

15 Dec 2020 to 16 Dec 2020 Virtual India

# **Quality journalism in pandemic times**

Techniques of investigative journalism and non-fiction writing



WAN-IFRA and the India Office of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung  
jointly presented a virtual workshop on  
**Quality Journalism in Pandemic Times**  
on  
December 15 – 16 2020; 10.30 – 12.30 hrs

## Introduction

The entire world has been plunged into an inconceivable ordeal. A global pandemic has led to an unprecedented collective psychosis. The fear caused by uncertainty about the present and the future amplifies the turmoil. In the meantime, we will have to overcome the epidemic of panic crossing doors and borders at an incredible speed. Overcoming this deep fear will require an unprecedented collective effort in which the role of news organisations and journalists will be essential. Only by providing information that is useful, truthful, complete, fast, accurate and committed to citizens will we succeed in curbing the panic of social contact.

Without a doubt, quality journalism is the best antidote to crime and corruption. Newsrooms at the heart of trusted media organisations are the error correction of manipulation vested by groups of interest that undermine the balance of institutions and society.

This workshop focused on the new opportunities available for investigative journalism and non-fiction writing. The session comprised of discussions on techniques of investigating organised crime and corruption.

## Key Takeaways

The workshop on "**Quality Journalism in Pandemic Times**" was organised by WAN-IFRA in partnership with the India Office of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) virtually on 15 -16 December 2020. The programme was conducted from 10.30 am - 12.30 pm on both the days.

The training focussed on helping journalists learn the new opportunities available around investigative journalism and non-fiction writing. This was particularly helpful for the journalists impacted by the aftermath of covid-19 pandemic. An unusual boom is underway in investigative journalism and non-fiction writing, even as mainstream media is in crisis.

The key elements of the workshop were as follows:

### **Non-fiction writing techniques**

Participants have learned about the various opportunities that are booming now including the non-fiction writing techniques, as there is a far greater chance of a non-fiction book being published than a fiction book. Some of the tips are;

- Use the emotional language as the key
- Let the characters talk and start from middle to take the audience to an exciting mode.
- Respect all your sources
- Get contacts from CIG

### **Podcast: New opportunities**

Podcasting is another new opportunity that has taken off globally. Choosing the subject of podcast and delivery is the key. Writing and reporting news through audio is one of the interesting ways of storytelling now a days especially during this covid-19 pandemic.

Participants gained important tips on podcasting such as:

- Creating brief noise profile
- Use proper good quality headphones
- Shoot it in a dark and quiet room and so on.

### **Documentary: Century's greatest boom**

Investigative documentary writing is the greatest boom in this century. Character driven narratives are in great demand, but underscored by great journalism. Participants learned how to bring narratives to their journalism.

### **Scripted Series: Great journalism is in demand in entertainment**

Writing Scripted series and web stories is one of the another opportunity. Several of the big scripted series are derivatives of detailed investigative journalism and good non-fiction writing. This market continues to grow.

### **Discussion on techniques of investigating organised crime and corruption.**

The main and attractive part of this workshop was the discussion on techniques and sources of investigating organised crime and corruption. Participants got an insight into a lot of broad strategies, new sources, databases, and follow the money techniques.

