

**Individualland**


Creating space for the individual

# Evolution of Media National Media Conference 2013

Supported by

Friedrich Naumann  
STIFTUNG

**FÜR DIE FREIHEIT**



Editor: Mr. Muhammad Riaz  
Report Compiled by Gulmina Bilal Ahmad, Mr. Yahya Ahmad,  
Mr. Farhan Khalid Khan  
Designer: Mr. Adeel Amjad

The author acknowledges the support of Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung für die Freiheit for providing financial assistance to conduct this research. The information presented here would not have been possible without inputs from various sections of civil society. Despite all the assistance received, the lead author personally assumes the responsibility of any omissions.

### **Individualland**

Where the individual counts  
House 12-B, Street 26,  
F-8/1, Islamabad - Pakistan  
Tel: +92-51 2 25 34 37, 2 25 34 38  
E-mail: [info@individualland.com](mailto:info@individualland.com)  
Url: [www.individualland.com](http://www.individualland.com)

### **Supported by:**

Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung für die Freiheit  
P.O Box 1733,  
Islamabad - Pakistan  
Tel: +92-51-2 27 88 96, 2 82 08 96  
Fax: +92-51-2 27 99 15  
E-mail: [pakistan@fnst.org](mailto:pakistan@fnst.org)  
Url: [www.southasia.fnst.org](http://www.southasia.fnst.org)





# CONTENTS



- 2 Introduction
- 7 National Media Conferences 2011 – 2013
- 7 Welcome to National Media Conference 2013!
- 8 Right to Information
- 10 Pakistani media, graveyard of trainings?

- Strengthening press clubs 14
- Pakistan media in 2024 16
- In the newsroom 18
- Need for joint ethics for print and electronic, agreement on baseline 20



# Introduction

The last ten years have been a unique phase for print and electronic media in Pakistan. The media gives an interesting image of the period since 9/11, during which Afghanistan became the slain goat in a game of Buzkushi being played between its neighboring states and the United States of America. The circulation of local newspapers and periodicals shot up and a new breed of media workers – fixers – emerged on the scene. Electronic media also became an attractive venture and drew in considerable private-sector investment. But with the emergence of private TV channels, print media has had to face a decline in circulation and advertisement revenue.

According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, during the period 2001-2011 there were 952 print publications in more than eleven languages with a combined circulation of over six million copies. The electronic media, dominated by private sector, reflects details of big ownership. The Pakistan Electronic Media Regularity Authority (PEMRA)'s 2013 data shows that 83 satellite and terrestrial TV channels and some 126 FM radio channels have an operational network across the country. Approximately 18,000 journalists are engaged in this sector, compared to only 2,000 a decade ago..

Media in Pakistan has seen and experienced all kinds of suppression, including censorship, intimidation and torture/killing of media workers both during the quasi-civilian rule and military regimes. The successive regimes have tended to use a carrot-and-stick policy to control the media, and have partly succeeded in creating a partisan and docile media, preoccupying itself with non-issues.

But journalists and media workers have from their different platforms continued an unbroken struggle for the restoration of democracy, press freedom and a free and impartial judiciary.

(Numbers)

Year	Total	Dailies	Weeklies (a)	Fortnightlies	Monthlies	Quarterlies	Rest
------	-------	---------	-----------------	---------------	-----------	-------------	------

**PAKISTAN**


2001	763	168	151	52	309	39	44
2002	720	169	155	47	311	23	15
2003	945	204	219	89	393	34	6
2004	1279	291	347	105	517	10	9
2005	1997	438	508	141	775	64	71
2006	1464	370	377	80	503	68	66
2007	1820	437	463	92	686	71	71
2008	1199	324	292	52	502	26	3
2009	706	252	139	30	279	3	3
2010	952	360	184	35	351	15	7

(Numbers)

Language	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
<b>PAKISTAN</b>					
TOTAL	763	720	945	1279	1997
Arabic	4	4	4	4	5
Brahvi	3	4	4	2	2
Balochi	10	8	11	13	17
Bi-trilingual	3	3	14	..	..
English	153	153	204	223	290
Gujrati	8	8	13	13	15
Persian	..	..	..	..	..
Punjabi	1	1	1	2	8
Pushto	8	8	9	14	35
Saraiki	1	1	4	4	5
Sindhi	33	33	53	58	80
Urdu	539	497	628	895	1533
Others	..	..	..	51	7

(Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2011)





The federal government has two media watchdog organizations – the Press Council of Pakistan (PCP) and PEMRA. The two bodies regulate the print media and the electronic media respectively. Both are constitutional bodies, established in 2002 to monitor the media content and address public complaints. The PEMRA, however, is a license-issuing authority as well. Some quarters criticize it for being too powerful and therefore a tool that the governments use to twist the arms of some media groups. Others consider it a toothless regulator which has itself been a victim of political expediencies ever since its creation.

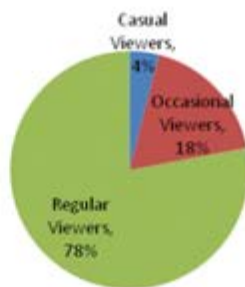
Many see successive Pakistani governments to have failed utterly in making the PEMRA a good regulator and a protector of public interest. The cable-operators do not pay a single penny to the PEMRA. Instead, they work for private TV channels as hawkers do for newspaper-owners. This phenomenon can be overcome by initiating direct-to-home (DTH) service through state-run television channel or by auctioning licenses to private investors.

The mushrooming of private TV channels and FM radios – most of them being owned and run by a class of nouveaux-riche largely inexperienced in the trade of journalism – has reduced, to some extent, the utility of the print media. A fast decline in circulation and advertisement revenue of the print media has initiated a debate as to whether newspapers and periodicals could survive the competition. According to different surveys, the print publications are losing both readership and revenue. Meanwhile, the nascent electronic media lack proper infrastructure, managers and editorial strength.

Print and electronic media are two separate disciplines, but media cross-ownership has blurred the difference between them. An anchor-person has become a newspaper columnist and a reporter is an anchor at the same time. This kind of media can grow and spread only under the watch of non-professional proprietors.

According to a Gallup survey in July 2013, cable TV viewership has increased by 20 percent in the past two years, while cable viewership has reached 64 percent from 55 percent in 2010, (Gallup Pakistan Media Research Team, 2013). According to a media report (2010) prepared by the Pakistan Institute of Public Opinion (PIPO), 21 percent of the total population in Pakistan listens to radio, out of which 53 percent are regular listeners.

Of the 81% who watch TV the majority are regular viewers




Of the 21% who listen to the radio a little over half are regular listeners



Of the 25% who read newspapers, less than a third are regular readers



(Inter-Media, 2010)



During this period, media have been exposed to new forms of pressures, which include vested interests of media houses or individual journalists, and corporate influences. This has been evident during the “media gate” scandal in June 2012. The scandal surfaced after a leaked off-air video conversation among a business tycoon and two leading anchorpersons during a program, suggesting influence being applied by the magnate. A list also surfaced during the same time period, purportedly containing names of some 19 journalists on the payroll of the same tycoon (Nazir, 2012). This came as a serious blow to the integrity and credibility of the media.

