



**SOUTH ASIA NETWORK FOR COMMUNICATION, DISPLACEMENT
AND MIGRATION (SAN-CDM) KING NEWS**

ONLINE TRAINING WORKSHOP WITH ZOBAER AHMED

(6-8 JULY, 2023)

REPORT

**Organised by Calcutta Research Group
(CRG), in collaboration with DW Akademie**



Movements and Migration: An Online Training Workshop on Reporting about Refugees and Migrants in South Asia

In June 2023, India and Pakistan together evacuated more than a hundred and seventy thousand people before the landfall of cyclone Biparjoy. Cyclonic and tidal storms, and resultant displacements are commonplace in the South Asian region, as are earthquakes, cloud burst, landslides, droughts, floods and famines. Apart from cataclysmic climactic events (increasing in frequency and severity) political upheavals/ unrest, insurgencies and struggles for autonomy, financial collapse and myriad other reasons make South Asia both a migrant and refugee producing and receiving region. Historical connections and the legacy of the partition also enable movement across national and international borders – making the refugees and migrants in and from South Asia some of the most vulnerable people on the planet.

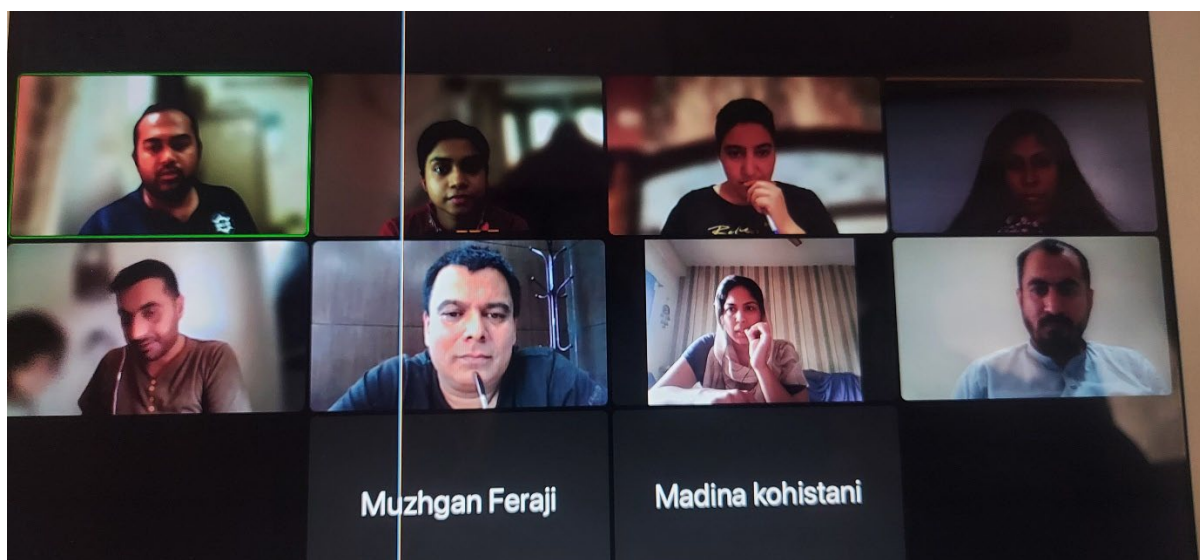
A three-day online training workshop, organized by Calcutta Research Group in collaboration with DW Akademie, under the aegis of the South Asia Network for Communication, Displacement and Migration (SAN-CDM) focused on creating well-researched news items with a focus on refugees and migrants in South Asia. It familiarized the trainees with relevant data, protocols, frameworks and nomenclature important to the field. The training identified hidden and obvious biases present in mainstream reportage and indicate ways to tackle them.

