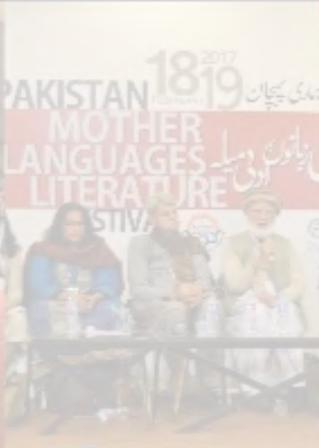
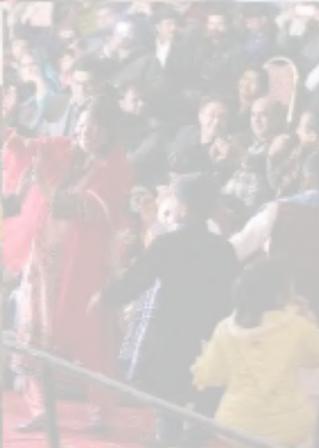
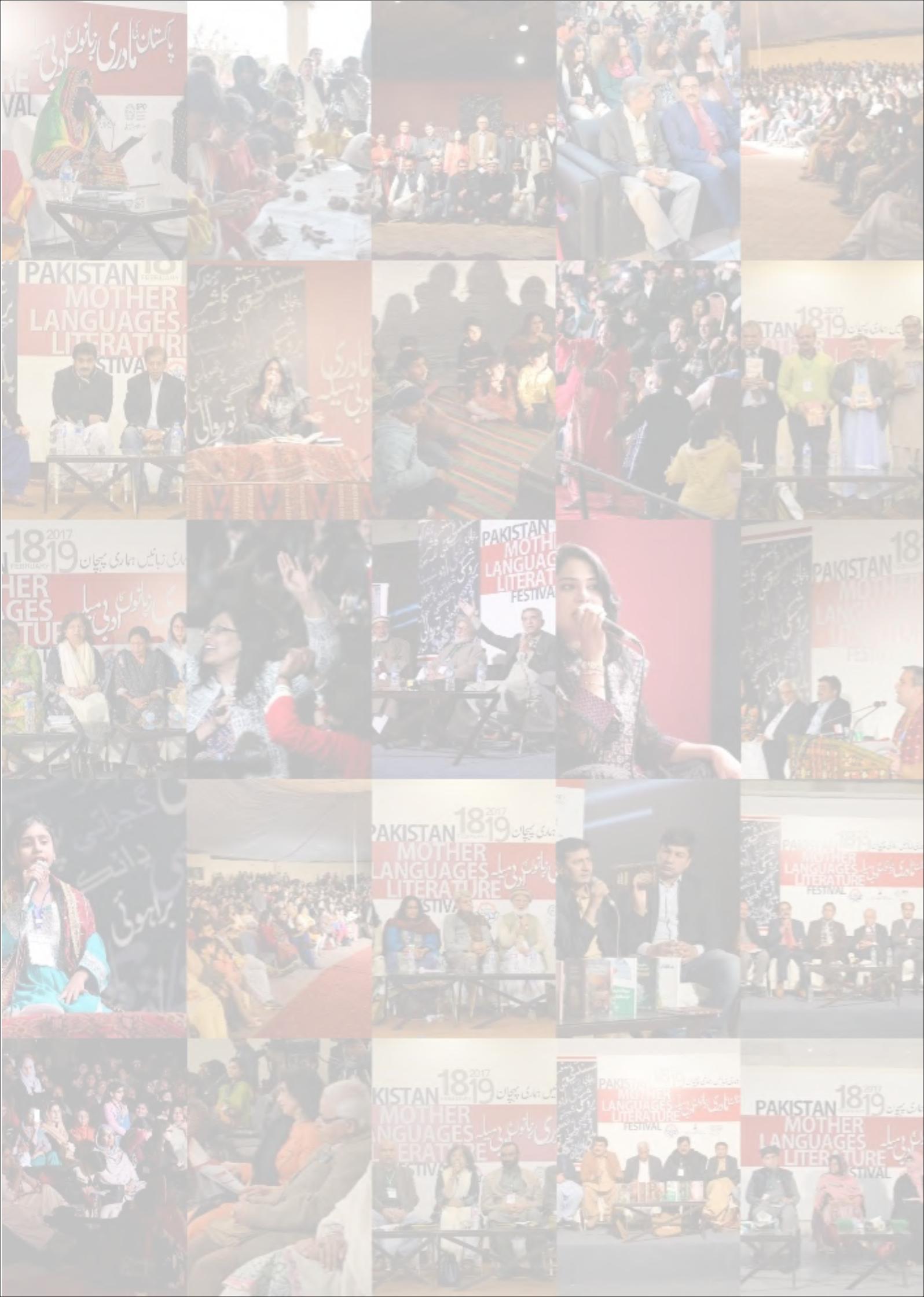




