tangible examples of how positive change can be achieved.

Table 5: PIF Indicator # 2 (Personal Agency)

Indicator # 2 (Personal Agency)						
% of the population that believes they can make a positive difference in the area they live (Participating journalists)				Percentage of participants and non-participants that believes they can make a positive difference in the area they live (Both participating and non-participating journalist)		
	Men	Women	Overall		Participants	Non-participants
Completely Agree	62.50%	76.92%	69.44%	Completely Agree	69.44%	25.00%
Agree	33.93%	19.23%	26.85%	Agree	26.85%	56.81%
Neutral:	3.57%	3.85%	3.70%	Neutral:	3.70%	13.62%
Somewhat Disagree	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	Somewhat Disagree	0.00%	3.06%
Completely Disagree	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	Completely Disagree	0.00%	1.53%

Institutional Legitimacy: The third PIF indicator is the **percentage of the population that is satisfied with the services they seek from authorities**. The data shows that only 4.3 percent of the respondents were very satisfied. The number of very satisfied women was less than half of the men. It is important to understand participatory journalism plays an important role in promoting citizen satisfaction with government services. Participating journalists play a crucial role in ensuring that government services meet the needs and expectations of the population. Their investigative reporting, watchdog role, and advocacy for accountability contribute to building trust between citizens and authorities, ultimately leading to higher levels of satisfaction with the services provided. Journalists serve as intermediaries between the government and the public. They provide timely and accurate information about government programs, services, and policies. The respondents said that journalists through their reporting help citizens understand their rights, entitlements, and how to access services effectively. These journalists are vigilant in identifying gaps and inefficiencies in government service delivery. They investigate bureaucratic red tape and subpar service quality. The evaluation participants in this evaluation also confirmed the investigative work by journalists exposes these issues to the public eye, putting pressure on authorities to address them. Being themselves unhappy, it is likely that they will report on these issues. Reporting journalists hold government officials and agencies accountable for their actions and decisions. When services fall short or journalists investigate and report on these matters. This serves as a check on power and encourages authorities to improve service delivery. Further, their efforts contribute to building trust between citizens and authorities and ensuring that government services meet the needs and expectations of the population. In this way, journalists play a crucial part in achieving the goals of good governance and inclusive development, and thus increased institutional legitimacy.

Table 6: PIF Indicator # 3 (Institutional Legitimacy)

Indicator # 3 (Institutional Legitimacy)			
% of the population that are satisfied with services they seek from authorities (Participating journalists)			
	Men	Women	Overall
Very satisfied	5.95%	2.56%	4.32%
Moderately satisfied	34.52%	35.90%	35.19%
Somewhat unsatisfied	30.95%	25.64%	28.40%
Very Unsatisfied	19.05%	23.08%	20.99%
Unsure/No answer	9.52%	12.82%	11.11%

% of the population that are satisfied with services they seek from authorities (Participating journalists) (Both participating and non-participating journalists)		
	Participants	Non-participants
Very satisfied	4.32%	5.83%
Moderately satisfied	35.19%	45.74%
Somewhat unsatisfied	28.40%	9.91%
Very Unsatisfied	20.99%	21.02%
Unsure/No answer	11.11%	17.50%

Project Indicators (Log frame Results including PIF Indicators)

Table 7: Log frame Results

Project Objective 1: Increase the capacity of young journalists, particularly young women, in independent and conflict sensitive reporting.					
Activity	Indicator	Achieved in the Project	Project Target	Comments on Target Achieved	PIF Theme Measured
Outcome 1.1	1.1: % of media products (out of total) produced by the participating young journalists that meet the minimum standard of conflict-sensitive media products	88.6%	70%	Target Surpassed	Not Applicable
Outcome 1.2	1.2: # of articles produced by DRL-supported journalists following responsible journalistic practice	105	70	Target Surpassed	Not Applicable
Activity 1.1.1. Consultative Workshop with Partner Universities	1.1.1.1: # of participants engaged in a consultative workshop	46	30	Target Surpassed	Personal Agency
	1.1.1.2: # of university departments integrating conflict sensitive journalism into their course curricula	1	3	Work in progress	Institutional Legitimacy
Activity 1.1.2. Training of Trainers (ToT) on Conflict Sensitive Journalism	1.1.2.1: # of participants trained	21	90	All relevant staff from the three universities were trained.	Institutional Legitimacy
	1.1.2.2: % of participants with increased knowledge on how to teach conflict-sensitive media content development approaches	56.3% increase from the pre-test	20% increase from the pre-test	Target Surpassed	Violence
	1.1.3.1: # of young journalists trained and supported	62	45	Target Surpassed	Personal Agency