The media has also been drawn into the violent conflict engulfing Pakistan in the form of terrorism, especially within the conflict-torn areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Balochistan. Both state and non-state actors are pressurizing the media in order to control the flow of information. Amnesty International has already stated in its annual report (2013) that journalists in Pakistan are under threat from all sides – state agencies, political parties and militant outfits (The News International, 2013). According to figures compiled by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), at least 65 Pakistani journalists and media personnel have been killed since 2002 (CPJ, 2013).

Apart from questions over the independence and freedom of media, the debate now also focuses upon the responsibility the media has towards its consumers.





The citizens are the consumers of media, and should have the potential or the capacity to show their acceptance or discontent through their feedback in the form of viewership and subscription. Over the years, with the expansion of the media, especially in the electronic sector, there has also been an introduction to the concept of media literacy.

“Media literacy empowers people to be both critical thinkers and creative producers of an increasingly wide range of messages using images, language and sounds. It is the skillful application of literacy skills to media and technology messages,” (National Association for Media Literacy Education NAMLE USA). Media literate consumers are able to critically analyze the content that is presented to them through the print, electronic and social media, rather than absorbing everything without any consideration. The reflection of this media literacy has been evident in the feedback received by the media outlets mostly on the social media, in the form of letters to the editor and through complaints to PEMRA. In recent years, media houses and associations have also made attempts to introduce some kind of a self-regulatory code of conduct with emphasis on responsibility and objectivity in their content (Pakistan Broadcasters Association, PBA). Unfortunately, even such self-defined parameters have not been actively implemented.

Individualland Pakistan (IL-Pakistan) with the partnership of Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung für die Freiheit (FNF), has been part of this debate by involving media personnel, journalists, media houses and owners through consultative sessions, seminars and conferences. IL-Pakistan has been working with the media to learn from them, while also getting the consumer perspective across. This endeavor was under the umbrella of “Free, Independent and Responsible Media (FIRM)”, a term specifically coined for emphasizing media independence accompanied by responsibility. Apart from the approximately 3,000 direct beneficiaries (media persons), that have been imparted trainings on FIRM, thousands of others have also benefited from the numerous publications produced in English, Urdu and other languages by Individualland on the issue of FIRM.



For the last three years Individualland has been holding annual media conferences at the national level at the Federal Capital, Islamabad. The purpose of this conference is to discuss the pressing challenges and future scenarios facing the Pakistani media while also highlighting consumer concerns. On the other hand, the conference also acts as a platform for the direct beneficiaries of FIRM to give their feedback regarding the training programmes conducted with them, in order to augment the level of trainings in future.

The first two conferences were held in the years 2011 and 2012. The third was held during 27-28 November 2013. It was attended by more than 300 journalists and media personnel from across Pakistan. The conference was titled “Evolution of Media: Requirements, Facts and Fears from a Free, Independent and Responsible Media’s (FIRM) Perspective.” The two-day conference was divided into five sessions, each consisting of a chairperson and 2-4 panelists. The five sessions were namely:

- Right to Information (RTI) (Chaired by Mr. Rashed Rahman)
- Pakistani Media, A Graveyard Of Trainings (Chaired by Mr. Adnan Rehmat)
- Strengthening Press Clubs (Chaired by Mr. Saleem Shahid)
- Pakistani Media in 2024 (Chaired by Mr. Kamal Siddiqui)
- In the Newsroom (Chaired by Mr. Aniq Zafar)





## Welcome to National Media Conference 2013!

Ms. Gulmina Bilal Ahmad, Director Individualland, Mr. Muhammad Anwar (Acting Country Director Friedrich Naumann Foundation, Pakistan) and Ms. Angela Aggeler, Counsel for Public Affairs, Embassy of the United States, started the proceedings. Ms. Gulmina thanked the participants for being part of the Media Conference and set the tone for the event. She said that media freedom and responsibility are two themes which are being discussed throughout the country by analysts, politicians and the civil society. According to her, currently there are 18,000 journalists working in Pakistan and almost 18% of them consist of individuals that are below 40 years of age. Unfortunately, only five percent of these individuals have a journalistic background or experience and therefore, their development and training is highly critical. According to her, there are around 15-18 organizations, including Individualland, that are conducting training programmes for journalists throughout Pakistan. Quoting the stats about the number of media trainings carried out by media organizations over last five years, she displayed both her excitement and bafflement over the total 4,000 journalists trained by various media organizations in comparison to 3,000 trained by Individualland alone. According to her, there are several questions regarding the media demographics, the media freedom and responsibility that every individual related to media ponders over. Ms. Gulmina added that with the help of the conference, the organization also aims at receiving feedback from journalists regarding the organization's work in order to make it more effective and practical in future. She also said that the organization is looking to increase its outreach in the coming years and is looking forward to work with new journalists. In her concluding remarks, she thanked all the partners of the organization.





Mr. Muhammad Anwar gave an introduction about FnF, its partners and the organization's efforts for strengthening democracy since the inception. According to Mr. Anwar, FnF has supported various projects and FIRM is amongst its most important ones. He cherished the partnership between FnF and Individualland and added, both would continue to work on the issues faced by media in the coming years. Ms. Angela also commended both FnF and Individualland for their work on FIRM and Right to Information. She added, US believes in right to freedom of speech and freedom of press is highly pivotal in this regard. Talking about the evolution of media in last two decades, she reiterated when she was a child, there were minimal sources to acquire information but now, the sources for acquisition of information have increased. Dis-





cussing the evolution of media over the years, she also reiterated an incident from her childhood when she visited a newsroom of a local media outlet of that time. She added how excited she was to witness the news ticker, multiple screens and different state of the art equipments in the news room then. According to her, the transmission of news was a complicated process then whereas now, the news can be read on mobile phones even.

## Right to Information

The Right to Information (RTI) is considered a protector for other fundamental rights and is also a very effective anti-corruption tool. RTI is the oxygen for democracy. Realizing its importance, the Act was introduced in Sindh (2006) and Balochistan almost a decade ago in 2001. However, despite being introduced, there have been question marks over the effective implementation of the RTI. In October 2013, RTI was also introduced in the Senate of Pakistan. The bill aims at providing media and the common man with access to all types of information – be it secret, classified, confidential or otherwise. Each and every government department comes under the domain of the bill and is required to provide all kinds of information sought by the general public. While still in early stages, it continues to make the headlines with debates over the effectiveness and issue of implementation of RTI in future.

In an attempt to discuss the phenomenon of RTI further and answer the questions mentioned above, a set of panelists at the Media Conference presented their view on the theme. Mr Rashed Rehman chaired the session whereas Mr. Zahid Abdullah, Mr. Zulfiqar Haider, Mr. Toby Mendel and Mr. Mukhtar were amongst the panelists.

Zahid Abdullah at this conference presented a view on the importance and implementation of the right to information in Pakistan. He was of the opinion that Pakistan "is the first South Asian country to adopt the RTI. We use RTI on behalf of the citizens and every citizen has the right to use this law. Sindh and Balochistan were the first to adopt the RTI and it has been dubbed as one of the best laws in the world because a citizen can simply submit a form containing his/her CNIC number and ask for information. If the relevant information officer fails to answer the request within the stipulated time, he/she will be liable to a fine of Rs. 250 to Rs. 5000. This is the democratic way of seeking information."





