Global Neighbourhood for Media Innovation (GNMI) is a registered not-for-profit organization working in the dimension of media development for a better informed and responsible society. It promotes the nationwide access to media advocacy, learning and literacy in the spectrum of news, and infotainment, through intellectual and cultural engagement. It is committed to becoming the centre of developing media and civil society. GNMI works under the areas of media awareness, cultural development, providing learning resources, advocacy and social justice.
Message from the President

Looking back at 2020, much of it was overwhelmed with chaos and uncertainty, we now know that the world has changed. The COVID-19 pandemic has speeded up some past developments, and entirely changed the direction of others.

We were also inspired by the power of people we witnessed. With no shred of doubt, the year will be remembered not just for the challenge—a global health pandemic, but also for amplified fight for media freedom, efforts against the infodemic by the journalists reporting in most unsafe and unprotected situations and struggle to eliminate violence against journalists especially women and impunity for such crimes in a polarized political environment under a regime that is more than willing to crush the free voice, physically or digitally.

Financial problems put projects, even organizations, under stress that they had to shut down due to immediate halting of ongoing activities but at the same time it was also a promising year as international development sector were passionately inspired to support more adaptive, innovative and safer interventions to carry forward the development work under pandemic conditions. GNMI took it as an opportunity and explored innovative solutions to meet our programmatic needs. Our partners also made remarkable commitments to our cause. Their generosity has continued to ignite confidence and faith in reaching our goals during 2020 such as increasing gender-equality in news reporting, addressing disinformation around polio and COVID-19, promoting human and women rights, raising and highlighting voices for independence of media and press, and addressing technical, capacity and financial challenges of journalists in a fast-paced world of digital newsrooms.

With our partners’ support and out team’s dedication and hard work we were able to implement 3 in-person and 44 online activities under 6 projects with 4 partners while engaging 1,178 beneficiaries across Pakistan.

All of us – individuals, communities and organizations – faced unprecedented challenges in 2020. In these unpredictable times, GNMI remained committed to contributing in improving the economic and social prosperity of the journalist community in particular and public in general. We intend to continue doing just that!

We welcome the future. We are ready!

Najia Ashar
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Introduction

This annual report overviews the working of Global Neighbourhood for Media Innovation (GNMI) during the year of 2020. We carried forward a few projects from the previous year and also started new projects including Saving the Press – Pakistan Entrepreneurial Journalism program which is the first of its kind program in Pakistan specifically designed to increase capacity of journalists and those who work in media and wish to launch their own digital news outlet, taking full control of their venture and earning revenue through it.

In this year, GNMI worked on projects that focused on innovation in media, tolerance, social cohesion, democratic values and gender inclusion. GNMI also arranged several workshops, training sessions and discussion on the role media can play in building an informed and equal society. It was the year of pandemic. The projects required a hybrid strategy to meet their goals in set time. While many organizations halted their operations or postponed them, GNMI had to work harder than before as journalists were fighting on frontline against the infodemic that came along with the COVID-19 pandemic to keep their audience informed and safe.

Working in an online space opened new avenues for us. Here, in this report, we discuss in detail how we used online spaces in our working and how using the online platforms affected our work.
2020 was the year of pandemic caused by a novel coronavirus that emerged from Wuhan, China and spread to the whole world in few months. All countries following footsteps of China and Italy imposed strict lockdowns within their borders to contain the virus in infected areas and to stop more infections. This whole situation affected everything both in public and private spaces. The internet technologies came for the rescue of human race. The offices utilizing the advance technologies shifted from offline spaces to online to run their regular operations as before. It was not less than a challenge for organizations working in developing countries with low internet penetration.

Global Neighbourhood for Media Innovation (GNMI) halted its operations in March as the COVID-19 cases started to increase. The situation was uncertain. No one knew when life would return to normal. In July, GNMI decided to resume its activities seeing the infodemic surrounding COVID-19 reporting to equip journalists in Pakistan with essential trainings required for responsible reporting in the pandemic. It was not possible to conduct offline sessions as before. GNMI decided to go online. It was the first time the organization was going to use any online service to conduct its sessions. GNMI used two video conference software, Zoom and StreamYard for its sessions with journalists and other stakeholders.