Activity 1.1.3. Journalist Training Program for Balochistan and KP	1.1.3.2: % of participating journalists in Balochistan and KP with increased knowledge of conflict sensitive journalism	118.9% increase from the pre-test	30%	Target Surpassed	Personal Agency
Activity 1.2.1. Media Mentorships	1.2.1.1: # of journalists matched with mentors	64	45	Target Surpassed	Not Applicable
	1.2.1.2: # of exchanges organized with mentors and mentees	235	45	Target Surpassed	Not Applicable
Activity 1.2.2. Media Fellowships	1.2.2.1: # of independent media projects implemented by trained journalists	45	45	Target Met	Personal Agency
	1.2.2.2: % of supported trained journalists who feel equipped and supported to advance conflict sensitive journalism	100%	90%	Target Surpassed	Personal Agency
Project Objective 2: Foster an enabling environment for the professional advancement of women in media.					
Outcome 2.1	2.1: % of women media professionals surveyed who believe that they have increased opportunities to practice and grow as independent journalists by the end of the project	92.3% (51% increase from the barrier analysis)	25% increase from the barrier analysis	Target Surpassed	Not Applicable
Outcome 2.2	2.2: % of women media professionals surveyed who believe that barriers faced by women journalists identified at the beginning have been addressed by the project	100%	50%	Target Surpassed	Not Applicable
	2.1.1.1: # of persons trained with USG assistance to advance outcomes consistent with gender equality or	167	120	Target Surpassed	Personal Agency

Activity 2.1.1. Gender Training for Press Clubs	female empowerment through their roles in public or private sector institutions or organizations				
	2.1.1.2: % participants with increased knowledge on principles and practice of gender friendly media	48.4% increase from the pre-test	20% increase from the pre-test	Target Surpassed	Personal Agency
	2.1.1.3: # of new women members in press clubs	3	35	Not achieved. Work in progress	Institutional Legitimacy
Activity 2.1.2. Workshops with Media Houses	2.1.2.1: # of participants in workshops with media houses	110	120	Target Surpassed	Institutional Legitimacy
Activity 2.2.1. Press Club Reform Initiatives	2.2.1.1: # of reform initiatives implemented by press clubs	14	13	Target Met	Institutional Legitimacy
	2.2.1.2: # of USG-assisted media-sector civil society organizations (CSO) and/or institutions that serve to strengthen the independent media or journalists (DR.5.3-2)	15	13	Target Surpassed	Institutional Legitimacy
	2.2.1.3: # of media actors engaged in Press Club reform initiatives	205	260	All major actors engaged	Institutional Legitimacy
	2.2.1.4: # of press club policies changed as a result of reform initiatives	7	10	Partially achieved	Institutional Legitimacy
Activity 2.3.1. Expanding Networks for Women in Media	2.3.1.1: # of women supported by the project to engage in networking opportunities	20	20	Achieved	Personal Agency
	2.3.1.2: # of USG-supported activities designed to promote or strengthen the civic participation of women	7	8	Partially achieved	Personal Agency

4. CONCLUSIONS

The project design, interventions, and targeting in the two provinces of Pakistan aligned with the challenging context, especially in high-risk border districts with Afghanistan. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, where conflict dynamics and security challenges are prevalent, the project is highly relevant. It offers a platform for youth and women journalists to report on conflict-related issues, enriching public discourse. The evolving media landscape in these regions, marked by increased demand for diverse voices, makes the project's empowerment of underrepresented groups crucial. Focusing on youth and women journalists, the project provides training, resources, and support tailored to their unique needs. It prioritizes inclusivity by considering gender and ethnic diversity, contributing to a pluralistic media landscape. By empowering these journalists to report on conflict and peacebuilding, the project aligns with the region's needs and furthers local perspectives on peace solutions.