PAKISTAN ²⁰¹⁷ 1819 FEBRUARY ہماری زبانیں ہماری پہچان

MOTHER LANGUAGES پاکستان کی مادری زبانوں کا ادبی میلہ
LITERATURE

FESTIVAL



**“Promoting Pakistan’s Linguistic and Cultural Diversity
by Fostering Critical Thinking Through Effective use of
and Creative Expression in Mother Languages”**

Mother Languages Literature Festival 2017

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Contents

Acronyms.....	4
Acknowledgements.....	5
Introduction.....	6
Sessions.....	8
Opening Ceremony.....	8
Day-I Concurrent Sessions.....	12
Protection and Promotion of Ignored Languages of Pakistan.....	12
Treatment and Representation of Women in Mother Languages Literature.....	14
Launching of New Novels in Mother Languages.....	16
Peoples History in Mother Languages.....	18
Role of Mother Languages in Promoting Critical Thinking.....	19
Launching of New Poetry Books in Mother Languages.....	21
Market and Political Economy of Languages in Pakistan.....	22
Short Stories in Mother Languages.....	24
Writing for Resistance.....	26
Multi-Lingual Mushaira (Poetry Recitation).....	28
Day - II Concurrent Sessions.....	30
Launching of New Books in Mother Language.....	30
Language and Technology.....	31
Cinema in Mother Languages.....	35
Indus Valley – Evolution of Languages and Civilizations.....	35
Impact of Media on Mother Languages.....	37
<i>Nazam</i> (Poem) in Mother Languages.....	39
The Novel in Pakistani Mother Languages.....	41
Language Policy and Planning – South Asian Experience.....	42
Readings from Pakistani Mother Languages.....	44
Premiere of “Marvi- The Mystic Muse” (Documentary).....	44
One Message Many Voices.....	46
Obituaries.....	47
Science Fun <i>Mela</i> (festival).....	49
Closing Ceremony.....	50
Monitoring and Evaluation.....	53
Successes and Key Results.....	54
Challenges and Lessons Learned.....	55
Media Coverage.....	56

Acronyms

CE	Chief Executive
ECOSF	ECO Science Foundation
FOSI	Foundation Open Society Institute
ICF	Indus Cultural Forum
MLLF	Mother Languages Literature Festival
NAP	National Awami Party
PSC	Pakistan Science Club
PSF	Pakistan Science Foundation
SAMAR	Society for Alternate Media and Research
SLA	Sindhi Language Authority
SPO	Strengthening Participatory Organization
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
PIPS	Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services

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Pakistan Mother Languages Literature Festival is a collaborative initiative of the Indus Cultural Forum (ICF), Strengthening Participatory Organization (SPO) and Lok Virsa. We greatly appreciate this collaboration and acknowledge the untiring effort of several staff members and volunteers from these organizations, who worked as a team to make the festival a success.

We would also like to extend our gratitude to the Foundation Open Society Institute (FOSI) and the Culture, Tourism and Antiquities Department, Government of Sindh for their generous financial support, without which the festival would not have been possible.