It was not an easy task especially in reference of Pakistan where internet is still a luxury. GNMI focuses on building capacities of those journalists and media workers who otherwise do not have access to formal education in media and work under severe conditions with the limited knowledge and skill they have. Most of them live and work in the areas with poor internet access. GNMI had to take care of their needs to involve them in its activities.

GNMI worked day and night to make its training sessions inclusive, safer, and easier to attend for the participants- seeing workload and the strict work schedule of journalists. Some of the workshops were split into two-hour sessions each day to not add into their workload.

Although most of the projects had offline activities but seeing the need of the time, our program team made changes accordingly. Gladly, the new shift to online platform opened new opportunities not for GNMI as an organization but also for its stakeholders. The online sessions were easier for female journalists to attend from the comfort of their home. Before the pandemic, some of them would decline to participate in the workshop because of their commitments at their homes. The online conferences made it easier for them to participate in sessions and enhance their capacities. GNMI trained 1,178 journalists and media students from all provinces of Pakistan during the pandemic.
Projects

GNMI worked on several projects in 2020 that complied with its main objective of supporting digital news media in Pakistan in its way towards fair and responsible reporting. Here, we are presenting an introduction of each project along with their impact and results.

Reshaping the Future of Journalism - Gender Equality Reporting

This project titled “Reshaping the Future of Journalism” particularly focused on increasing the capacity of journalists and media students to report on gender-sensitive issues using the contemporary tools required to go digital.

It started in last quarter of 2019 as in person activity. Earlier part of the project was implemented as such but with the spread of COVID-19 in Pakistan, we had to shift our activities online to make our training sessions keeping in mind the viral spread and the social distancing rules to keep our participants safe. This added another dimension of capacity building of the participants to the project scope, having train them to use such software and devices prior to the actual execution of training activities.

During Jan-Mar 2020, GNMI organized 2 in-person workshops covering different topics were arranged for 171 journalism students from Mehran University Jamshoro and Sindh University (Jamshoro). During the pandemic Oct-Dec 2020, 18 online sessions with 477 students from University of Balochistan (Quetta), Sardar Bahadur Khan Women’s University (Quetta), Balochistan University of IT, Engineering and Management Sciences (Quetta), Alhamd Islamic University (Quetta), Sindh Madressatul Islam University (Karachi), Benazir Bhutto Shaheed University Lyari (Karachi), University of Karachi (Karachi), and Iqra University (Karachi) were held. The topics covered were digital interviewing tools and techniques that interviewee must use while interviewing survivors of gender-based violence, newsgathering techniques for social media and principles of gender-sensitive journalism, voicing and presentation over social media, and Photojournalism – mainstreaming a gender perspective.
During Jan-Mar 2020, 1 in-person training was arranged for 26 journalists in Hyderabad press club on Digital Interviewing Tools & Techniques for Survivors of GBV. Between October 2020 and December 2020, 4 3-day online training sessions were organized with 61 journalists from Quetta, Ziarat, Pasheen and Karachi on Reporting through vlogging/blogging - addressing gender equality and building a bulletproof digital news startup and much more. These trainings were led by US-based trainers Ms. Beatrice Motamedi and Ms. Zena Barakat. The reason behind training journalists from the two provinces was that many of them who report on gender-based violence often struggle with ethical issues while writing their reports.

**Empowering Journalists to Report On the Impact of Covid-19 in Pakistan through Online Capacity Building Workshops and Advocacy**

This special program was launched to build capacity of Pakistani journalists to report on the impact of COVID-19 in Pakistan. It was a standard practice for reporters to go into the field to collect stories. COVID-19 pandemic confined them to their work stations at home. This sudden shift exposed them to new challenges mainly related to the infodemic of bad advice, baseless medical information, and sensationalist headlines. Several international news organizations and internet companies released tools to help journalists verify information; however, journalists
working in developing countries like Pakistan required training specifically for them. During 2020, this project supported a workshop conducted on “Countering fake news propaganda & disinformation linked to Polio amid Covid-19 pandemic”. A total of 12 journalists (6 women, 06 men) from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Tribal Areas attended the live workshop on Zoom. Mr. Tayyeb Afridi (founder Tribal News Network) was lead trainer of this workshop. Dr. Hafsah Muhammad (Asst. Professor Khyber Medical University) participated as guest speaker.