**Mr. Abdullah discussed the two levels of RTI: (a) the public good, and (b) personal benefit. According to him, the RTI is there but not only are the citizens unaware of it, even the state servants have little knowledge about it. Giving examples of this lack of awareness, he said that once he requested information regarding the Sindh law book but it was denied by the deputy commissioners as they complained there was no law book provided to them. He then compared the difference in effectiveness of RTI between Pakistan and India. In India, the requested information is provided within 30 days. He mentioned the story of an 80 year old Indian woman whose passport was not made in due time. After she filed under the RTI law, immediate action was taken and she received her passport within days. According to Mr. Abdullah, the RTI is a powerful tool in the hands of journalists and can help them immensely in extending their outreach to information which would otherwise have been beyond their reach.**

**Mr. Zulfiqar Haider, another panelist at the session, also gave his views about the issue. He expressed his delight over the introduction of the RTI laws in different provinces of Pakistan recently. According to him, RTI has been in Pakistan for a long time but because of non-awareness amongst the citizens, it failed to make an impact. Now that citizens along with the government have started talking about it, it is a highly encouraging sign. He suggested that apart from government institutions, RTI should also be made applicable to organizations that are run with tax payers' money. Mr. Haider also added that compared to Pakistan, RTI is very strong in India.**



Speaking on the occasion, Toby Mendel stated that RTI is closely linked to human right, and that the international law gives a lot of importance to this law. Talking about the evolution of RTI, he said that two decades ago, RTI was present in only fourteen countries whereas currently 95 countries have RTI laws. Eastern Europe, Latin America and Asia have also adopted the RTI. However, he added that its implementation in many countries was still a matter of concern. According to a global survey conducted by two human rights organizations — Access Info Europe (AIE) and the Canada-based Centre for Law and Democracy (CLD) – RTI is very weak in Pakistan.

He pointed out that RTI had the potential to expose corruption and, given the provision that such information could be had within 10 to 15 days, it could be an effective tool in the hands of journalists. Mr. Mendel gave an example regarding how RTI was used in his own country. He narrated the story of a Canadian Defense Minister who demanded a rescue helicopter for his transportation from an island where he was stranded during a private fishing trip. Unfortunately for him, the information was revealed in a RTI request.

Toby Mendel expressed concern over the lack of interest by the newly elected government of Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) in implementing the RTI. He was hopeful, though, that government would take effective measures to ensure the implementation of the law over the next few years.

Mr. Mukhtar Ali of CPDI, while expressing his views on the subject of Right to Information, praised the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for taking the lead in implementing it. Punjab, he said, was also implementing RTI but there were various shortcomings that need to be addressed in order to make it more effective. He said information must be passed to the citizens because it is their right. He also said the culture of transparency should be adopted and the system should also be decentralized. He said many requests have been filed and still there is no information which is quite sad and the skeleton of the RTI is the same as 2002 ordinance, which consisted of;

- 1. Public record**
- 2. Subject to harm**
- 3. Information cannot be given**

He further said that the federal parliament excludes itself from the RTI, adding that it was very disappointing on the part of the federal government not to focus on such an important issue.

Chairperson Mr. Rashed Rehman also briefly spoke about the state of the RTI in Pakistan. According to him, RTI is a tool which if used properly can prove to be highly beneficial for the citizens and the government as well. He also criticized Punjab Government's right to information bill which he said needed serious modifications in order to be of any value.

During the plenary session, a participant admitted that awareness about RTI is not present amongst the journalists or citizens. He also showed his disappointment over the lack of discussion on media about the issue. Throughout the day, several talk shows are run on each channel discussing politics, religion and other issues but no airtime is given to RTI. Questions were also asked by the participants regarding the lack of government's interest to share the information about missing persons in the provinces of KPK and Balochistan despite the Supreme Court's intervention in the case and the introduction of the RTI Act. Most of the participants were keen to get information about the rules and regulations of the RTI Act, 2013 (Information regarding the fee for availing the service, time period in which information can be acquired, specific type of information to be acquired and the effectiveness of RTI currently). The panelists shared points from the document, "RTI Act, 2013," to clarify the participant's queries. According to the panelists, committees are to be formed in order to ensure the implementation of RTI. For instance, if the information is not delivered to an individual in ten days, the committee will act upon and even penalize the concerned official for not providing the information.

A participant raised a point over the connection of RTI with internet censorship and banning of various websites. According to her, there was confusion in Pakistan over RTI and the freedom of expression. She inquired whether an individual could question the government's move of banning websites like YouTube in the country with the introduction of RTI Act 2013. In reply, the panelists reiterated that issues related to internet censorship are not placed currently under the RTI; however government is taking measures to counter issues related to internet freedom. Other participants were of the opinion that in order to demand transparency from government, the media persons and organizations also need to make themselves transparent.





## Pakistani media, graveyard of trainings?

There are approximately 18,000 journalists working in Pakistan today as opposed to only 2,000 in 2002. According to a recent report, only one third of the news organizations provide trainings to their personnel, while approximately only 4,000 journalists have been trained. The efficacy and quality of the trainings being imparted to the journalists is also highly debatable, as per certain journalists they do not meet the desired quality (Pintak&Nazir, 2013). A session was conducted to discuss this issue. The session was chaired by Mr. Adnan Rehmat, while the panelists included Mr. Iqbal Khattak, Mr. Shamim Shahid, Mr. Shaukat Ali Aashraf and Mr. Shehzada Zulfiqar. The topics addressed were:

- Media require training
- Training is more than required

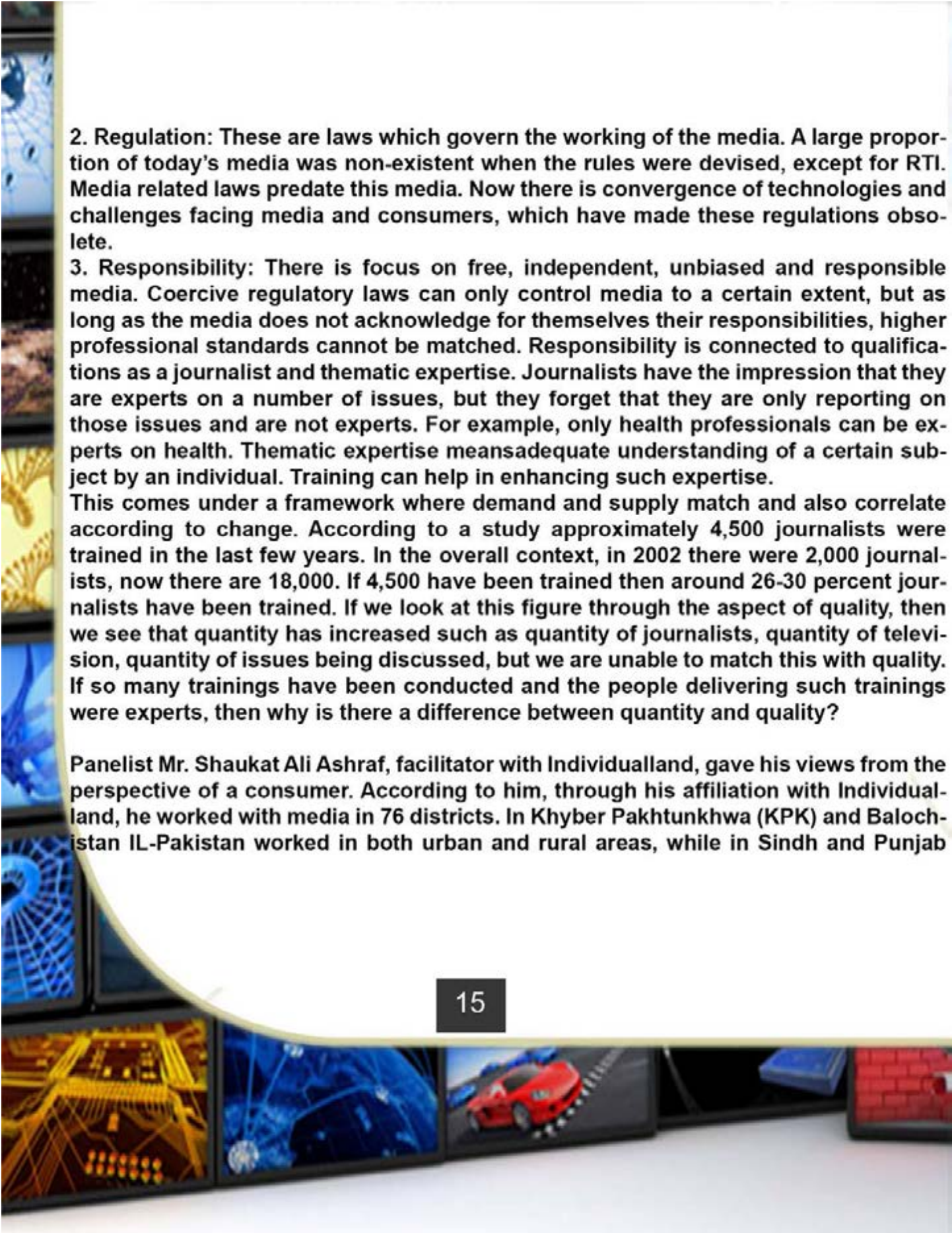


The discussion focused on the impact of training. Mr. Rehmat pointed out three phases of media evolution since the turn of the Century. During 2000-2007, new TV channels and media practitioners appeared on the scene. Between 2007-2011, pluralism and localization within the media increased. From 2012-2013 onwards, the capacitation of media has begun to hold centre stage, meaning thereby that the performance of its role in public interest is coming under focus. The media itself is voicing concerns over the level of professionalism and the say of the citizens whose interests it claims to be serving.

The training programmes can be divided into three segments according to the media structure, he said.

1. Rules: How were the rules decided for the composition of the media? Who decided that print and electronic media come under similar ownership? No one also thought regarding its impact on pluralism. It was wrongly perceived that as the quantity of media increased, so will the pluralistic views, because this did not happen. Rather, there is uniformity of news, views and even expert opinion during the 7-11pm prime-time slot. We are a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-religious society, so how come the views are so very much the same?





**2. Regulation:** These are laws which govern the working of the media. A large proportion of today's media was non-existent when the rules were devised, except for RTI. Media related laws predate this media. Now there is convergence of technologies and challenges facing media and consumers, which have made these regulations obsolete.

**3. Responsibility:** There is focus on free, independent, unbiased and responsible media. Coercive regulatory laws can only control media to a certain extent, but as long as the media does not acknowledge for themselves their responsibilities, higher professional standards cannot be matched. Responsibility is connected to qualifications as a journalist and thematic expertise. Journalists have the impression that they are experts on a number of issues, but they forget that they are only reporting on those issues and are not experts. For example, only health professionals can be experts on health. Thematic expertise means adequate understanding of a certain subject by an individual. Training can help in enhancing such expertise.

This comes under a framework where demand and supply match and also correlate according to change. According to a study approximately 4,500 journalists were trained in the last few years. In the overall context, in 2002 there were 2,000 journalists, now there are 18,000. If 4,500 have been trained then around 26-30 percent journalists have been trained. If we look at this figure through the aspect of quality, then we see that quantity has increased such as quantity of journalists, quantity of television, quantity of issues being discussed, but we are unable to match this with quality. If so many trainings have been conducted and the people delivering such trainings were experts, then why is there a difference between quantity and quality?

Panelist Mr. Shaukat Ali Ashraf, facilitator with Individualland, gave his views from the perspective of a consumer. According to him, through his affiliation with Individualland, he worked with media in 76 districts. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and Balochistan IL-Pakistan worked in both urban and rural areas, while in Sindh and Punjab



He said: "Mainly, two types of groups are responsible for the violence, i.e. separatists and non-separatists, while there are also sectarian organizations. The militant outfits through threats coerce the media to highlight their stories. All the opposing sides in the conflict then also use the same threats towards the media for coverage of their activities. There are 158 dailies being published from Quetta, although with no proper offices established by the national level publishers. However, some TV channels do have offices in Quetta. The salary of a journalist is very low, and professional environment is hostile, compounding his economic as well as physical security issues. As many as thirty-six journalists have been killed so far during the performance of their duties, but only one or two families have received compensation. The families have been ignored by government and journalist community and are facing hardships. They sometimes also approach journalist organizations for assistance.

"Training is a necessity but there is no interest in training by journalists. Journalists in the interior parts of the province are not well educated, so there is minimal impact of training. Even after two to three training programmes, journalists still need to be guided through the basics of journalism. In addition, the purpose of training is not clear to journalists. The trainer is charging loads of money for imparting training, so is he doing it just for money or is there any professional obligation as well? On the other hand, there is no denying that these trainings have impact and trainings have introduced a positive change. It is now a necessity that the citizens willing to join this field should be given proper training before practically being involved.

Among the panelists, Mr. Iqbal Khattak stated that the negative impact of conflict on journalism in KPK has yet to be quantified, while the impact and effectiveness of the trainings have also not been quantified. He refers to a fellow journalist, late Saif ur-Rehman, who attended one of the very first safety training programmes for journalists in Karachi. He said Mr. Rehman claimed that the training had assisted him in staying alive. He later died in a terrorism incident. The training was effective and it did assist him, but he still eventually was a victim of terrorism. He was instructed by his media outlet to cover a bomb blast, knowing the risk. The reason for his demise was that journalists have greater concern for their jobs than their lives. They are out to please their supervisors and are concerned for their deliverables. Mr. Khattak stated that "I am a journalist and a citizen, while as a journalist and a citizen I face difficulties." Journalist associations do not associate the personal lives of journalists with their professional ones. The figures presented by these associations for journalist casualties do not include the ones facing harm due to personal feuds.



According to him, the topic for the session was a little harsh, but there are reasons for using this word of “graveyard”. First the trainings have been given according to demands of donors rather than the needs of journalists. Second is the problems and drawbacks in the nomination process. Development sector organizations directly invite journalists, or take nominations through press clubs, unions and media organizations. Operation cost of trainings is a lot, while the encompassed journalists and results do not match the cost being incurred. Money that should be spent on trainings is spent on operational procedures. Narrating a personal experience he stated that a journalist was once registered in two trainings simultaneously and spent a few hours in both, while another journalist attended 48 trainings. He further stated that journalist unions and associations can hardly get 15 journalists under one roof, while during the IL conference he witnessed so many participants.