We are also thankful to the Eco Science Foundation (ECOSF) and Pakistan Science Foundation (PSF) for their support in arranging the science related entertaining activities for children during the festival and revealing a new area of focus i.e. Science and Culture. We acknowledge the logistical and secretariat support provided by the Society for Alternate Media and Research (SAMAR) throughout the festival.

Our sincere thanks go to all the distinguished panelists, moderators and performers who added color to the festival. A big applause for the technical advisory committee comprising renowned writers from various languages who guided the design and implementation of the festival. Last but not least our big thanks to all our young volunteers who did a tremendous job in making it a successful event from all aspects. Thank you all!



Introduction

Pakistan is a multi-lingual country with its linguistic diversity carrying the rich traditions of music, literature, poetry and other forms of arts. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Pakistan has six major and 57 minor languages¹. According to UNESCO's world atlas of endangered languages as many as 27 languages of Pakistan are facing different levels of vulnerability.² There is no patronization of these languages and they risk extinction in the near future. There are no common platforms or avenues where the rich heritage and literature of these languages is applauded and celebrated.

The Indus Cultural Forum (ICF) is a non-profit group of volunteers who is interested in promoting diversity of cultures and is based in Islamabad. ICF believes in promoting and celebrating Pakistan's linguistic and cultural diversity. ICF undertakes its activities in collaboration with various like-minded institutions and organizations. "Pakistan Mother Languages Literature Festival (MLLF)" is a flagship activity of ICF which it organizes in collaboration with organizations like Lok Virsa and Strengthening Participatory Organization (SPO). The annual literary festival is arranged to mark the International Mother Languages Day on 21 February, declared by UNESCO.

The first of its kind festival started in February 2016 by bringing together over 150 authors, artists and researchers to celebrate the rich linguistic and literary heritage of Pakistan. The second festival in 2017 was held on 17-18 February and was equally successful in offering much more than the previous year's festival. This report compiles the overall activities and major discussions undertaken during the MLLF 2017 to document the depth of 'critical thinking' prevailing in the linguistic saga of Pakistan.

As mentioned above, the festival was jointly organized by ICF, Lok Virsa and SPO. This year's festival, in 2017 was generously funded by the Foundation Open Society Institute (FOSI) and the Culture, Tourism and Antiquities Department, Government of Sindh.

The festival complements already existing literature festivals in Pakistan. While Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad literature festivals contribute significantly to the promotion of literature, books and reading culture in Pakistan, their scope is inherently limited to the promotion of English and Urdu writers and books. Understandably, other mainstream languages of Pakistan such as Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, Balochi, Seraiki, Brahvi, Kashmiri, Hindko and other such languages remain either unrepresented or underrepresented in these festivals.

The Pakistan Mother Languages Literature Festival is aimed at mainstreaming the potential of literature and art in these languages which is as diverse as Pakistani society itself. These languages represent traditions which are centuries old of a written and verbal intellectual journey expressed through several forms and genres of literature and performing arts. Literature in these languages from ancient to contemporary times offers a unique perspective on Pakistani life and society.

The festival has been widely recognized by its participants as well as the national media

¹ <http://www.unescobkk.org/education/multilingual-education/mle-mapping-data/pakistan/>

² <http://www.unesco.org/languages-atlas/index.php>

as a unique and “first of its kind” opportunity to showcase the books and authors from these languages. It represents the ancient strong traditions of poetry, literature, music and other aspects of literature and art forms in these languages.

The festival provides a unique platform to promote critical thinking especially among a young audience through cultural interaction and integration between representatives of culture, art and literature, predominately on the themes of peace, diversity & social harmony, human rights and democracy. The event, as is expected, leads to greater ownership and recognition by the Government and people of Pakistan especially children for mother languages, and encouraged the fostering of critical thinking in learning. The festival demonstrates the importance of mother languages at national level among a population from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The first festival laid the foundations of this process, and its continuation was further debated to promote critical thinking among the people in local languages.