The project's effectiveness can be assessed in terms of its objectives, capacity-building impact, promotion of conflict-sensitive journalism, and fostering a safer, more inclusive environment for women journalists. This effectiveness was maintained despite a shift in implementation modality and a no-cost extension. Training and mentorship led to improved skills and balanced reporting on conflict-related issues, fulfilling the primary objective of responsible journalism. The project enhanced the capacity of press clubs, journalists, and universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, fostering openness and collaboration. By incorporating conflict-sensitive journalism into curricula, the project enriched journalism education and training. The project cultivated ethical reporting, sensitivity to local contexts, and diverse perspectives, contributing to understanding and peace. It empowered women journalists to work safely and independently, gaining industry support and increasing their professional capabilities.

Intermediate impact assessments highlight the positive influence on the professional lives of women and youth journalists, their prominent roles in the media, and the integration of conflict sensitivity in journalism practices in target regions. The project improved job prospects, self-confidence, and balanced reporting for many participants. It promoted the active participation of youth and women in the media sector, breaking gender and age barriers. Journalists adopted a more responsible approach to conflict-related reporting, showing increased awareness of their impact on tensions. The project fostered a supportive community of practice, encouraged discussion on the media's role in peace-building, and addressed potential risks faced by women journalists.

To ensure project sustainability, capacity-building, mentorship, and stakeholder engagement are prioritized. Skills and knowledge are imparted to journalists, press club members, and faculty to continue promoting conflict-sensitive journalism. Mentorship relationships will persist, with experienced journalists guiding emerging talents. Local partners, universities, press clubs, and media houses have embraced the project's initiatives, ensuring their longevity. Universities have incorporated conflict-sensitive journalism into curricula, and press clubs provide enduring platforms for collaboration and professional growth. Government support for ethical journalism and inclusivity indicates a long-term commitment to the project's principles and objectives.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

S. #	Lesson learnt	Recommendations
1	<p>Participants in conflict settings, such as journalists working in the 15 target districts, experienced significant stress and trauma due to their exposure to conflict-related stories and experiences. For example, according to the South Asia Terrorism Portal, in the first nine months of 2023, more than 900 terrorism-related fatalities took place between January – September 2023, where over 70% of them were in Peshawar, South Waziristan, North Waziristan, Bajaur and Quetta, all of which were targeted by this project.</p>	<p>Media projects should provide mental health support and counselling services for participants to address the emotional toll of their work, especially in contexts like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. For these journalists, it is important to create a supportive and empathetic project environment for the well-being of the youth and women involved.</p>
2	<p>The paramount lesson drawn from this media project conducted in the two provinces is that assumptions regarding communication security and universal internet access cannot be made in all geographic regions, even when readily available in other areas. Operating within the challenging landscape of conflict zones in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, the project revealed a digital divide, with significant internet connectivity issues in places such as South Waziristan, North Waziristan, and border regions adjacent to Afghanistan. Additionally, concerns about leaked private communications have undermined the confidence of journalists in utilizing digital communication tools, as they grapple with the constant fear of eavesdropping. Moreover, the project evaluation found disparities in technology access among participating journalists, highlighting that inconsistent access to both the internet and necessary tools could hinder the effective utilization of digital media products.</p>	<p>The issues related to communication security and the universal internet underscore the critical importance of addressing these issues and adopting adaptive strategies to navigate such challenges effectively in future projects. For this purpose, Search’s media projects should consider providing participants with the necessary digital tools and training in low-tech or offline media production methods to overcome connectivity challenges. If possible, collaborating with local internet service providers to improve connectivity could also be explored. It is also important to consider factors as part of the training which can assure journalists that their conversation concerning their professional obligations remains confidential and protected.</p>