Urdu journalists do not have “raabta” or connection, as the learning process is predominantly in English based media. In English newspapers, editing is carefully done. However Urdu newspapers are not properly edited. If you read an Urdu newspaper, you cannot understand anything clearly. No source is given and sensationalism is also present, in Mr. Khattak’s opinion. There has been little or no focus on issues within Urdu journalism and the actual problems lie there, in his opinion. English based journalists on the other hand, are getting the results and achieving the goals. As long as a proper environment is not given to someone to learn they will not, the same problem is in the case of Urdu print media. Newsrooms have not been encompassed in the trainings. There is difference of opinion between the field journalists and the personnel in the newsroom i.e. editors. The managers in the media houses still carry the perception of a situation 30 years ago. There are also some grey areas in journalism which can be focused in the coming years.

Panelist MrShamimShahid while giving his views stated that before 9/11 no media organization or the managers ever considered the need for capacity building of reporters. According to him, “Although there are deficiencies but still I am thankful to the organizations, which impart trainings to the journalists.” The journalists have a forum where they can sit together and learn. In the past seniors guided junior journalists or newcomers about how to handle certain situations..Mr. Shahidstated, “I have been able to establish good relationship between field (reporters) and newsroom (editors).” The training should be according to local needs and requirements. Environment and situation in various districts of KPK is different, where an outsider cannot understand or report on the events taking place. Education level is also low in rural areas, so training is a necessity. Even the literacy level among district correspondents is low. The electronic media is going through a nascent phase within the province. Producers of electronic media should also be involved in trainings, as they are not sensitized to the local environment. They wrongly instruct the journalists to file leading stories, creating further complications.



During the plenary session questions and comments were taken from the audience. During the session it was discussed that if the question is that trainings should be imparted, then the simple answer is that they should be. There is also a responsibility on the organization, senior journalists and management for trainings. When a youngster joins this field after studying journalism, they do not have any practical knowhow. They join at a stage when they have learned through text books, now time is to give them on the job trainings. The responsibility is of the seniors to guide them and give them technical experience of beats on various issues. Another participant stated that unfortunately, no one sensitizes them to take precautions during conflict reporting. There are people working in conflict areas of KPK and Balochistan, but there is no training being conducted. Training is not the work of development sector, as they are not experts or related to this field. Just handling the camera is complicated, which can only be understood by a person who has the technical knowledge. Training cannot be conducted by a person who has no experience in this field.

It was further discussed that effort should be made to invite the owners of media houses to such events, so that the demands and requirements of journalists could be conveyed to them and pressure can be built. If a reporter or journalist is not given salary on time, then he/she cannot perform his/her duty with aplomb. The socio-political landscape in Sindh, especially in rural areas, is bleak for working journalists. They need to be trained how to report an incident involving atrocities of local tribal elders, shenanigans of elected representatives, complicity of police in crimes and safety of journalists and their families in rural fiefdoms of local tyrants. The situation in urban centers is different than rural parts of the province. In big cities, they are exposed to a sort of multi-faceted violence bordering fascism. The political gangs, sectarian outfits, drug and land-grabbing mafia consider them their prime enemies. Figures suggest that overall 96 journalists have been killed since 2000 in Pakistan, of which 26 or 30 percent are from Sindh. According to another attendee, since the time trainings have been initiated the quality of journalism has declined instead of improving. There are no big names in today's journalism, which were present in the past. Although training does have its benefits, but on the other hand professional journalism is vanishing. There is more Urdu journalism now than ever before. The problems with quality are not only present in the Urdu media but vary from organization to organization and so cannot be stereotyped. On-the-job training and mentoring should be focused within the media organizations. The problem also lies with the fact that people are able to open media houses just on the basis of money.

As the number of journalists has increased dramatically over the years, so that is one of the reasons for declining professionalism. It is also not possible to impart trainings to everyone. The citizens do not directly purchase the content from electronic media or subscribe to it. They get it through the cable TV operators. So the producer has no pressure from citizens to improve the quality of journalism. Public interest over media



is applicable globally, because they pay for the channels. Another trend in the current paradigm is that senior journalists are being overshadowed, while the new inexperienced people are getting the limelight. This is just on the basis of delivering more by sacrificing quality for quantity. Training is being given to those who do not require training, so truly a graveyard. The media situation in Pakistan has changed since 2002, as per the perspective of both the consumers and media practitioners.

The development sector organizations working in Balochistan for journalists are unable to provide them relief. In Balochistan when the militants threatened journalists in Panjgur, they went to Quetta and met with journalist unions and associations. The Journalist union asked the militants to withdraw their threat otherwise the entire media may turn against them. The militants retracted their threat and apologized. Journalists throughout these conflict-struck areas in KPK and Balochistan should support each other. In Quetta, after a twin blast claimed lives of journalists, a letter was written to media houses on behalf of unions, stating that if the reporters are pressurized to cover such stories without taking into consideration their safety, the organizations will be responsible. No story is worth a life and safety of the reporters and other field staff is of utmost importance. However, the emphasis on safety is very low by every organization involved in trainings.

There has been rapid growth in the number of media personnel since 2002. In such a situation, it should be made clear as to which ones are actually journalists and doing journalism. There are those who have opened print and electronic media houses just because they had access to funds. They have little or no background of journalism. Similarly, they hire people who do not have any professional knowledge and experience in journalism. These journalists also need guidance and training in professional journalism. A list should be developed for media personnel based on the safety measures to be taken. PFUJ has worked on this and also developed a code of conduct for reporting from conflict zones. Coalition for ethical journalism has been initiated which is engaging media owners, practitioners and journalists. Threat reporting center has also been established for journalists. It is important that these measures are adopted by journalists associations, media houses and media associations. The trainings on safety will be effective when the media houses adopt the same procedure and also ensure compliance from their reporters.

A participant emphasizing on the practicality of the capacity building stated that the trainings imparted by professionals and those by development sector differed, as the latter was more theory and did not relate directly to the profession. On the other hand, professionals impart trainings which can be practically applied. However in response to this it was acknowledged that trainings on thematic expertise (mostly imparted by development sector) and on technical aspects of journalism differ, but they both have their importance.





## Strengthening press clubs

In general, press clubs are considered recreational centers where journalists converge from all over the media places to eat, relax and chat on social, political, economic, cultural and literary trends. But, in Pakistan, it has been more than that owing to the special history and circumstances of the country. The press clubs have had to provide alternative political forums to the democratic forces during the long spells of dictatorships, when political parties had been stopped from operating openly. This political surrogacy had kept alive the political culture in Pakistan. On the other hand, press clubs were forced to organize training sessions and capacity-building workshops for journalists, because media houses were doing nothing on this front.

Apart from distribution of news, Press Clubs have a pivotal role in the training of journalists. This is why press clubs are very critical for journalists. A healthy press club ensures the effective performance of the journalists and hence the distribution of news. The objective of a press club remains the same, however the big question mark arrives when the functioning of press clubs of different districts are talked about. In Pakistan for instance, the press clubs of different cities would be performing completely differently from one another. The reasons may vary from lack or access to funds, corruption, conflicts between the members etc. Speaking about the performance of press clubs in Pakistan, journalists spoke about emerging challenges faced by the institutions and suggested measures to improve them. A session of the media conference, focused on ways to strengthen the press clubs. The session was chaired by Mr. Salim Shahid whereas Mr. Esa Treen, Mr. Saiful Islam Saifi, Mr. Imtiaz Faran, Mr. Arshad Ansari, Mr. Afzal Butt and Mr. Matiullah Jan were amongst the panelists.