A cohort of 10 participants were selected from more than 50 applicants

Training Expert: Zobaer Ahmed, DWA

Participants:

1. Nirasha Piyawadani, Sri Lanka
2. Sadaqat Ghorzang, Afghanistan
3. Salma Niazi, Afghanistan
4. Zirak Faheem, Afghanistan
5. Shahenoor Akther Urmi, Bangladesh
6. Shambhu Kattel, Nepal
7. Madina, Pakistan
8. Muzhgan Feraj, Pakistan
9. Raihana Maqbool, India
10. Tabassum Barnagarwala, India



Participants discussing about their expectations from the training in the Introductory session

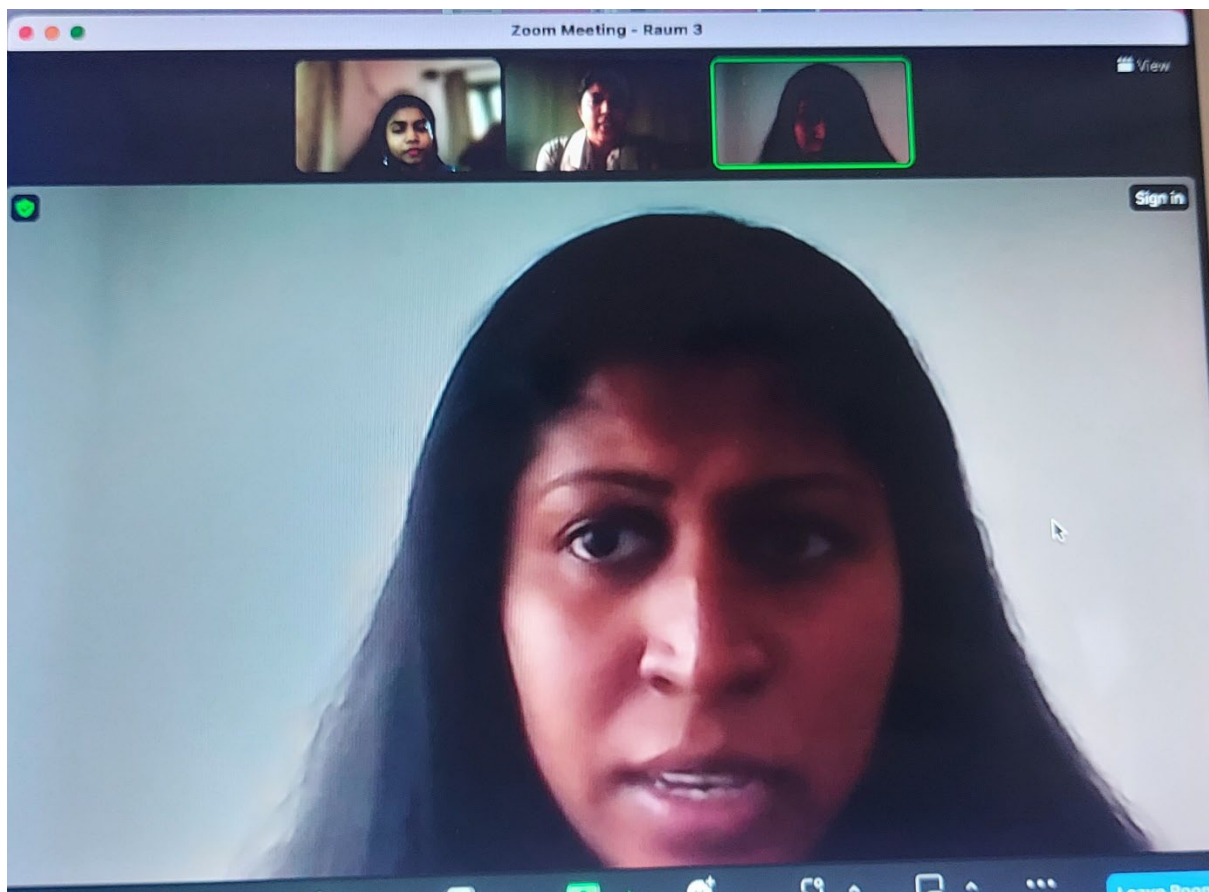
Day One (06.07.2023)

