A Conversation on Internet Rights Human Rights: Kapashera Perspective

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Introduction

Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF) Communication Information Resource Centre (CIRC) and IMPACT team conducted the Internet Rights Human Rights (IRHR) workshop with 46 participants at the DEF CIRC in Kapashera, New Delhi on July 29th, 2015. The team of trainers from DEF area as follows:

S. No	Name	Designation
1	Niki A. Shah	Country Research and Advocacy Coordinator – APC IMPACT
2	Rajat Kumar	Trainer – APC IMPACT
3	Pawas Suren	Trainer – APC IMPACT
4	Rahul Choudhary	Trainer-APC IMPACT
5	Bijo Abraham	Trainer-APC IMPACT
6	Monika Sharma	CIRC
7	Maubani Dutta	Trainer APC IMPACT

The team initially introduced the IRHR initiative and what it meant within the context of freedom of expression, both offline and online and particularly how individuals and communities behave and express offline and how it translates to online communication and behavior. It was explained that this workshop was meant to be interactive and that both the trainers and the participants were to learn from each other.

Session 1: Deconstructing Internet Rights Human Rights (IRHR)

In this session, the objective was to:

- Educate participants and raise their level of awareness about FoE as a basic human right and its applicability in the online sphere
- Encourage citizen journalism: The team of trainers encouraged the residents of Kapashera to share their issues and challenges and specifically positive stories, ideas, acts that have influenced the community in some way. We also encouraged them to express themselves or share stories related to culture, art, language, religion, history, politics, medicine food, and other community members, as part of FoE

This was achieved by first engaging a group activity to set a context about internet and deconstruct its meaning and also deconstructing their perceptions, views, experiences and observances around basic human rights. In this, we specifically asked participants: **What does the word internet mean to you? What are the purposes, benefits, challenges, or negative effects they can think of?**

In response to this question, the majority of the participants indicated that they used the internet, mostly on mobile phones, or in the newly established CIRC to search information on Google, book rail tickets, conducts net banking, play video games, download songs and movie for

entertainment purposes. Students said that they used the internet to seek education related tools and information and job seekers said that they looked for job opportunities online.

Some of the other responses received are as follows:

- Online shopping
- Express our problem through FB
- Filling forms
- Online recharge
- Stay abreast of current affairs
- online business, online banking, online marketing, and online shopping

The next question focused on: **What are human rights?**

We received a range of responses from the participants which include the right to life, right to education, right to health, being able to find a job, taking care of the elderly people, and being able to communicate and interact with the local government to find solutions to existing problems within the Kapashera community.

Thereafter, we delved into what **freedom of expression** meant for the individuals and the community at large. At first, we received no responses from the participants. But, after few moments of silence, a participant, Bharti, spoke out.

She said that freedom of expression is an undeniable human right for each and every individual, specifically women in the community—in terms of being able to attain an education, have equal status with the man of the family and the household, being able to provide for a decent education for their children. She further stated that freedom of expression is necessary for any prosperous democracy to function and that every individual can and should express their opinions freely in a way that does not diminish one's dignity and ensures respect for all. In short, the opinion should be constructive to be sensitive and respectful to others opinions and views as valid opinions.

Do these human rights, particularly apply offline?

Majority of the participants said that freedom of expression is a right that translates online, but are unaware of the legal parameters and implications in case of any violence. While some said that tthrough the internet we can share videos and share our thoughts and can get solutions for the social problems, others were much knowledgeable about current affairs around FoE on Twitter like actor Salman Khan's twitter post on the hanging of Yakub Memon.

Figure 1: Actor Salman Khan's tweets on Yakub Memon

Although freedom of expression is a human right guaranteed by the Indian government, some participants felt that the right is denied in the Indian society in cultural and social ways. Moreover, other development priorities are more important for the participants since it is crucial to daily life:

- Poverty, unemployment, rent, and private school fees for children's education
- Food and sanitation and skills deficit
- Landlords are rude over the people who live in their houses at rent
- Self-respect and unity
- Self confidence
- Lack of awareness and security
- Discrimination and gender bias

Session II: Importance of ICT tools and internet access for FoE online

In this session, we sought to inquire about ICT tools individuals accessed to go online. Freedom of Expression FoE, as a concept was also introduced to the group to seek their views.

The team conducted this session two times to garner extensive feedback from the participants. While the first round was more an interactive session where participants talked about the questions posed, the second round was a group exercise where they were divided in 4 groups. In the group exercise, participants were asked to note down the following:

- Tools they used to access internet
- Identify social media that they access and its purpose

- Definition of freedom of expression[1]
- Views, opinions, and thoughts around personal/individual responsibility
- Issues and challenges in their daily lives[2]
- Positive stories, views, thoughts, developments or current affairs in the community, or even a small karma or deed that may have been a positive influence on the individual

ICT Tools and Internet Access

We screened the video of ICICI digital village in Akodara in Sabarkantha district of Gujarat. Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated the ICICI Digital Village at Akodara in Sabarkantha district of Gujarat to the nation.

