

Fostering citizen  
journalism  
among youth



PAKISTAN YOUTH  
CHANGE  
ADVOCATES

Pakistan Youth Change Advocates (PYCA) is a non-profit civil society organization working to promote peace and development through youth participation.

## CONTEXT

Media plays a key role in any society as it provides us with the understanding of the world around us. Nevertheless, with this authority of giving perspectives and opinions to masses about the world, comes the responsibility of disseminating information objectively and honestly. Hence, the term free media becomes synonymous with responsible media.

To truly become the fourth pillar of the state, media requires certain professional and ethical standards of journalism that ought to be followed strictly. Thus, for free and responsible media to flourish, it is imperative to root out sensationalism and yellow journalism.

However, sensationalism cannot be addressed properly if one does not take into account the scope and application of investigative journalism which requires the capacity to make sound and balanced political and social judgments.

No discussion of responsible media can be conclusive without addressing the growing influence of the World Wide Web. There are a number of people, including professional journalists, who have started putting out credible information on their blogs and websites when the mainstream media fails to report and investigate an issue.

With over 30 million active internet users and internet penetration standing at 16%, Pakistan has one of the fastest growing internet usage rates in Asia. The advent of 3G and 4G technology has further boosted Pakistan's internet connectivity statistics with more than 13 million active 3G/4G users as of June 2015. The bulk of internet users (i.e. about 70%) are below 30 years of age and the majority of social media users boost similar demographics (e.g. Facebook: 70% users between 18 – 34 years of age).

These facts and figures emphasize that there is both need and immense potential to promote citizen journalism in Pakistan – especially among the youth which forms more than 60% of the country's population.

Accordingly, PYCA with the generous support of Open Society Foundation (OSF) has launched an initiative that will capacitate 800 Pakistani youth regarding the importance of citizen and investigative journalism. Under this project, Pakistan's first ever youth-led citizen journalism news portal will be launched as a result of which young people from across the country will have a platform to share information with a larger national and even international audience. The success of this project will thus, provide an indigenous platform to youth that will eventually serve as a citizen-led watchdog for mainstream media.

## OVERALL GOAL

To enhance plurality and diversity of Pakistani media through strengthened capacity of university youth and establishment of an effective platform that the country's young people can employ for reliable information sharing.

## TARGET GROUP AND BENEFICIARIES

The initiative aims to target 800 university going students belonging to a mix of media-related disciplines (e.g. Mass Communication, Media Studies etc.) and other departments pertaining to the social sciences (e.g. Sociology, Development Studies, International Relations etc.). Target institutes will be selected from Punjab, Khyber Pukhtoonkhawa and Sindh.

## SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- To build capacity of 800 university students in citizen and investigative journalism.
- To develop and launch Pakistan's first youth-led citizen portal to promote greater plurality and diversity of media.
- To share the learning derived from the project with a wider audience as well as develop and implement a sustainability plan.

## PROJECT ACTIVITIES

- **Desk Research**  
The project will start with a comprehensive desk research in the pre-identified regions. The assessment will 1) collect baseline data on regional information flows to national media; 2) track public perceptions and requirements for media products; and 3) map the internet accessibility in the communities.
- **Manual of Citizen & Investigative Journalism**  
The first signature aspect of the proposed program will be the development of the Manual of Citizen & Investigative Journalism.
- **Partnerships & Roll-out Workshops**  
During the first leg of the project MoUs will be signed with PYCA's existing and new partner institutes to specifically facilitate the implementation of workshops on Citizen & Investigative Journalism in their respective universities.  
A total of 8 two-day workshops and 4 day-long seminars will be conducted to reach out to 800 students.

- **Launch of Pakistan's First Student Led Citizen Journalism Portal**

To ensure that the skills imparted to the students are put to practical use, Pakistan's first students-led citizens' news portal will be launched.

With the help of the partner institutes, an on-line application process will be launched to recruit editorial boards in each target campus. Each editorial team will be responsible for gathering and vetting content before it is uploaded on the web portal.

- **Third Party Evaluation and documentation of Learning**

A third party evaluation will be conducted at the end of the project to document and widely disseminate its learning.

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Pakistani youth understands the importance of citizen journalism.
- The country's future journalists learn the principles of investigative and hence, responsible journalism.
- Young people feel empowered to voice their concerns in a peaceful manner via Pakistan's first youth-led citizen portal.
- The web-portal plays the role of a citizen-led watchdog for mainstream media that will help in highlighting the stories that effect and matter to the common citizen.



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