Zobaer Ahmed started his training by describing the basic structure of the three-day training workshop and by asking the participants to say a few words about themselves and the respective situations in their countries. The first day was dedicated to the basics of displacement and migration. He presented a PPT on how being a member or non-member of the treaties on the regulations or protection of refugees and asylum seekers, for example, the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol, creates a huge difference in the internal politics regarding the representation of refugees and displaced persons. Another point raised by the trainer was that journalists working in the arena of migration and displacement often lack an understanding of the terms migrants, immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. He asked the participants about their understanding of these terms. Some of the participants expressed that they have been using the terms interchangeably and never thought that the meaning varied so much. In this session, the trainer, through some newspaper reports, showed how connotations and their consciousness are key elements while reporting on refugees and displaced persons. In the post-break sessions through the participatory method (chat section, breakout rooms), the trainer asked the participants to think about the relevant questions on migration and their expectations from the training. Zobaer introduced the contemporary demographic scenario of displaced persons, like the number of international migrants in the world in 2020 or remittances transferred globally in 2019 by migrants and diaspora, the percentage of migrants in the global population, etc.

Day Two (07.07.2023)

On the second day of the training, the trainer presented some crucial points for reporting on migration:

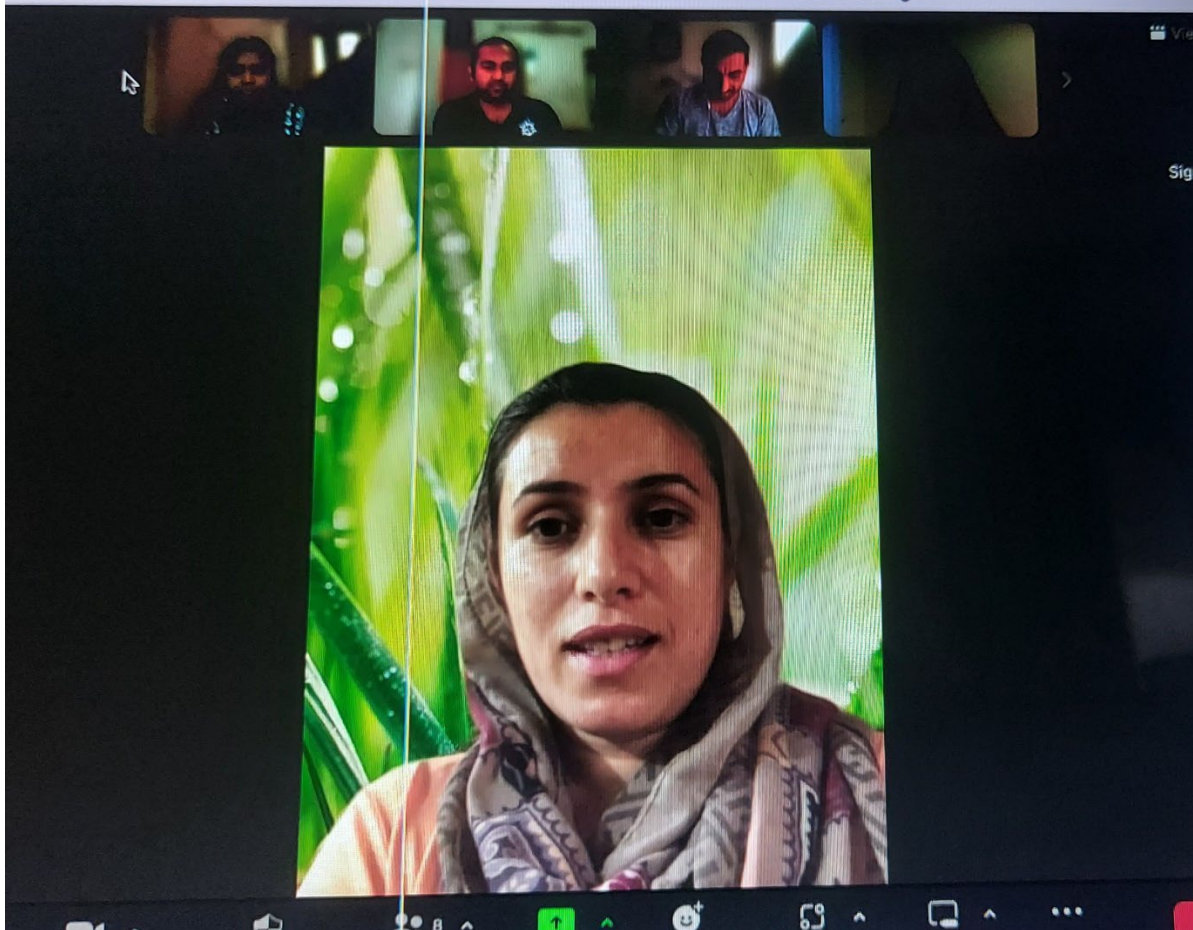
- a. **USE OF WORDS** – It is important to keep in mind how words can be misunderstood, and while reporting on migration and displacement, journalists need to be conscious of the words they are using to describe the situation:
- Legality/Illegality vs. Regularity/Irregularity
 - Refugee crisis vs. refugee situation
 - Number games: thousands or hundreds of thousands vs. a few thousand or at least a thousand
 - Housemaid/Help vs. domestic workers
 - Economic migrants vs. work migrants or labor migrants.
 - Dehumanisation: Words like "flocks," "invaders," "swarms," "floods," and "waves" should be treated with caution, as should the indiscriminate use of "racism" and "xenophobia."
 - Comparing with disasters: 'Floods of refugees', 'Waves of migrants'