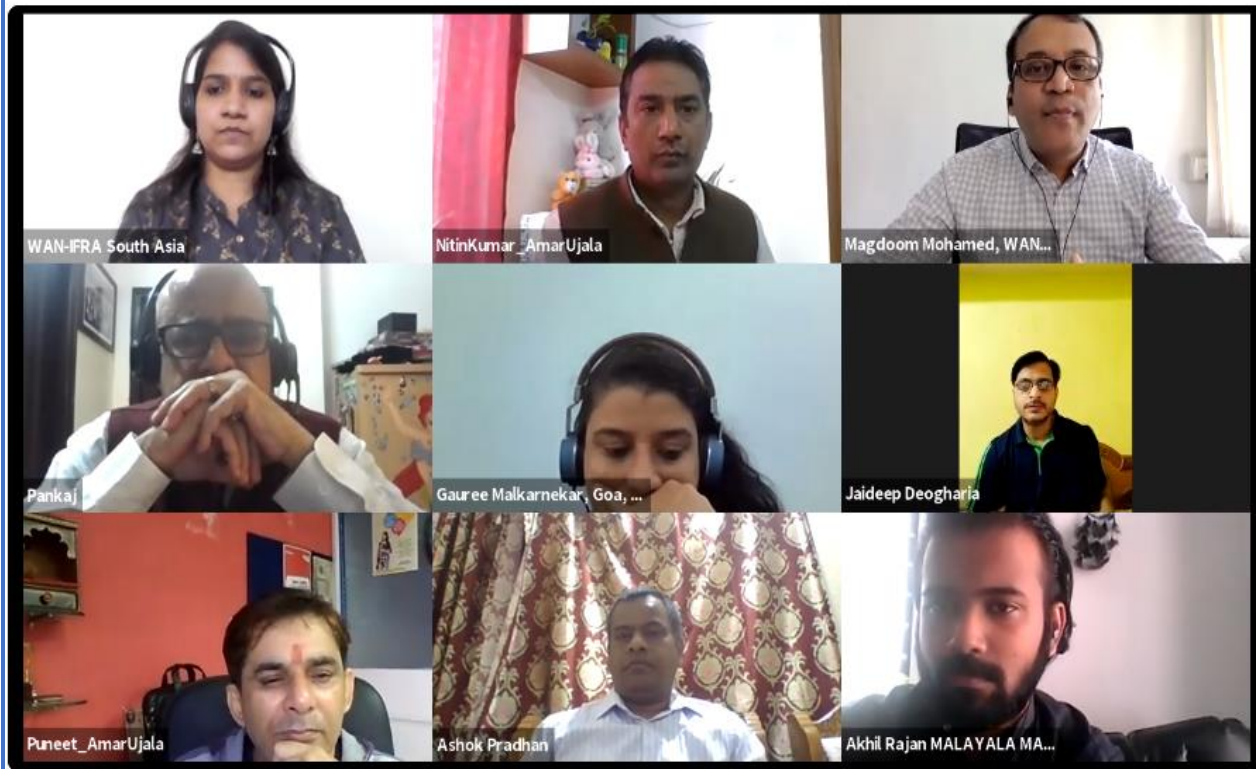
Moreover, they learned how to get the investigative stories published, what are the challenges and obstacles in it, how to overcome them and how to get the support while doing the investigation and where as well as whom to approach.

There were a lot of interactions among the participants during the workshop and many challenging questions were answered and clarified by the trainer. Participants were also taught how and where to start while writing investigative stories and how to take them forward to the next level.

Many interesting international and Indian case studies, reports and articles were also shown by the trainer and also pointed out the aspects to consider while downloading any document pertaining to investigation.

At the end of the programme, many participants shared their positive feedbacks and their expectations in our future programmes.

## Glimpses



YouTube

Disaster Series

Press **Esc** to exit full screen



0:06 / 1:19

Settings, Full Screen, Share, and other video player controls.

## Agenda of the workshop

WAN-IFRA and the India Office of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung  
jointly presents virtual workshop on

### **Quality Journalism in Pandemic Times**

#### **Agenda**

#### **December 15, 2020; 10.30 – 12.30 hrs**

10.30 am	Introduction and welcome by WAN-IFRA
10.35 am	Welcome note by the India Office of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung
10.45 am	Programme starts with new opportunities for journalists in media during crisis
11.15 am	Non-fiction writing techniques and publishing books
11.45 am	Podcasting – new way of powerful storytelling in crisis
12.30 am	End of the programme

#### **December 16, 2020; 10.30 – 12.30 hrs**

10.30 am	Recap from day 1, 15 <sup>th</sup> December
10.45 am	Another opportunity in demand – Character driver documentary writing
11.15 am	Importance of scripted series in investigative and non-fiction writing
11.45 am	Discussion on techniques of investigating organised crime and corruption
12.15 pm	Discussion on broad strategies, new sources, databases and follow the money techniques
12.30 pm	End of the programme

**DAY 1 – 15<sup>th</sup> December 2020:**

## **Introductory Remarks**

**K Z Magdoom Mohamed**

Managing Director, WAN-IFRA South Asia



Mr. Magdoom Mohamed, Managing Director, WAN-IFRA South Asia welcomed everyone at the workshop on '**Quality Journalism in Pandemic Times**' held on **15-16 December 2020** virtually. Mr. Magdoom mentioned about various WAN-IFRA activities in the journalism world and described various challenges and obstacles that news media organisation is facing now a days due to this COVID-19 pandemic. He also discussed about the aim of this workshop and how this programme is going to help journalists to overcome the challenges while providing quality journalism to the society in India.

Mr. Mohamed also thanked the India Office of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung for their partnership in organising this programme for journalists.