Mr. EsaTareen, former president of Balochistan Union of Journalists, expressed his views on the functioning of Balochistan Press Club. He said all the districts of Balochistan have press clubs; some are limited to buildings while others have a much better structure. Some of the press clubs receive funding from government and some from other sources. He said that there should be a central union of press clubs in Pakistan, like the PFUJ. MrTareensaid press clubs have a central role in imparting training to them. He also said requirements of presidents of press clubs cannot be ignored because they strengthen them and academia and trainings should be an important part of press clubs.

Mr. Saiful Islam Saifi, former president of Peshawar Press Club, appreciated Individualland for their efforts in organizing the National Media Conference for the third year running. Speaking on the strengthening of press clubs, he said press clubs have a central role to play in a journalist's life and press clubs cannot be detached from our society. During dictatorships when freedom of expression was curtailed press clubs offered space to citizens to speak up, so the importance of press clubs cannot be cuss mutual issues. It is a second home to journalists and journalists are important stakeholders in a society. There is a general perception that press clubs are just a lounging area for journalists, but they are actually a lot more than that. Mr.Saifi believes that FATA also has a lot of importance and for the same reason, Peshawar Press Club has tried to accommodate journalists from FATA by providing them the desired environment to work, He admitted that although Peshawar Press Club is faced with a number of challenges but efforts are being carried out to overcome them. He also said it is a part of our (PFUJ) constitution that press clubs should be equipped with the latest facilities and the press clubs provide a voice to the poor and the under privileged.





The Karachi Press Club, which had been a bastion of freedom since its inception, played an important role against the curbs on media during Zia military regime. The KPC had been a source of inspiration and courage for political activists and democratic forces. For its courageous stance, once prominent poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz said: "A role that ought to be played by the political parties has been played by the KPC".

Mr. Imtiaz Faran, KPC president, shed light on the functioning of KPC. He started his discussion by praising the role of KPC which celebrated its 50 years in 2008. The KPC has catered to the needs of many senior journalists and writers. It was the first press club to amend its constitution keeping in view the basic changes in dynamics of the media, particularly the electronic media. He said the most important duty should be character building and training and the press club has vowed to help the unemployed members and those who are having problems. In Karachi, Mr. Faran stated, threats to journalists and their families have become a norm and it is the responsibility of the government to protect them. He said the press club had been exposed to pressures and criticism from some quarters who accused it of bias. But he dismissed this perception. Mr. Faran added the government should provide facilities to the journalists and also give them residential plots so their economic problems can be solved. He said our press club is situated in the red zone, due to which we face a lot of pressure and are not permitted to carry out demonstrations. He also said we were warned against welcoming the relatives of missing persons at Karachi Press Club, but we went ahead with it because we believed it was our duty to side with the oppressed. On the role of senior journalists, Mr. Faran said seniors must always help their juniors and students should be given guidelines about their career.





Arshad Ansari, president of Lahore Press Club, also emphasized strengthening of press clubs across the country. He was of the view that the PFUJ is the mother body and has a constitution and we are bound by it. He underlined the need for setting up coordination on the pattern of PFUJ. Mr Ansari said LPC has a budget of Rs. 30 million. He said LPC have spacious halls, which we rent out to generate funds. He said provincial government provides us Rs2.5 million. All the district clubs contact the LPC for their problems. Speaking about the life of journalists, Mr Ansari said a sub-editor earns less than a police constable; one can weigh the difficulties of a journalist at economic level. He said the LPC has succeeded in getting residential plots for journalist community. Talking about the LPC membership strength, he said at present we have above 1,800 members, who have a life insurance of Rs.160 million. In case of natural death, he said, we pay Rs 800,000 to the bereaved family. Besides, there's a 24-hour dispensary service on the premises of LPC which is also linked to the all big hospitals, he added. Apart from welfare services, he said, we have always struggled against dictatorships. He said the LPC is open to all, but it does not allow uniformed people in its precinct.





their problems. Speaking about the life of journalists, Mr Ansari said a sub-editor earns less than a police constable; one can weigh the difficulties of a journalist at economic level. He said the LPC has succeeded in getting residential plots for journalist community. Talking about the LPC membership strength, he said at present we have above 1,800 members, who have a life insurance of Rs.160 million. In case of natural death, he said, we pay Rs 800,000 to the bereaved family. Besides, there's a 24-hour dispensary service on the premises of LPC which is also linked to the all big hospitals, he added. Apart from welfare services, he said, we have always struggled against dictatorships. He said the LPC is open to all, but it does not allow uniformed people in its precinct. Speaking on the occasion, PFUJ president Mr. Afzal Butt said a press club cannot be complete without family activities like other clubs. Owing to their professional commitments, journalists cannot give time to their family members so press club caters to their needs. He said press clubs are a sort of beaneries, which do provide food on subsidized rates to its members. He said press clubs are like political barometers, reflecting political changes in society, and that is why they are more politicized than the political parties. He said they have always sided with poor segments of society and provided them a platform to vent their feelings. Speaking about his visit to the Indian press clubs, he said in India press clubs offer membership to entrepreneurs by charging them a fee of Rs one million. He said in his opinion all press clubs should have a central coordination body. He said the PFUJ had a golden history, but suffered a lot in the last ten years at the hands of imposters and opportunists.

Expressing his views, Mr. Matiullah Jan, an anchor person at Waqt TV, said that situation across Pakistan has worsened, as the press clubs have failed in their role. He said resources assigned to press clubs should be equally distributed and press clubs should not be allowed to bargain with the donors. Mr. Jan was critical about the union of journalists, as he said press clubs have overtaken unions. He claimed that union of journalists had lost control due to lack of funds and lost their moral authority. He said union of journalists should be like an appellate court for press clubs and press clubs should be disciplined by the PFUJ otherwise their standards would keep on deteriorating. He also spoke about corruption and said it is one of the reasons why journalism is suffering. He said unless press clubs and unions are disciplined, corruption and black money would keep on threatening different people.

After the panelists' sessions ended, the floor was opened for questions and comments from the participants of the media conference. Various interesting comments and questions were raised by participants. One participant expressed her concerns that despite their constitution, press clubs are still faced with problems. She suggested one constitution for all press clubs across the country. Another participant said that self-realization at individual level is a prerequisite to solving the problems faced by the press clubs. If the press club is not getting required funds from the government or other sources, its members need to find and promote income-generating activities.



A participant raised the issue of gender discrimination and harassment at press clubs by their male counterparts. Mr. Imtiaz, addressing the concern, said that there is a code of conduct designed for all the press clubs under which un-professional behavior with colleagues is punishable, and that the press clubs are working hard to ensure the implementation of that code.

Other participants raised queries about the ineffectiveness of members of the National Press Club of Islamabad. One participant was of the view that it would have been better if the secretary of NPC were invited to the media conference in order to answer their questions. According to him, the top management should be answerable to queries from members of the press clubs.

their problems. Speaking about the life of journalists, MrAnsari said a sub-editor earns less than a police constable; one can weigh the difficulties of a journalist at economic level. He said the LPC has succeeded in getting residential plots for journalist community. Talking about the LPC membership strength, he said at present we have above 1,800 members, who have a life insurance of Rs.160 million. In case of natural death, he said, we pay Rs 800,000 to the bereaved family. Besides, there's a 24-hour dispensary service on the premises of LPC which is also linked to the all big hospitals, he added. Apart from welfare services, he said, we have always struggled against dictatorships. He said the LPC is open to all, but it does not allow uniformed people in its precinct.