Nirasha Piyawadini from Sri Lanka interacting with the trainer about how biased reporting on specific people can cause social misconceptions and in reaction how that also works as a mode of otherisation of the specific community in question.

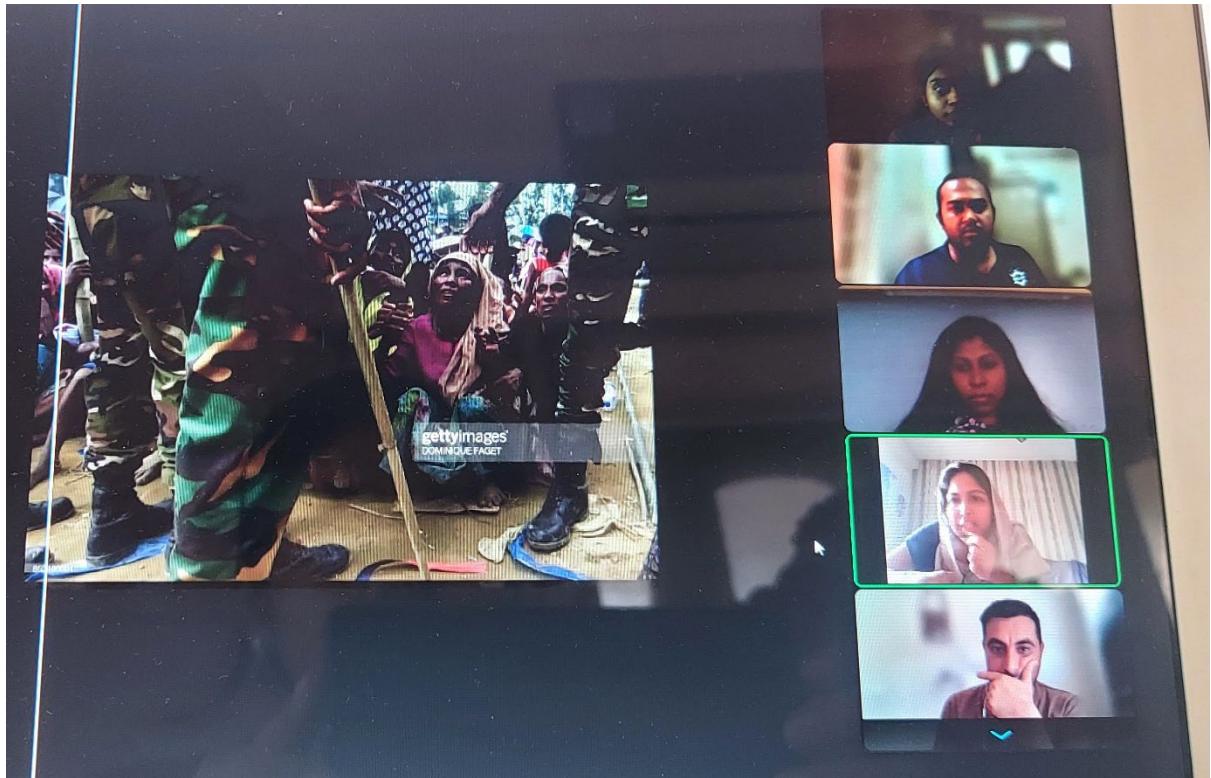
- b. **BIASED REPORTING:** Bias in reporting can be caused for the following reasons:
- Bias by omission