<p>3</p>	<p>The notable lesson learned from the Search media project in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan is the significant challenges faced by youth and women participants in conflict settings in journalism-related work. In conservative and conflict-ridden areas like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, societal norms and traditional roles often dictate that young people, especially women, are expected to prioritize family and household responsibilities over external engagements. The mere act of participating in a media project, which may involve travel, interaction with diverse individuals, or addressing sensitive issues, was perceived as a deviation from these traditional roles. This situation not only hinders the personal growth and development of these young individuals but also poses challenges for the media project itself. Even though the involvement of youth and women in media activities is a positive and empowering step, it often collides with deeply entrenched cultural norms and societal expectations prevalent in the two provinces. As a result, the restrictions placed upon them could have profound implications for their participation in media activities. Their limited participation may lead to the loss of diverse voices and perspectives, which are essential for a comprehensive and representative media project. It also impedes the project's potential to bring about positive change and empower marginalized groups, such as youth and women.</p>	<p>To address this lesson, future media projects in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan and other similar contexts should proactively engage with families and communities. Initiatives that promote awareness about the benefits of youth and women's participation in media projects, both in terms of personal development and broader community impact, can help mitigate these restrictions. Additionally, efforts should be made to accommodate family needs and concerns, such as ensuring safe and secure participation for all involved. Engagements with parents may be considered as a component of media projects to orient them on the project activities, projects should also provide support mechanisms for participants facing cultural barriers and ways to address them. By recognizing and addressing these cultural and familial dynamics, media projects can better promote inclusivity and realize their full potential in contributing to positive change in conflict settings.</p>
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5. APPENDICES

Annex 1: Bibliography

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Annex 3: Survey Tools

TOOL 1 – SURVEY WITH PARTICIPATING & NON-PARTICIPATING JOURNALISTS	 TOOL 1-SURVEY WITH PARTICIPATING
TOOL 2: IDI WITH PRESS CLUB SENIOR OFFICIALS	 TOOL 2-IDI WITH PRESS CLUB SENIOR
TOOL 3: IDI WITH MENTORS	 TOOL 3-IDI WITH MENTORS.docx
TOOL 4: KII WITH PROJECT PARTNERS	 TOOL 4-KII WITH PROJECT PARTNERS.
TOOL 5: KII WITH PROJECT TEAM	 TOOL 5-KII WITH PROJECT TEAM.docx
TOOL 6: KII WITH MEDIA DEPARTMENT FACULTY	 TOOL 6-KII WITH MEDIA DEPARTMENT
TOOL 7: KII WITH PRESS CLUB MEMBERS	 TOOL 7-KII WITH PRESS CLUB MEMBERS
TOOL 8: KII WITH TRAINERS	 TOOL 8-KII WITH TRAINERS.docx

Annex 4: Evaluation Terms of Reference

SEARCH ToRS for Final Evaluation	 ToRs-Final Evaluation.pdf
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Annex 5: Case Studies

Aimen's Journey to Empowerment: Practicing Independent and Inclusive Media in Balochistan

Aimen Khan, a resident of Quetta city and a recent graduate of media and journalism studies from the University of Balochistan was in her last semester when presented with the opportunity to take part in Search for Common Ground's "Inspiring the Next Generation of Independent Media in Pakistan" Project. Reminiscing her time participating in the mentorship activities of the project, Aimen terms it as an eye-opening experience which also turned out to be a major turning point in her journey as a media and journalism student.

Four years ago, when Aimen and her fellow batch-mates joined the media and journalism department at their university, they had very little knowledge about the field of study that they had chosen or its underlying importance in the context of Balochistan. Ethical as well as social responsibility attached to being a journalist, especially in a conflict zone like Balochistan, is something she never considered nor was sensitized about. Even in university, the curriculum was extremely outdated, and the syllabus hadn't been revised in over two decades. So much so that even as final-year media and journalism students Aimen and her classmates were unaware of how to compose a news ticker/bulletin, produce a feature story or carry out fieldwork within/outside of conflict zones. Their education was also extensively theoretical in nature and lacked a practical component including technical skills like camerawork. The impracticality of their knowledge is also evident from the fact that they were mostly unaware of the issues journalists face within their region and the various kinds of sensitive and dangerous conditions under which most journalists work.