## Welcome Remarks

### **Pankaj Madan**

Deputy Head, India Office of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung



Mr. Pankaj Madan, Deputy Head of the India Office of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung welcomed all the participants on 15<sup>th</sup> December at the commencement of the programme. Mr. Madan described about the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung(KAS). KAS is a political foundation, with a strong presence throughout Germany and all over the world. It has 100 offices over 120 countries. Mr. Madan added that KAS cooperates with Government and Private institutional organisations, political parties and civil society organisations building strong partnerships along the way. He also mentioned that this COVID period is both good and bad time for journalists. KAS also wished and expected all the journalists to learn and explore more opportunities through this workshop up to a certain level. Together with its partners, KAS develops democratic ethos, press freedom, cultures and values at national and international levels.

## Discussions:

Workshop trainer Josy Joseph started the workshop by introducing new opportunities available for journalists in this crisis. He initially described about various publishing platforms that are booming now such as podcasting, documentary writing, non-fiction writing, scripted stories for investigation on organised crime and corruption.

Mr. Joseph enunciated the importance of a new way of storytelling, podcasting. Writing and reporting news through podcasting is one of the interesting ways now-a-days especially during this pandemic. He also shared some sources such as:

- Headphones
- Script writing and collaboration tool – Write duet, Doodle, Live streaming – Google or YouTube
- Sound and post production tools – audacity and garage band, transcribing tools and Mr. Joseph shared videos on broad strategies, databases and new sources for non-fiction writing and investigation on organised crime and corruption. He also showed important case studies on:
  - Various Indian banks
  - Amanda's humble table
  - The Karven cottage

Furthermore, he discussed about various challenges and obstacles like how he got his book published successfully and the problems that journalists are facing while publishing their investigative stories. He also helped them how to overcome those challenges by providing some-helping sources.

**For example:** One of the participants asked that though they work hard while writing stories, sometimes it does not get the light of day, and what can be done for this?

Joseph answered that sometimes it happens and it happened for him also. But he suggested all journalists that they should not get frustrated and go forward to it and get support from the top officials without harming anyone to get the work done.

Documentary writing is another interesting opportunity for journalists. Character driven narrative story writing is in great demand. There is an opportunity for this to grow, Mr. Joseph added.

Mr. Joseph deliberated about writing scripted stories and web stories in this crisis. Scripted stories are derivatives of detailed investigative journalism and good non-fiction writing.

## **DAY 2 – 16<sup>th</sup> December 2020:**

### **Discussions:**

The second day, 16<sup>th</sup> December was filled with tips and tricks that journalists need to learn in this topic. There were a lot of interactions among the participants during the workshop and many challenging questions were brilliantly answered and clarified by the trainer. Few of them are:

#### **1. Siddharth Prabhakar from The Times of India;**

*You took 3-4 years to get the book published. How did you get the stories?*

Answer from Josy:

I was working with The Hindu at that time and I was working on this story simultaneously, I took some sources from defence, daily feeds, PWD and OCCRP. This came on part of my work. But you cannot do this kind of expensive quality by focusing on 1 story, you should try working on multiple stories to get that much efficiency. You should try multiple stories with difference sources.

#### **2. What are the other stories that you are working on?**

Answer from Josy:

My stories in the pipeline are: one for OCCRP and another one with/for Jet airways that I was working on 10-15 years but that was never published.

#### **3. Swati Deshpande, The Times of India**

*So what do you say, do you/ we need lot of energy and dedication in this?*

Answer from Josy:

Yes, but you don't have to keep searching and augmenting every day. Whatever sources are available you can start working on that and don't have to wait for something that is new.

#### **4. Sunita Rao, The Times of India:**

*What is an important thing while doing investigative stories with names and brand etc?*

Answer from Josy:

Yes, we need to give sufficient time to those personalities and business to get their response. But especially in India while you are doing this and waiting for their response, they will get back with legal notices only.

The participants were apprised of techniques, while start writing the investigative stories, such as;

- Getting the right contacts
- Take time and get the detailed resources
- Refer more than one data and so on
- how and where to start while writing investigative stories and
- how to take them forward to the next level. For example, to start with the journalists can do simple stories using publicly available data from sources such as CGA sites. From there, they could go indepth in to deep diving on stories they find to be interest and information need of the society.
- Character driven documentary writing: writing in fiction-style narrative structure, starting the story with a plot and or a narrative acts, which will give the story the curiosity interest from the word go.
- Antother technique to go indepth is to find the link between organised crime and corruption. For example, the corruption linked to illicit / illegal deals. These can be found when going indepth in to the data and one data leading to another.
- Broad strategies while covering investigative stories – starting with the simple story and sources first, connecting the dots, and following up the sources leading to unravelling more information for the story.