- Bias by selection of sources
- Bias by story selection
- Bias by placement
- Bias by labelling
- Bias by spin



A participant sharing her lived-experiences with the audience in the context of challenging hate and stigmatisation of minority communities

- c. **CHALLENGE HATE** - One of the key reasons for training the concerned people is to provide them with an understanding of how their articles can bring about changes in normative perceptions and help in challenging the general hatred faced by the vulnerable. Ahmed also emphasized how irresponsible reporting to establish or confirm popular frames (like security or economic threats) can cause ripple effects on the lives of innocent people. He ended this session with questions like whether the overall sense of your story captures the complexity of the whole story, and can you do anything to add to it? Have you looked beyond ‘the question of immigration’, at the underlying stories of the human beings involved?



Zobaer Ahmed explaining the importance of images and how to use them consciously to represent the plights of the people

d. **CAUTIONS BEFORE USING IMAGES** – The participants were given multiple exams of how images and videos are being used by multiple newspapers and networks to create sensationalism. So, it is pertinent to seek permission from credible sources to avoid intrusion or voyeurism, which will eventually help in maintaining the safety of the people concerned.

- Don't pick photos based on what your audience might expect
- Select and take pictures that reflect reality as well as the overall picture.
- Never alter an image to remove or introduce elements that would mislead the audience, such as cropping out pertinent sections or using software to introduce elements that were not in the original image.

Day Three (08.07.2023)

a. **DATA AND DISPLACEMENT** – The third day of the training was dedicated to one of the most frequently asked questions in the field of journalism. Specifically, the sources of data and the different meanings attached to them. Ahmed gave some examples for journalists and researchers about the possible sites where they could find information: OCHA, Relief Web, IOM, IDMC, and the World Bank. He also put emphasis on the fact that it is important to remember that it is not about numbers but people.

b. **DATA JOURNALISM** – Ahmed talked in detail about the different facets of data journalism and how it reflects the increased role of numerical data in the production and distribution of information in the digital era.