However, after participating in the mentorship program under this project, not only has Aimen learned the importance and relevance of conflict-sensitive journalism concerning Balochistan, but she has also been sensitized to the complex and accountable nature of her profession. Aimen views this mentorship program to be most relevant for her as Balochistan, with its prevalent tribal society happens

to be a major conflict zone. The tribes of Balochistan consist of many opposing groups that tend to gravely retaliate when talked about in mainstream media. Therefore, the biggest challenge for journalists working within Balochistan is their safety and security as their tribal community tends to become their biggest enemy, threatening the lives of these journalists and their families. Similarly, as there is often a shortage of journalists in Balochistan province, a single journalist often must cover diverse issues including bomb blasts, tribal conflicts and *dharnas* (sit-in protests for political or social reasons) for which

they must be fully equipped and report accordingly. Furthermore, very little support or protection is provided to journalists by the government and other security agencies, due to which journalists are often targeted and must ensure their safety and security themselves, further highlighting the importance of conflict-sensitive journalism in Balochistan.

Aimen further elaborates that since most of the senior journalists in the mentorship program had personal experiences of being attacked or reporting during critical situations like bomb blasts, they were able to effectively sensitize the mentees on issues of personal safety, emphasizing the importance of responsible and ethical reporting. This included paying close attention to word choice along with the revelation of details and identities of individuals while reporting. Aimen also discovered that this type of journalism is quite distinct from the kind practiced in most cities/regions of Pakistan.



Stressing the interactive as well as hands-on component of the mentorship program as her favorite and most memorable part of the training program, Aimen adds that the mentorship program helped provide a real-time experience and didn't for a moment make her feel like she was only a student. This approach was also utilized to deliver another major component of the training relating to gender sensitivity within the media landscape of Balochistan. A simulation exercise was carried out in which the male and female participants were asked to switch roles. While the male participants took on the role of victims of harassment, the female members played the role of journalists reporting these cases of harassment. In doing so, the women replicated the treatment that real victims of harassment face from media reporters which significantly helped the male members and the overall group gain a real sense of understanding of how it feels to be cross-questioned by journalists in sensitive cases like those of harassment.

"This activity helped us understand how our tone of voice, the words we choose and the type of questions we ask are of extreme consequence in critical circumstances, like those of Balochistan province."

As a result of her learnings, Aimen has produced two stories relating to peace journalism, one print¹⁹ and one digital (Facebook)²⁰. Her very first print story described the struggle of a handicapped Afghan refugee who eventually found a job and a happy home in Pakistan. Her second story, a digital one, was a video depicting the story of an old, abandoned hospital building in Quetta city which has now been transformed into a community library by young students. Aimen explains that creating these stories was a major milestone for her both personally and professionally as she managed to independently carry out tasks, she never knew she had the potential to.

¹⁹ Published in Balochistan Voices

²⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=556955663246213&ref=sharing&mibextid=2Rb1fB>

"I travelled to Sohrab Road by myself, which is a highly conservative area where you hardly find any women. Moreover, even though I lost my way, I managed to locate the library where I confidently interviewed, interacted and photographed men as there were hardly two or three women present there. I remember I was trembling inside, but I remained cognizant of what our mentors, during the training sessions, had told us about never letting fear be apparent on our faces."

Her second story was about how youth turned a deserted hospital into a library to revive Saryab's literary culture after decades of uncertain peace. A screen grab for her story is presented here.



Figure 2: Screen Grab from Aimen Story

کئی دہائیوں کے غیر یقینی امن کے بعد سریاب کی ادبی ثقافت کو زندہ کرنے کے لیے نوجوانوں نے کس طرح ایک ویران ہسپتال کو لائبریری میں تبدیل کر دیا۔

Following her commendable efforts which were widely appreciated by her seniors and other media actors, Aimen is currently working on her third story, the idea of which she conceived during the mentorship program as well. Aimen aims to document the work of the four women journalists currently actively practicing their profession in Balochistan. This includes highlighting their accomplishments and sharing their struggles to encourage other women journalists in Balochistan to come forward and take the lead in their professional duties. Aimen is grateful for the fact that the training program has helped her realize her full potential as a journalist. Aimen is now confident about not having to associate with any organization, Media Center or press club to practice her profession in the future. All that is required of her is the power of her pen and the selective nature and strength of her words along with the skills acquired during the training program. Not only has this boosted Aimen's self-confidence but has also instilled within her a sense of independence. Aimen is thankful to the trainers who were extremely supportive and encouraging throughout the mentorship program, with whom the mentees have established long-term connections and can contact whenever help is required.