The ICICI Digital Village enables the people of Akodara to use technology in various aspects of life including banking, payments, education and healthcare among others. ICICI bank is digitizing school attendance and school records and implementing school management software in the village school. The bank is providing smart boards, integrating projector and computer at the school and the Anganwadi, with audio-visual digital content for classes 1 to 10. It will provide digital access to telemedicine via mobile or video conference, giving villagers access to medical expertise. The aim is also to create enabling infrastructure to make technology available, and access and disseminate information.

Some of the major questions were:

- Do you access the internet?
- What tools do you use to access the internet?
- Why do you access the internet?
- What don't you access on the internet? Why?
- What would you like to access on the internet?
- Do you use social media? And what are its purposes?
- How do you use social media to express yourself online?

While majority of the participants indicated that they used mobile, laptops, PCs, and tablets to go online, some said that television, magazines and newspapers were still relevant and the primary medium to access information. It is important to note that community radio or radio did not come up once during the entire workshop. It raises questions about the level of radio usage in Kapashera, if any.

The same people also used Google to search for information and gmail for email purposes. Here, there is a distinction between how the participants indicated Google and gmail. While gmail is part of Google services for email purposes, participants perceived Google to be a primarily a search engine for information while gmail is used strictly for email purposes.

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[1] This was meant to be an open group activity where participants were invited to write, draw; discuss anything that came to their minds around Freedom of Expression. We did not incorporate offline or online aspects of FoE

[2] This was incorporated into the curriculum to: (1) get insights into development challenges and issues in the individual's life and (2) get a perspective on FoE and whether it is a perceived issue for individuals in the community.

Furthermore, these participants accessed information and social media sites like Twitter and Facebook and other mediums like WhatsApp and Skype. Other sources include: Hike, We Chat and Line.

Freedom of Expression—Offline and Online

In addition to introducing national human rights mechanisms to FoE like Article 19(1) and 19(2) of the Indian constitution, IT Act and Indian Penal Code, the team introduced the concept of FoE within the group. We discussed the Article 19(1) in greater detail and also Article 19(2) which talks about reasonable restrictions to FoE and how they play out in India. The group activity enabled participants to think about relevant cases like Salman Khan's post on Yakum Memon, controversy around the film PK, and other Facebook posts that might be considered "objectionable" or annoying, within the context of the law.

In terms of FoE, the following questions were asked to spur the discussion:

- What does the word **"freedom"** mean to you?
- What does the world **"expression"** mean to you?
- What are the **forms of expression**?
  - Online
  - Offline
- Do you communicate or express your views, emotions or feelings around personal and public issues?
  - What are personal things we communicate or express online about?
  - What are public things we communicate or express online about?

Majority of the participants expressed that FoE is a human right—a right one is born with. To be able to express oneself is not only essential to communicate problems, challenges, emotions, incidents, circumstances—but also give opinions, views and thoughts on range of subjects that are important for human existence like culture, history, politics, medicine, art, language, religion, films, music and now internet. Someone expressed that on 27th July 2015, India lost her former President, Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam who was a great scientist and a knowledgeable person. Other said that:

> "freedom should be there but it should not be against religion or country. There should be more laws and our rights should not be violated…through internet we can share videos and share our thoughts. We can also get solution for our problems"

The women, however, and particularly Bharti indicated that while FoE is guaranteed under the Indian law, many still do not exercise it freely due to cultural and social pressures and stigma. Some are afraid to voice their opinion out of fear. But she also mentioned that while citizens have this right, it is equally important to think about individual responsibility and should voice opinion in a positive and constructive way and not in an insulting or offensive way.

It is important to note that participants were more **comfortable, open, and free to write down what FoE meant for them rather than speaking in open**. This has a lot of significance when one thinks about how FoE, both offline and online is exercised in India.

Other thoughts about what FoE meant for participants were penned down:

- Motivating people to vote
- Motivating people to save girl child through Facebook—Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao
- Promoting Swacchh Bharat Abhiyan at school level
- Motivate people to be animal lovers
- Promote plantation and encourage people not to cut trees

Personal Responsibility and Positive stories @ Kapashera

Participants also felt very strongly and expressed strongly that each individual has to understand his or her responsibility in exercising his or her right to FoE. We also screened a video of Actor Aamir Khan's response to a press reporter on theatres and film screening being vandalized after the release of movie PK. In the video, he highlighted that FoE as a right should be protected and that each individual must express themselves freely but exercise responsibility without violating the laws. With regards to the screening, all participants agreed that there has to be some level of personal responsibility attached to FoE.