# Pakistan media in 2024

Media is considered the backbone of a democratic society. It plays a role in molding public opinion and informing them about the hidden agenda of tyrants. It is called the fourth pillar of a democracy. During the last decade, media in Pakistan has emerged as a powerful player. In 2000, we had only two TV channels – PTV and STN. Since then, many private television channels have emerged, widening the choice for the consumers. This has also improved the quality of information provided to them. Moreover, with the emergence of social media, the delivery of information to the consumers has picked up enormous pace.

At present, we have some 83 TV channels that showcase news, entertainment and religion. This means that during the last ten years, at least 80 new TV channels have surfaced, which is an extraordinary event. This increase is proving beneficial to consumers, but there are also some risks. Will media follow the code of ethics in its business? Media is power, which can transform the world into both paradise and hell. It depends on the media policy-makers how they want to see their planet. There is a general belief that media outlets are deviating from media ethics in order to expand their influence. How

media will be shaping itself in the next 15 years? Whether it will produce quality journalism or go for mushrooming quantity? How it will look like in 2024?



In a separate session, the Media Conference also focused on Pakistan Media in 2024. The session was chaired by Mr. Kamal Siddiqui, Editor of Express Tribune, whereas senior journalist Mr. Ikram-Hoti, and famous broadcaster Mr. Murtaza Solangi, Ms. Fareeha and Ms. Nighat Daad were amongst the panelists.

Mr. Siddiqui started the discussion by accepting the dominance of electronic media over the print media in last decade. He said: "The rising electron-



ic media has affected the print media, but the latter is not in decline. We will have to look into the future of the print media." He said people prefer internet to get news. He also pointed out that social media has changed the landscape of journalism and enhanced the process of news sharing. He said

and that it also fears democratic forces because it is not democratic itself. Concluding his discussion Mr.Hoti said the media needs a paradigm shift and there should be a new social contract with the society if media wants to improve its image.



Former Director General of Pakistan Broadcasting Corp, Mr. Mur-tazaSolangi,said he endorsed the views expressed by Mr. Hoti and said he has rightly expressed his reservations about the media in 2024.

He said today's media in Pakistan is either seth-centred(controlled by cash flushed merchants) or state owned, and unfortunately the state media institutions have not introduced any improvements during the past few decades. He said the state institutions and their leaders also influence the media. While concluding his address Mr.Solangi said today's media environment has become complex and future newspapers might not be on papers but will be tools for perspective building and will provide a deeper analysis. He said now we have digital editions of newspapers and in the future this practice will increase manifolds. Ms. Fareeha, Director of Bolo Bhi, added that the next ten years would see the ascent of social media in Pakistan. She said the basic difference between social media and traditional media is the element of seriousness. If the social media was so non-serious then it would not have been like this. She said news is circulated

though the social media has its pitfalls (lack of credibility, no censorship), it is still an important medium of information.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. IkramHoti said the media in 2024 will grow technologically, but will be a nuisance. He criticized the media for its role in promoting of militancy and expressed fear that it will transform into a terrorist-friendly media by 2024, if it doesn't review its role. The media is inclined towards militancy, which the journalists should realize. He also pointed out that the media has so far not given a charge-sheet to dictators,





this. She said news is circulated within minutes on social media and due to this the mainstream media will have to open a kiosk on the social media as well by 2024, which is quite worrisome for the print media. Rejecting the general perception that social media is for the elite only, she said that smart phones are now within the reach of every individual, irrespective of how rich or poor he or she may be. This she said has made social media accessible to everyone.

Ms. NighatDaad, Executive Director at Digital Rights Foundation, continued from where Ms. Fareeha left. Speaking on the theme, she said that the importance of social media cannot be ignored. She recalled how a few tweets by an Abbottabad resident about an unusual helicopter movement brought to the world the earliest tidings of Osama bin Laden's episode. If social media was not important, then Dawn and Express Tribune had no need to create their websites or blogs. The fact that blogs give power to citizens to discuss anything they want without any fear is what makes them so pertinent and powerful. She said an ongoing debate that social media is overshadowing electronic and print media should come to a halt. People need to realize that both branches of media have their importance and both can benefit from each other, she concluded.

During the plenary sessions, some participants applauded the role of social media during the last decade or so; some were concerned that in the next ten years or more, the standard of news reporting will suffer negatively owing to the social media. A participant challenged the authenticity of news on social media and linked it to the downfall of media. Another was of the view that the hype surrounding the social media is unjustified as in Pakistan it has only unearthed two or maybe three breaking news including the OBL operation. Other than that, it has been the traditional media which has been providing the consumers with news.

The panelists dismissed the assertions that there is any rivalry between the social and the traditional media. A significant number of journalists are taking the route of social media to increase their outreach or to spread their views, which they cannot convey through their respective media outlets. The panelists admitted that there should be laws on the regulation of information shared on social media to ensure the credibility of news. When asked to define a sense of ownership on social media, one of the panelists said it is responsibility of the individual to post content that is legal in context. The regulations are still in early phase of implementation and will get robust with time.





## In the newsroom



A newsroom is an office where journalists work to create stories for a newspaper, radio station or television station. The most important person in the newsroom is the editor; it is s/he who evaluates the worth of a news story and to list stories in order of importance. Only professional journalists and editors can run a newsroom because all the stories are produced there. In order to discuss the ongoing situation at the newsrooms of different media outlets, a session was held at the media conference. Mr. Aniq Zafar chaired the session whereas Mr. A.H Khanzada, Mr. Raza Rumi and Mr. Matiullah Jan were amongst the panelists.

In his introductory remarks, Mr. Aniq Zafar shed light on the deteriorating role and status of the newsroom. He said: "The role of the newsroom has transformed, and diminished". Mr. Raza Rumi, editor of Friday Times, said that the evolution and greater outreach of electronic media in the past ten years has changed the role of the newsroom. There are people attached to both print and electronic media. There are more than thirty 24/7 news channels, where the role of editors has also diminished and there is always a race for breaking news. The central role of the editor was evident in the print media, but the role of newsroom in the electronic media is hard to distinguish. The role of advertisers in promoting the breaking news phenomenon is also prominent. The advertisements are based on the sensationalism accompanied with breaking news, captivating the viewers.



He was of the view that sensationalism in the media has increased to such an extent that once a judges' panel of the apex court was formed at midnight and the media portrayed it as something extraordinary. This sensationalism led to an environment of confrontation within the country. The media has to determine for itself the code of ethics and professionalism for broadcasting any breaking news, in order to maintain objectivity. The mechanism for editorial control and oversight has to be actively implemented, as is done elsewhere in the world. Mr. Rumi also said that news reporting through SMS is already a new phenomenon and presents new challenges. There are 130 million registered mobile numbers in Pakistan of which 65 percent are active. After the 3G platform becomes available, the scenario of news reporting will undergo another change.