Strengthening Responsible Journalism: Hissamuddin's Efforts Towards Promoting Conflict-Sensitive Reporting

Hailing from the conflict-ridden area of North Waziristan, Hissamudin Dawar, a graduate of Gomal University has been practicing journalism for over a decade. During his career, Hissam carried a general understanding of the power of media in bringing about positive change within his community. However, it wasn't until he actively participated in Search for Common Ground's "Inspiring the Next Generation of Independent Media in Pakistan" Project, that Hissam fully realized how to effectively use this power to further the practice of responsible journalism in conflict-ridden areas.



Not only did the training program provide Hissam with the essential skills and knowledge required for practicing conflict sensitive journalism but it also taught him the basics of story publishing. Hissam learned how to report in a well-researched and impartial manner without exacerbating conflicts. Furthermore, he learned the key components required in a story to turn it into publishable content and that too in such a manner as to gain maximum positive readership/viewership. Empowered by this newfound insight, Hissam began approaching his stories with a more refined and conflict-sensitive lens. Consequently, with the assistance of his newly acquired knowledge, skills and the journalism kit received during the mentorship workshop, Hissam produced three distinct stories on sensitive topics but this time through a more systematic and conflict-sensitive approach.

Hissam's very first story²¹ was published online in The Khyber Times after completion of the training. The story focused on highlighting the positives of the Zarb-e-Azb operation, a joint military offensive conducted by the Pakistan Armed Forces against various militant groups residing in the district of North Waziristan. This story of Hissam was highly appreciated and went viral within days of its publishing with over 3,000 views before it was archived. Hissam made it a point to highlight the human aspect of conflict in this

²¹ <https://thekhybertimes.com/2023/01/04/3235/>

story which earned him great public review. An example of this review was from his colleagues who attributed it to looking into this sensitive issue from a completely different dimension. Similarly, Hissam's next story focused on widespread target killings within his district, this time attempting to foster harmony among different faiths/sects to promote a sense of peace within his community through this story. Hissam made sure to engage in thorough interviews to present well-rounded viewpoints, once again emphasizing the human aspect of conflict.

Recently Hissam published another story highlighting the plight of underprivileged farmers due to issues like climate change and limited government support. This not only helped provide the underprivileged farmer community with a voice of their own. Hissam is confident that the training program enriched his journalistic skills and instilled a deep sense of cultural sensitivity in his reporting style.



"The training program has significantly transformed my approach, compelling me to dig deeper to gather reliable information. As journalists, it is our basic duty to use our platform to share authentic stories which amplify the voices of targeted, marginalized, and underprivileged segments of our community."

Hissam's published stories²² are reflective of his accomplishments as a journalist. His reporting is now characterized by a sensitivity to conflict as well as an emphasis on highlighting the difficulties faced by his community in the conflict-ridden district of North Waziristan. Hissam has managed to elevate the voice of underprivileged segments as well as address issues of a critical nature like target killings. Not only have Hissam's narratives helped broadcast reliable information to the public, but they have also contributed towards promoting harmony and progress within North Waziristan.



²² These stories are available in off-line mode as The Khyber Time archives old stories.

Changing Perspectives: Inclusion of Women in Mainstream Media and Journalism

Following the gender training held under Search for Common Ground's "Inspiring Next Generation of Independent Media in Pakistan" project, Umar Shinwari, the General Secretary of Landi Kotal Press Club in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, felt a major shift in his thinking patterns concerning the involvement of women in the field of journalism.

Before attending the gender training, adhering to the prevailing cultural norms of his province, Umar held a relatively conservative view regarding the participation of women in the journalism profession. One major factor contributing to this view was the safety and security concerns faced by women journalists specifically in the context of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

"Even though I have been working with renowned media houses like HUM Network and Pakistan Television Network (PTV) where the role and status of woman journalists is much enhanced, I always used to view this as an independent occurrence and did not see it materializing in my area as the cultural dynamics here are much different."