The expected outcome of the two days festival was to promote critical thinking in local languages through interactive discussions, plays, poems, debates and songs so as to encourage presenters and participants to interact in their mother tongue. The participants comprising of 150 writers, artists, poets and intellectuals from over 15 Pakistani languages across all four provinces including Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan participated in the event, and made this festival a success. The rigorous schedule of the festival was composed of 25 plenary and concurrent sessions on several literary topics pertaining to critical thinking in mother languages, a launch of 19 new books in Pakistani mother languages, and activities for children and youth for promoting critical thinking through mother languages literature and science.

The approach of the event was participatory and interactive. In each session, the discussions were followed by the questions and answers among the presenters and audience. Other interactive attractions included sessions for children on science and culture, audio visual screenings, art performances, book stalls in various mother languages, a mobile science laboratory and mobile library as the methodologies for interaction and participation.

Within two years, the festival has been successful in putting the debate about the promotion of mother languages on to the national agenda. The Senate Committee on Law and Justice coincided a Public Hearing on a proposed constitutional amendment to declare various languages of Pakistan as National Languages. The hearing was held on Monday, 19 February 2017, at the Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services (PIPS), in which several writers including participants of the festival testified to the importance of mother languages. The Chairperson of the Committee, Senator Murtaza Javed Abbasi started off the Public Hearing by acknowledging the festival and purposely coinciding the public hearing with the holding of festival to make the hearing inclusive with the presence of writers and intellectuals representing various languages of Pakistan. The Committee has since then cleared a Bill to amend the Constitution of Pakistan to recognize Sindhi, Punjabi, Pashto and Balochi as National Languages of Pakistan along with Urdu. The amendment, if approved by the Senate and National Assembly, will also pave the way for declaring other languages including Seraiki, Hindko and Brahvi as national languages as well.



Sessions

Opening Ceremony

Moderator: Nusrat Zehra

The festival started with the Welcome Ceremony. Nusrat Zehra introduced all the distinguished speakers. In her opening remarks, she said that the second consecutive annual festival was a demonstration of a commitment by the organizers to promote Pakistan's linguistic and cultural diversity. She said it is the hope of all the partners and stakeholders that this effort will continue in the future. Following speakers deliberated on the occasion:

Niaz Nadeem, Chairperson of the Indus Cultural Forum, introduced the salient features of this year's festival. He said that as in 2016, this year too there was strong determination for organizing this mega mother languages literature festival. The barbaric attack on renowned *sufi* Qalandar Lal Shahbaz's mausoleum in Sehwan just a day before, is a tragic incident for the whole country but this kind of festivals are an impressive sign of resilience and way forward against the extremism that wants to silence these voices. He announced that to pay tribute to the martyrs of the Savhan blast, the cultural performances at the opening ceremony have been converted into a Dhamal performance, i.e. the Sufi music and dance performed at the shrine of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar and other Sufi shrines of the sub-continent. He thanked everyone who made this event possible including volunteers of ICF, SPO, the Lok Virsa team, civil society organizations, and government departments who supported the cause.

"These festivals have mainstreamed the discourse on Pakistan's linguistic and cultural diversity and potential of our rich and shared heritage."
Niaz Nadeem

Naseer Memon, Chief Executive of SPO highlighted the wave of cultural revival in Pakistan through literature festivals, music *melas* and book fairs. He said *“the colors of languages are able to connect us with each other through creative expression of the messages of love and peace”*. He said, the festivals were instrumental in promoting critical thinking, creative expression in mother languages and building bridges across various cultural and linguistic spectrums in Pakistan. He said we all need to respect all the languages and cultures which are an interesting reflection of Pakistani society.

“the colors of languages are able to connect us with each other through creative expression of the messages of love and peace”
Naseer Memon

“Parents to play their role to help and encourage their children to learn and understand more local languages” Dr. Fouzia Saeed

Dr. Fouzia Saeed, Executive Director Lok Virsa in her welcome speech, said that languages play a key role for national integration because these festivals and events are opportunities for all of us to understand other languages. She also emphasized that through organizing such events we also can combat increasing

extremism and terrorism in the country. She emphasized that the Lok Virsa was committed to supporting the cause of promoting Pakistan’s linguistic and cultural diversity and was always willing to cooperate with organizations like the Indus Cultural Forum to deliver on this commitment. She urged the parents to play their role to help and encourage their children to learn and understand more mother languages of Pakistan.