Currently, the facility of internet is available to about 25 million Pakistanis, due to which the social media is also gaining popularity. Especially in urban areas the social media has become a medium of dialogue and the main source for acquiring information. The print, electronic and social media are merging with the passage of time and traditional barriers are fading. Even the traditional electronic and print media are utilizing the internet and mobile network for expanding their outreach. He said Pakistan's 60 percent population is less than 29 years old, while internet and mobile is very much popular among this segment of the population. The use of social media and SMS is also a norm within this segment. Regulating the internet is next to impossible. Even though YouTube has been blocked for



YouTube has been blocked for a couple of years, there are proxy servers available to bypass such restrictions. It has now become a necessity that regulations should also be developed for such situations and training should be imparted to media personnel for operating within this environment. During the evolution of electronic media, journalists switched over from print media to electronic media in cross-owned media houses, and the same trend could take place in the case of social media, where larger media groups may take the lead.

A. H. Khanzada shed light on the distinctions between print and electronic media. He added that the television newsroom is different compared to the print media's newsroom as the electronic media's newsroom is quite vibrant. In the print media, the newsroom takes its time and goes through the news copy and the entire newspaper with great care. This is a process spanning hours, while viewing content from every aspect. On television a news story starts with a ticker from a field reporter and the assignment editor then decides how far that story can go. If the news story has to be carried forward, then other details are taken from reporter over phone. The response time for the electronic media is very little and the personnel have to face a lot of pressure. There is a tense environment in the newsroom and only those people sustain this situation who can manage stress.

Mr. Khanzada was of the view that the owners of TV channels had given the authority to producers, instead of journalists. He was critical of the producers. He said the producers had seen an increase in power but they were not journalists, lacked professionalism and therefore did not follow any professional, ethical or even policy guidelines, whereas this was not the case in the print media newsrooms. He also compared the professionalism of director news in electronic media and the editor in print media. He considered the former to be less professional. He quoted a certain news director as referring to his female reporters as "eye candy" and being particular about their 'outlook'. He deemed this not only unprofessional but also "immoral". He also criticized the news channels for playing English and Hindi songs during news reporting and the TV anchors sometimes asking foolish questions and behaving irresponsibly. He also criticized the owners for not doing enough for the benefit of their employees and not even paying the journalists their salaries. Referring to the importance being given to the social media, he considered that this can never replace the traditional media.

Matiullah Jan, a senior journalist, said the concept of a newsroom is like an Intensive Care Unit (ICU), some are cured and others go back on a stretcher. The news based on certain criteria is given space in the print or airtime. Sometimes it receives more praise than expected, while in other instances it might be rejected. The newsroom now has lost its sanctity because of lack of professional editors; owners run newsrooms now, not editors. He referred to the recent war of words between two leading news groups. He gave the examples of how senior people related to the two groups heaped scorn at each other. He asked whether this could happen in the presence of a professional editor. The editors and journalists are there, but they are in constant contact with the owners, who dictate

to them the policy. Some reporters and journalists are not even answerable to their seniors, but only to the owners.

Then there is also the influence of businesses and the corporate sector over journalists and the overall media. Mr. Jan said the newsrooms today do not represent the public, but big business, and want to influence the courts and the government. As during the last five years, the newsrooms have been dictating to the courts, he said. The newspapers are nowadays filled with retraction of news stories filed earlier by reporters because proper procedure was not adopted by the newsroom while printing them. There is monopoly and cartels being created within the media sector through cross-ownership. He criticized the role of PEMRA and the Press Council for failure to respond to consumer complaints against the media. The media has lost its sense of self-accountability and only emphasizes the accountability of others. He was of the view that our field has lost its color and in order to improve the standards, serious measures have to be taken.

During the plenary session, a participant asked how the situation where producers and owners are in total control can be changed for the better. In response it was suggested that either a professional journalist should be made the producer, or it should be attempted that the producer should adhere to journalistic norms and understand journalism. The journalists should also take active interest in the field of production, so they can also attain such slots. To a question regarding the banning of social media within most newsrooms and reporting rooms and its impact, it was stated that social media is not a reliable source for acquiring information. With reference to a recent sectarian incident in Rawalpindi, it was stated that there were exaggerated versions of the event circulating in the social media. However, given the popularity of social media it is important that its use should be accepted and accommodated, instead of being blocked or banned from newsrooms. One of the participants was of the view that the news desk or the newsroom and the people involved there should not be stereotyped; rather, it should be understood that all kinds of people exist everywhere. It was also discussed that there is a specific amount of time allocated for free of cost public service messaging. However, some channels are also selling that airtime to sponsors.

The media is pressurizing the state institutions and no authority can take any lawful action against it or its owners. The government also uses financial strings and other methods to control the media. There are a few newspapers, which have a working editor. The rest have owners themselves as chief editors. The families owning these groups follow a dynastic policy, where the offspring inherits the media group. According to a participant, journalists are present in the newsroom; it is only the problem of definition. Even the producers should be included in the definition of journalism. The newsroom has the responsibility to filter the news, checking and correcting language or spelling mistakes, while the editors and director news come after that. The language of the news is the responsibility of the reporter, editor and publisher. The problem is not in the newsroom, but is also present in the grooming and capacity building of the journalists and newcomers.



## Need for joint ethics for print and electronic, agreement on baseline

The concluding session was conducted by Mr. Mazhar Abbas, who said that lust for money and poor editorial decisions are damaging journalism. All journalist and media associations and regulatory bodies i.e. Pakistan Broadcasters Association and PEMRA; all have codes of ethics. So there is only a question of implementation as few organizations and fewer journalists follow the code of ethics. In 1950, the PFUJ's code of ethics was developed and if that is implemented, then it may be enough. He stated that being a journalist, he/she should not carry out any activity that may be humiliating for them, their organization, their employer or their profession. The editors always had considerable authority within the traditional mainstream newspapers and this has been somewhat maintained till now. There was no interference in the work or domain of the editor; however this practice is no more followed.

Throughout the world, there are mostly government based regulations, while self-regulations are very few. Self-regulations are needed where there is no editor, as the editor carries out this job. He gave the example of certain newspapers, which have the policy of not printing advertisements on the front and back pages, despite offers from sponsors. Regarding electronic media he shared his own experience, when he was director current affairs and the channel owner requested him to reduce the time for programs and increase political advertisements during the final days of the election campaign in 2013. Mazhar linked such pressures to poor editorial decision, based on financial





interest. The time which could have been utilized for informing the citizens about elections was dedicated to advertisements. He further claimed that if these media organizations are given a code of conduct prioritizing the editorial over the marketing department, they will never look at it a second time. The viewers do not watch a program for the advertisements it includes.

The advertisers are paying for the quality of the program and the resulting viewership. A fine balance should be maintained between advertisements and content, as finance is also required for sustenance. The resolution of issues is being sought through television programs, while the anchors consider themselves experts on solving these issues. He was also of the view that some highly sensitive matters are discussed on television which can lead to disaster and programs that are morally and ethically not worth viewing are often run on television. He said the biggest issue these days is whether all the media stakeholders will agree with the government on regulations or not. Now the media has become so powerful that they can topple governments. He was also of the view that PEMRA should be an autonomous body with journalists as office holders, because the chairman and office holders in PEMRA are not often from the media.





**Individualland**

Creating space for the individual

Individualland creates choices! As an innovative research-based consultancy and advocacy group we open up space for the individual. Our focus is the role of the media and to generate a peaceful discourse in society. We are working to increase the number of responsible journalists, media-literacy among citizens and a greater acceptance for different ways to live.

[www.individualland.com](http://www.individualland.com)    [info@individualland.com](mailto:info@individualland.com)

Find us

 Individualland  
 Individualland