In the same year this program also supported a webinar titled ‘Women on the Frontlines of Polio Eradication & Covid-19 Response’. Founder and president of GNMI Najia Ashar hosted the live session. Among the panelists, there were parliamentary secretary health of Balochistan Dr Rubaba Buledi, member of Provincial Assembly Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ayesha Bano, Journalists Farzana Ali and Bushra Qamar.

Webinar’s estimated reach on Facebook was approximately 23,000. 1200 individuals watched the webinar live on official Facebook page of GNMI. On Twitter, the webinar received 7,851 impressions and 211 engagements.

Besides, this project also focused on publishing awareness messages about pandemic for the mass audience. For the very purpose, GNMI contacted renowned names from different fields of life. Dr. Fauzia Saeed – Chairperson Pakistan National Council of Arts, Hassan Khan – Director
News Khyber News and Qazi Arif Mehmood – Program Host – were the first three celebrities whose awareness messages GNMI recorded and disseminated through its social media platforms during November 2020. These interviews reached up to 29,803 unique users combined on official social media platforms of GNMI – Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

 Fighting Disinformation & Supporting Independent Media in Pakistan

This project aims to strengthen Pakistani journalists’ skills in fact-checking, investigative journalism, and their ability to identify and counter disinformation in digital media. It started in October 2020. In the first quarter that completes with the end of 2020, two online journalists training workshops, one live webinar and two digital interviews were produced under this project. The project is supported by National Endowment for Democracy.

The online workshops targeted journalists working in Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and tribal areas as they seldom get opportunities to grow and excel in their career. Both workshops were organized on video calling service, Zoom.

The first training workshop was organized for the journalists working in Hyderabad, Kashmore, Sukkur and Karachi. The title of this workshop was ‘Countering Fake News, Propaganda and Disinformation Linked to the Covid-19 Pandemic.’ Ms. Lubna Jerar Naqvi, who is a seasoned journalist and has more than two decades of experience in digital media, led the training. She told participants about disinfodemic during the COVID-19 pandemic, how disinformation and misinformation spread and how social media accelerates the process. Mr. Sajjad Suhag, a broadcast journalist affiliated with KTN, was invited as a guest speaker for the session. He led the session on risk factors that regional journalists face while reporting especially during these challenging times of pandemic. A total of 11 (06 women, 5 men) journalists attended the workshop.
The second workshop covered responsible and ethical reporting through mobile journalism. It was open to attend for journalists working in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and tribal areas. Senior journalists and media trainers Founder Tribal News Network) and Mr. Ayaz Khan (Founder Mojo Pakistan) were the main trainers of this workshop. The training comprised of two back-to-back sessions with the objectives of informing the participants about mobile journalism (mojo) and ethical issues in mojo to consider for reporting responsibly. A total of 15 (07 women, 08 men) attended this workshop.

Other than online workshop, this project also supported a live webinar on the role of women who were countering the disinformation during COVID-19 pandemic. The panel had Fareiha Aziz (Digital Media Activist), Iffat Hasan Rizvi (Journalist/Author/Columnist), Najia Ashar (Journalist/Founder Media Baithak) and Muzzamil Hassan (Journalist). Former news anchor Ayesha Khalid moderated the session. The webinar went live through official facebook pages of GNMI and Media Baithak. A total of 73 individuals (22 women, 51 men) interacted with the live video in form of views, reactions and comments. The organic reach of the webinar was 4.8K, more than our expectations.
GNMI also produced two digital interviews under this program. The first interview featured senior broadcast journalist and documentary filmmaker Munizae Jahangir. She discussed freedom of speech, threats to media freedom and journalists in Pakistan, censorship and self-censorship, right to information and fake news among other relevant topics. This interview was published on official social media platforms of GNMI on 2nd November 2020. It reached to 3.5K individuals organically and engaged 2.9k unique users that indicate their interest in the topic.