Nevertheless, the training program not only sensitized Umar on the importance of the inclusion of women journalists in mainstream media, but it also helped highlight the importance of reporting on gender issues to fill the existing vacuum in the current media landscape of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Furthermore, it led to a transformation in Umar's mindset regarding women's needs and rights in workplaces, including press clubs. Convinced of their rights and significance, Umar started actively addressing the issue of the non-representation of women in press clubs and advocating for their increased membership and active participation.

"If we are to increase reporting on gender issues, we certainly need the help of our female counterparts who experience gender-related issues first-hand and have better access to other victims of gender discrimination. Furthermore, if we are to effectively report on these issues and promote the rights of women, we certainly need to balance the gender demographics within our press clubs first and foremost."

As the general secretary of Landi Kotal Press Club, Umar took the initiative of opening press club membership for female journalists²³. He assigned each existing member of his press club the task of bringing in two journalists for membership. Even though the turnout has been relatively low, Umar is quite hopeful that even if a few woman journalists join his press club now, over time it will create a ripple effect and female membership will increase slowly over time. Moreover, to ensure the women journalists' comfort, Umar is working on assigning a separate room as well as a bathroom facility for women journalists within his press club. Cognizant of the strict cultural norms of his area, while attempting to facilitate his female counterparts, Umar has also given woman journalists the option of working from home (WFH) where they can simply send videos or written stories to the press club via mail and do not have to travel daily. Due to the

²³ <https://leadpakistan.com.pk/news/female-journalist-applies-for-membership-in-landi-kotal-press-club/>

profound effect of gender training, Umar is currently working on surveying his area to find out the total number of educated women residing in the jurisdiction of his press club. Once he has a rough estimate, over time, Umar plans on carrying out an advocacy campaign to persuade educated women to join the field of journalism and media, guaranteeing them membership in his press club to facilitate the process.

Female journalist applies for membership in Landi Kotal press club

By **Web Desk** - July 4, 2023

👁 29 🗨 0



Figure 3: First female journalist applying for membership in Landi Kotal press club

Encouraging the Next Generation: Struggle to Advance Emerging Journalists



In the arid landscapes of Balochistan, where journalism can be a treacherous journey, one courageous journalist dared to defy societal norms and give a voice to an often-marginalized community. Attiya Akram is one of the four female journalists currently actively working in Balochistan. For the past decade, she is working with one of the largest media houses – ARY – in Pakistan. For Attiya it was not an easy journey. This case study delves into the remarkable story of a female journalist who, against the backdrop of high insecurity, undertook the challenging task of highlighting the groundbreaking work of a transgender individual in teaching religious education. Balochistan, a region known for its rugged terrain and turbulent security environment, has posed significant challenges for journalists, especially women. Attiya had to navigate not only the inherent risks of her profession but also societal expectations that often restricted the roles of women, particularly in the media. Furthermore, the issue of transgender rights and their roles in society remained largely unaddressed. Transgender individuals were not commonly allowed to teach religious education, and their abilities often went unnoticed and underappreciated.

Attiya chose to challenge the status quo by investigating the life of a transgender individual who had broken barriers by teaching religious education to children. This compelling story, filled with the courage and resilience of the transgender teacher, showcased the determination of an individual to make a difference in the lives of children, regardless of their gender identity. The story was not only aired on a prominent television network, ARY, but was also uploaded to Facebook, reaching a wider audience. The response was overwhelming, with many viewers expressing their support and admiration for the transgender teacher's dedication and passion for teaching. The impact of this story was profound and multifaceted. It catalyzed change in the community, challenging stereotypes and transforming perceptions about transgender individuals. Several key outcomes emerged from this groundbreaking story. In our discussions with Attiya, she reflected on how the story played a pivotal role in altering the public's perception of transgender individuals. It helped break down stereotypes and demonstrated that transgender people are capable of making valuable contributions to society, including in roles as educators. The story ignited conversations about the rights of transgender individuals, particularly in the context of education. It led to increased advocacy efforts aimed at promoting inclusivity and equal opportunities for transgender individuals, including follow-up stories by ARY on transgender. The case underscores the transformative power of responsible journalism. It illustrates how media can be a force for positive change by shedding light on important issues and challenging prevailing norms.