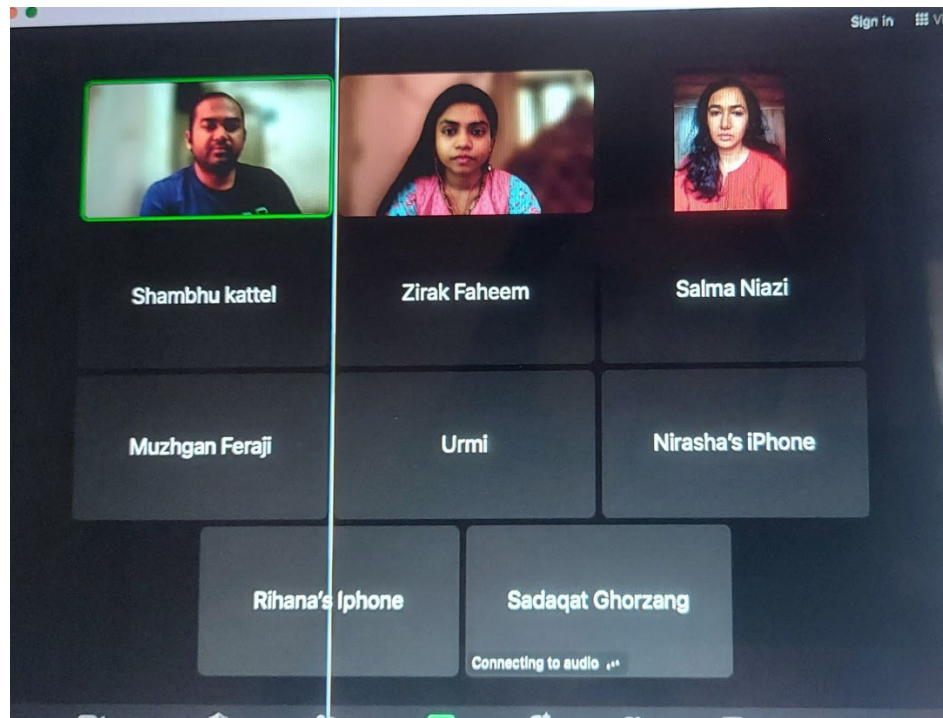
- Story telling with data
- Deriving meaning from data
- Different forms of Migration data: Range from “hard” numerical information about border crossings, population numbers, employment rates and demographic details, like age and gender, to “soft” qualitative analysis derived from an in-depth study of communities, testimonies, literature or artefacts.
- Qualitative vs. Quantitative Data

c. **QUESTION THE DATA** – Taking information without testing it is unethical and can cause disastrous effects on the people, region, or community that is being reported on. Hence, before including the data in the reporting and using it to analyse the situation, we need to ask:

- Can the data be verified independently?
- What methods are used in acquiring the data?
- Is the source politically independent?
- Who is funding the data?
- It is also necessary to always provide the sources of your statistics to the audience.

d. **DATA VISUALISATION** - Data visualization can be effective for both breaking news – quickly imparting new information and also for feature stories, where it can go deeper into a topic and offer a new perspective, to help us see something familiar in a completely innovative way. The key points are:

- Start with good data - If the materials you use are misleading or incorrect, you will be producing a poor data visualization, no matter how good it looks. So, Ahmed pointed out that it is pertinent to use verifiable data in order to be credible.
- Keep content clear and simple – using more than one chart if you need to, rather than cramming in information.
- Don’t play with parameters for dramatic effect.
- Remember that the data you are using is not just numbers; it is people and things.
- Think about your audience: what do you expect them to do with the visualisation – glance at it or engage with it carefully.



Tabassum Baranagarwala sharing her experiences of reporting as a woman in the field of journalism

In the concluding discussion, all the participants shared their individual experiences about the workshop and conveyed their gratitude to Zobaer Ahmed and SAN-CDM for the workshop. As many participants were themselves in exile, they expressed the necessity and importance of attending this kind of online training workshop, as many of them would not be able to attend physical or offline trainings. As journalists and people working in the field of displacement, it is often a challenge for women to cover areas and report on specific situations. The female participants also pointed out the huge gender gap in the field of representation and the inherent discrimination in many institutions they work in. Hence, they pointed out that networks like SAN-CDM is also helping them access data and giving them exposure on equal terms with everyone else.