The second digital interview featured senior journalist and anchor Amber Rahim Shamsi. She discussed the culture of breaking news in the newsrooms, fake news, news verification, digital verification platforms, information disorders and importance of independent media in her interview. The digital video was shared on social media platforms of GNMI on 15 December 2020. It reached to 1000 unique users organically.
This special program on Entrepreneurial Journalism focuses on increasing journalists’ capacity to create and distribute content online from which they can furnish or significantly supplement their income, thereby reducing the need dependency on government-sponsored advertising.

It is first of its own kind of program that GNMI introduced to support journalists and content creators who wanted to take their own start in digital sphere. Through this program, GNMI planned to provide essential training and resources to at least 60 journalists, content creators and independent bloggers and vloggers to help them launch their own independent digital news outlets.

In the last quarter of 2020, GNMI invited applications from journalists, content creators and independent bloggers and vloggers to apply for the first phase of the program that covers a three-day training session on basics of entrepreneurial journalism.

Entrepreneurial journalism is a new concept in Pakistan. GNMI organized a live webinar to discuss the project in detail with a hint on why we need entrepreneurial journalism at this crucial time when the media industry in Pakistan is suffering amid the COVID-19 pandemic and political instability. Another purpose of the webinar was to give the interested applicants an opportunity to ask them questions about the big move – from mainstream media to digital platforms to try their luck in entrepreneurship. The webinar panel included Ms. Marjan Arbab (Manager, National Incubation Centre), Aoun Sahi (Senior Journalist), Najia Ashar (Founder GNMI) and Badar Khushnood (Co-founder Bramerz). The event received 366 live views with 987 organic reach.

GNMI also hosted a tweet chat on Twitter to answer most commonly asked questions of applicants. The response was overwhelming. Within half hour #AskGNMI was trending in on Pakistani twitter. #AskGNMI was tweeted and retweeted 352 times by leading journalists during the time of TweetChat including 39 questions from prospective applicants. The TweetChat received total 4,722,578 live views with an economic value of $6,251.
A total of 194 applications (see annex), 300% more than reserved space, were received from journalists all over Pakistan (Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit Baltistan and Azad Jammu & Kashmir). After a careful review and vetting process, GNMI selected 71 applications (34 of female applicants and 37 of male applicants). The selected participants were divided into three cohorts to be trained in Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad in the year 2021.

**Sensitizing Media on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE)**

Pakistan is one of the countries in the world that have higher rates of violence and extremism. GNMI worked on a project titled ‘Sensitizing Media on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE)’ to play its role in lowering the level of violence in the society. This project is supported by Development Alternatives Incorporated.
This project gives voice to those individuals from Pakistan who have been working for peace in their individual domains for years. Some of them have been working in politics, some in sports and some in journalism. GNMI identified fifteen role models from Pakistan belonging to all genders and backgrounds.

GNMI worked with them to tell their story to the entire world. In the first quarter of the project, three stories were developed for broadcast through official social media networks of GNMI in the year 2021.

The first story was of a boxer from Lyari, Nadir Baloch. He has been doing boxing for the last 20 years. He has represented Pakistan on various national and international boxing platforms and tournaments. He owns several titles including Pakistan’s featherweight champion.

The second story was of a journalist Sidra Dar. Dar works as multimedia journalist for Voice of America Urdu Service in Karachi. She covers politics to culture for VOA and often receives severe backlash from the locals but nothing stops her from pursuing her work.

This last story is of Saeeda Khatoon. She lost her only son in Baldia Town factory fire incident. She has been fighting for justice for past eight years. She chairs the Ali Enterprise Factory Fire Affectees Association, a group of affectees to demand justice.