However, in the group exercise the responses we received are as follows:

- **Be a good human being**: First priority is to be a good person at the individual and societal level. It's my duty to do good to my family, society and country.   Use rights in a right manner

- **Raise Awareness about human rights:** To make people aware and educated about their rights
- **Protect the environment:** Save electricity, water, trees, and natural resources
- **Be Respectful:** Don't abuse any caste or religion
- **Communicate about social justice issues:** Talk to each other and sharing thoughts. Through social sites we tell people about the injustice face by the poor.
- **Promote Education:** Through Facebook, we also tell children the importance of education so that the country can grow.
- **Prevent abuse:** We should fulfil our individual responsibilities and should also stop people who indulge in wrong practices like women exploitation, domestic violence

Positive Story

- **Prevented sex trafficking:** We helped a girl child form sex racket. She was unfortunately included in sex racket we helped her with the help of Nari Shakti Manch and finally we surrender her to the family in a safe and secured manner
- **Supporting Education:** We educate children at free of cost who are not able to pay fees
- **Women's empowerment:** We encourage women to drive and be self-depend through AAZAD foundation
- **Basic Entitlements:** We helped people to make Aadhar Card, ration card and Pan card at free of cost, in partnership with, Komal enterprises
- **Tarang NGO:** Tarang is a platform where we get to know about the talents of members and Tarang motivates us to overcome our challenges and problems
- **Awareness about digital rights:** We came to know about many things through DEF and CIRC. We came to know about our rights, Digital India, improving education system in rural areas and employment opportunities
- **Creating Opportunities and solving challenges:** In Kapashera there are lot of government institutes who help women by providing them various facilities and providing solutions for their problems.

Session III: Digital Citizenship and Security

In the last session on digital citizenship and security, the team discussed the importance of protecting oneself from cyber security threats as phishing is a real problem. Many cases are being reported of cyber fraud and protecting bank accounts, credit cards and other personal information that can land one in trouble.

We also shared and encouraged participants to use social media websites like Facebook to post positive and constructive messages while dealing with government or any of the matters related to Article 19(2) of the Indian constitution so that the participants are protected from any legal trouble. We also distributed hard copies of Article 19(1) and Article 19(2) of the Indian constitution for further review and study.

As a team, we also emphasized that Indian democracy is diverse with different people coming from different backgrounds, life experiences, cultures, socio-economic background, language, religion, and political history—so it was important to understand that realities, thoughts and opinions will differ—but it was important to accept that they are different and be able to move

on, despite differences. We highlighted that what matters is the common values and principles that bind us as a society rather than what divides us:

- Positive and constructive framing of view points
- Acceptance
- Tolerance
- Selfless love
- compassion

Testimonials

"This [IRHR Workshop] is a kind of unique initiative for the Kapashera community we are working in and since social media is a great tool of expression and reaching out to the world. I got some very positive responses from participants and this was one of the most liked activity at CIRC Kapashera." **Pravin Kumar, Project Associate Tarang**

"Content was good and could be more effective. We wouldn't be able to relate people with practical society of Kapashera. Workshop was too good according to the curriculum. We need more things apart from rights. How can you avail the rights that has been given by the government?" **Rahul Kumar, Kapashera Resident**

"This training has been very helpful. We need more session in the future." **Suraj Prakash, Kapashera Resident**

"I really like the workshop since things told in the workshop are really useful." **Aijaj Hussain, Kapashera Resident**

"Internet rights are everyone's rights." **Anonymous**

"This training was good for the kind of people who do not know about their rights which were provided by our constitution. This training also give information about the internet updation and how to communicate with our society and people and express our freedom to speech." **Rani, Kapashera Resident**

"Very good dived question and answer for freedom and independent world. But Aamir Khan press intereview for PK movie so very good speech...very good information. Thank you DEF CIRC." **Jalaluddin Ansar, Kapashera Resident**

Annexure I: Feedback Report from Rahul Kumar, Coordinator CIRC Kapashera

IRHR *Training*

Objective- The Objective of the workshop with the community is to aware them with their social and internet rights. The session was organized with the motive of introducing community with ICT tools and using their rights "freedom of expression" online apart from using INTERNET for their daily life including booking of Rail Ticket, having information, & accessing the Web

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"The Basic objective was to aware them using their right "freedom of expression" online.

Community Participation –

It was integrated group of the community including youth (School & College going students), Migrant workers, Working women & Housewife. Some of the workers took holiday from factory and come to join training. Apart from community people we also invited some coordinators from NSM & MEM.(Naari Shakti Manch & Mazdor ekta manch). So that they lead the community towards their social growth.

IRHR *Training*

Advantage of the Workshop -

It was the training where advantage was taken by each and every person in community like youth, workers and women. Through the workshop they learned about internet rights and freedom of expression on social networking sites. The one of very important advantage of the program was that people shares their views very freely that shows it was interactive Training with the community. With the help of many activities they shares their personal and social problems with us. Almost every youth and school going students knew about the right "freedom of expression" that encouraged debate in the training and all that things helped us to make them understand the Motive of the training.

Participants & Organizers Feedback –

The feedback of the participants was very positive towards IRHR training. All were looking very enthusiastic while whole training program. After the workshop youth and women told us their proper feedback that they learned so many new things from this training. People shared their stories that how they are coping with many problems in the society, and these rights can empower them to lead their own community. Rest of things they mentioned in their feedback form.

Organizer also had very positive response from the participants. They were able to make it one of interactive session with community that helps them to get some valuable points.

Further planning –

We're willing to have some more trainings with the community through which community can realize our existence in the community. Some of same things we are doing for the welfare of the community like regular internet training, mobilization camp etc. we got some more idea to work with the people in the society. In the events we are regularly addressing the people towards digital literacy by our events etc. we'll launce "Buddy4Study" at our centre actively will also do some more IRHR trainings in the community.