At the end, many participants appreciated the programme and shared positive vibes that gave us an energy to continue organising such a good programmes in the future with a support of KAS.

## About the Workshop Trainer

### **Josy Joseph**

Founder, Confluence Media



Josy Joseph is the founder of Confluence Media, a platform agnostic media outfit that is taking investigative journalism and creative non-fiction writing to various platforms— publishing, podcast, documentaries, scripted series and movies. He has formerly been a senior editor with The Hindu, Times of India and other media houses. Josy is the author of 'A Feast of Vultures: The Hidden Business of Democracy in India', which won the jury award at the 2018 Crossword Awards for the best non-fiction book. He has also been awarded some of India's most prestigious journalism awards.

## About the Partners

### **WAN-IFRA:**

The World Association of News Publishers, or WAN-IFRA, is the global organisation of the world's press. It derives its authority from its global network of 3,000 news publishing companies and technology entrepreneurs, and its legitimacy from its 60- member publisher associations representing 18,000 publications in 120 countries. They endeavour to protect the rights of journalists and publishers around the world to operate independent media and provide their members with expertise and services to innovate and prosper in a digital world and perform their crucial role in society. WAN-IFRA Conference in South Asia is a dedicated platform to discuss developments in business and technology in news media publishing space. The event attracts senior delegates from the industry and the leading suppliers of news products / services showcasing their offerings to the industry.

### **Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS)**

Freedom, justice and solidarity are the basic principles underlying the work of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS). The KAS is a political foundation, with a strong presence throughout Germany and all over the world. They cooperate with governmental institutions, political parties and civil society organisations building strong partnerships along the way. In particular, they seek to intensify political cooperation at the national and international levels on the foundations of our objectives and values. Together with their partners, KAS contributes to the creation of an international order that enables every country to develop in freedom and under its own responsibility. The Konrad- Adenauer-Stiftung has organized its program priorities in India into five working areas:

- Political Dialogue and cooperation
- Foreign and Security Policy including Energy Policy
- Economic policy and management
- Rule of Law
- Media and training programmes for students of journalism

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung's India office takes great pride in its cooperation with Indian partner organisations who implement jointly curated projects and programmes.

**Attendees at the workshop**

<b>COMPANY NAME</b>	<b>NAME</b>	<b>DESIGNATION</b>
Amar Ujala Limited	Bavinder Kumar	News Editor
Amar Ujala Limited	Nitin Kumar	News Editor
Amar Ujala Limited	Puneet Sharma	Deputy News Editor
Amar Ujala Limited	Kamal Kumar Sharma	Deputy News Editor
Amar Ujala Limited	Abhishek Yadav	Chief Sub Editor
Amar Ujala Limited	Vivek Dhyani	Chief Sub Editor
Amar Ujala Limited	Mohit Dhapar	Principal Correspondent
Amar Ujala Limited	Suraj Shukla	Senior Sub Editor/Senior Reporter
Amar Ujala Limited	Gajendra Pal	Senior Sub Editor/Senior Reporter
Amar Ujala Limited	Mahendra Kumar Tiwari	Special Correspondent
Amar Ujala Limited	Bhupender Rana	Chief Sub Editor/Chief Reporter
Amar Ujala Limited	Varun Maheshwari	Deputy General Manager
Bennet Coleman & Co Ltd	Pathikrit Chakraborty	Reporter
Bennet Coleman & Co Ltd	Siddharth Prabhakar	Reporter
Bennet Coleman & Co Ltd	P Naveen	Senior Assistant Editor
Bennet Coleman & Co Ltd	Gauree M S Malkarnekar	Special Correspondent
Bennet Coleman & Co Ltd	Ajay Kumar Sura	Reporter
Bennet Coleman & Co Ltd	Jaideep Deogharia	Chief of Bureau
Bennet Coleman & Co Ltd	Ashok Kumar Pradhan	Chief of Bureau
Bennet Coleman & Co Ltd	Vijay V Singh	Senior Editor
Bennet Coleman & Co Ltd	Swati Deshpande	Senior Reporter
Bennet Coleman & Co Ltd	Sunitha Rao R	Assistant Editor
Malayala Manorama	Ninnie Mary Baby	Sub Editor
Malayala Manorama	Akhil Rajan	Sub Editor
Swadesh	Akshat Sharma	Managing Director