The remaining stories followed by media sensitization sessions and publication of journalistic work in media will be completed next year.
Pakistan is one of the countries in the world that have higher rates of violence and extremism. GNMI worked on a project titled ‘Creating Media Clubs in Universities’ to play its role in lowering the level of violence in the higher educational institutions. This project is supported by Development Alternatives Incorporated.

This project aims to provide university students from Shah Abdul Latif University (Khairpur) and Benazir Bhutto Shaheed University Lyari (Karachi) a platform to promote CVE values through media focused activities. It will also contribute to increased universities’ engagement on CVE, through increased peace promotion (using media as the primary medium) activities on campus.

Under the project during year 2020, GNMI identified the participating students from both universities. GNMI also organized two online Orientation Sessions at Shah Latif University (Khairpur) to brief the students and faculty regarding the program, expectations and requirements of participation and schedule of activities.

The remaining activities followed by media development and publication on social media will be completed next year. The sessions were attended by 75 students (37 female, 3 male) at the university.
Research and Publications

The research team of GNMI actively produces knowledge-based documents to fill the gap in literature covering media, its working and participation of women in media. This year was special in terms that it brought new challenges not only for health department but also for media and its workers. GNMI produced following information-rich document to help journalists in Pakistan in understanding the risk and to report safely about it. This document is available on website of GNMI. Its link is given in the footnote.

Corona Coverage Guidelines for Journalists

Other than health workers and government officials, journalists were also fighting on frontline against the pandemic with the single aim to keep the public informed about the viral outbreak so they could protect themselves. They had been doing this at the cost of their lives. The need of the time was to educate them about the safety measures they must adopt to stay safe while reporting on COVID-19 pandemic. GNMI drafted and published this guiding document for journalists in Pakistan covering tips on coverage during pandemic and ethics of journalism. It also contains useful resources they could use to get authentic and up to date information about the pandemic.

Like previous year, this year, too, GNMI took part in international campaigns supporting women empowerment and demanding an end to violence against women. GNMI believes silence is not an option now. We all have to raise our voice together if we wish to make this world better for our future generations.

**International Women’s Day – Generation Equality**

GNMI invited women working in media industry to share their belief about women empowerment and agency on International Women’s Day, 2020. Their messages were shared on social media accounts of GNMI and Media Baithak which is an offline and online space for media engagement.

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**Sixteen Days of Activism 2020 – #orangethelworld**

GNMI became part of 16 days of Activism like previous year to show its support in demanding an end towards violence against women. The team at GNMI and its allies showed their solidarity with differently abled women who are more subjected to violence for their condition.
The social media presence of GNMI is not limited to Facebook and Twitter but these are the two major platforms in Pakistan with millions of users. Following are the numbers that we hit during 2020 on our official social media accounts.

**Conclusion**

2020 came with multiple challenges. The novel coronavirus pushed government across the world to impose strict lockdowns for the safety of their people. The offices shifted online so workers can work from the safety and comfort of their homes. It was an easy step to take in the developed countries but the situation was not that ideal for developing world with low internet penetration and literacy level.

GNMI halted its operations for the time being but then had to resume seeing rise in infodemic and conspiracy theories about the deadly virus. Like others, Pakistani journalists were also working on frontline along with health care workers and officials to keep the public informed and safe forgetting that they were also on risk. It was the need of the time to equip them with essential training and knowledge required for safe reporting during a pandemic and to counter disinformation and misinformation about the disease.

GNMI invited senior journalists, and media trainers to train working journalists so they can do responsible and ethical reporting during the pandemic. Like other organizations, GNMI also made best use of internet technologies during this time to conduct its activities as taking break was not an option. GNMI mostly targets under privileged areas that have low internet penetration. So, the bigger challenge was to make sure that each participants has smooth access to the internet and the training session does not feel an additional load as they were already very occupied.

Lastly, GNMI used its digital presence to disseminate its message to a much wider audience. It hosted webinars, broadcasted digital interviews and supported collaborations on a variety of topics related to COVID-19. The response was overwhelming. Thousands of social media users received those messages that show their interest in the work that GNMI does.
Our Partners in Change

Thank you for the belief and support to our vision and mission.
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