In a region where journalism is often fraught with danger, this brave female journalist's determination to tell the story of a transgender teacher set in motion a wave of positive

change. Her report not only showcased the resilience of an individual but also acted as a catalyst for societal transformation, breaking stereotypes and promoting inclusivity and equal opportunities for transgender individuals. This case serves as a shining example of the impact that responsible journalism can have in even the most challenging of circumstances.



Figure 4: The teacher in her story

Personally, it has been Attiya's biggest wish as well as the struggle to encourage the participation of young journalists and women journalists in the media sector so that report on issues of transgender and others. For her, this Search intervention has acted as a major catalyzing factor, in the realization of her efforts. She is determined to build upon and carry forward the impact of this project within her personal as well as professional capacity and hopes for increased partnerships of a similar nature in the future.



Expanding Horizons: Nasir's Journey from Local to International Reporting

Serving as the Deputy Secretary for the Press Club of Para Chinaar in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, Nasir Hussain often felt that the media education he had received was predominantly academic in nature and lacked practicality. Through his active participation in the training program offered by "Inspiring the Next Generation of Independent Media," Nasir was finally able to bridge the gap between his education and professional development.



Nasir found each component of the training to be highly pertinent to the circumstantial needs of his province. With regards to cultural sensitivity and conflict-sensitive reporting, Nasir views these as extremely crucial aspects of journalism which aren't just relevant for the media field but in consideration of Pakistan's contextual situation, Nasir thinks every citizen must be fully cognizant of these concepts. Nasir believes that the training activities effectively addressed this notable absence within the media landscape of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, providing him with the golden opportunity to gain expertise and perspectives intricately tied to his local context and its complex dynamics.



Furthermore, Nasir found the gender component of the training particularly relevant to the current gender dynamics within his province, especially in the field of media and journalism.

"I gained valuable insights into effectively presenting women's perspectives while being sensitive to the cultural norms of our community as well."

Armed with newly learned knowledge, Nasir formulated a strategy to raise awareness about the significance of integrating women's voices into reporting, thereby fostering mutual understanding and acceptance within the local community. To do so, Nasir is encouraging the membership of women journalists within his press club, setting up a separate working area and toilet facilities as a basic right and adding incentives for their increased participation in the form of providing them leadership positions. He commends the sustainable connectivity created between journalists from all over the country through the creation of WhatsApp groups, including female journalists who make excellent stories²⁴, which too are gaining momentum post-training. In one of his stories, he spoke about the cross border with Afghanistan and Central Asian countries via Kurram.

²⁴ manend.com (ضلع کرم بھی طورخم بن سکتا ہے - مانند اخبار)



The digital media component of the training was one which Nasir has benefitted most from. According to Nasir, completing his master’s degree in media and journalism in 2010, Nasir had negligible knowledge regarding digital journalism and e-journalism. However, following the training, Nasir created news pages on various social media platforms such as Daily Ahsas and mamend.com which turned out to be quite successful from their viewership exceedingly over 2,000 hits. Not only did Nasir gain a major following with over 3,000 members on these pages but people were actively reading his content with over 500 hits and interacting with him through these platforms. So far, Nasir has written and published over 10 articles on Climate Change which became so popular that some mainstream newspapers (Daily Ahsas) published them, too. Nasir’s Facebook page has become so widespread that now other media houses like Khyber News and clients contact him to publish their news on his social media pages, which is happening almost daily as he re-shares important stories. Nasir is making a series a total of 10 different stories using the equipment he received as part of the project to promote peace and address the issue of sectarian violence in his native district of Kurram. Nasir gives credit to the "Inspiring the Next Generation of Independent Media" project. Had it not been for the enlightening experience as well as key knowledge, skills, and equipment that this project provided him with, Nasir would not have been able to reach this pivotal milestone in his journalism career to produce these stories.