Dr. Saba Gul Khattak, Country Director of the Foundation Open Society Institute (FOSI), in her remarks said that her institute believes in fostering critical thinking among youth and children so that they can ask the right questions in their life, and this is only possible when they are taught in their mother languages. She said the literature in mother languages represents a true history of our society and culture. She said it was important for initiatives like Mother Languages Literature Festival to be supported.



Haji Akbar Taaban, Senior Minister Government of Gilgit Baltistan in his remarks said, languages have nurtured

and preserved the culture and heritage of Pakistan. He said it was our shared responsibility to save and promote these languages so that the colors of Pakistan's linguistic and cultural diversity are known to the world.

Ahmed Saleem, a legendary writer of Punjabi and Urdu gave the key note address on 'What can we learn from history' in which he traced the vicissitudes of different languages before and after the creation of Pakistan.

He explained the historical and political perspective of International Mother Languages Day. The day is celebrated each year on 21st February. It was first initiated by the government of Bangladesh to recognize the language movement. Later it was recognized by UNESCO. The significance of the day, he explained, is enormous. It promotes the preservation and protection of all languages used by people of the world. Besides, the day promotes linguistic awareness, cultural diversity and multilingualism. He further said that languages play a key role in the development of any society. It is not only a means of communication, but it is also a means of economic development and growth. Languages are the only source that keeps our cultures and literature alive, without our own languages we would be counted among the dead nations. He said more than 20 mother languages are spoken in Gilgit Baltistan alone, and many of them are struggling to survive. These languages are a symbol of diversity and will not harm our country in any manner. Like a garden has many flowers of various colors and fragrance and Pakistan is such a beautiful garden of different languages, cultures and heritage.



Ahmed Salim also spoke about the denial of linguistic rights and stigmatizing indigenous cultural identities, the lopsided anti-people policies of successive governments which led to the dismemberment of the country. He said culture is the only binding force which connects people from different geographic, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.



Syed Sardar Ali Shah, Minister of Culture and Tourism, Government of Sindh was the Chief Guest of the ceremony. He appreciated ICF, Lok Virsa, SPO and other partners who

organized such an event which was needed at the time when the sectarian terrorist activities and attacks on Sufi shrines like Qalandar Lal Shahbaz were increasing every day. He endorsed that these activities are in fact the peaceful protest of civil society

against terrorism. He insisted that we can strongly counter the menace of extremism through cultural revival.

“languages are a symbol of diversity and will not harm our country in any manner, “whereas culture is the only binding force which connects people from different geographic, ethnic and cultural backgrounds” Ahmed Salim

He emphasized the need for strengthening secular institutions to counter terrorism and intolerance.

The cultural show scheduled for the opening ceremony was transformed to *Dhamal* of Qalandar Lal Shahbaz by Gulab Afridi from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, who played Dhamal tune on *Rubab* and by a child performer Nabiha Ispahani whose singing enthralled the audience, and turned the whole event into an emotional moment to remember the martyrs of the tragic incidence.





Day-I Concurrent Sessions

Between the Opening and Closing Plenaries, the festival was spread over several concurrent sessions on different aspects of literature in Pakistan's mother languages. These sessions also included the launching of books in various languages.

Protection and Promotion of Ignored Languages of Pakistan

The speakers provided an overview of the status of the language they were representing. They highlighted opportunities and threats associated with the protection and promotion of these languages. The speakers also provided examples of literature, poetry and research being produced in these languages.

Moderator: Zubair Torwali

Baqar Waeem said that **Dhani** is a land of Rajput, and 1.2 million people speak the Dhani language, mostly in Chakwal and Rawalpindi Districts. It is quite like Hindko language.

Bharu Mal Amrani, while talking about **Dhatki** said, it is a mixture of languages. It is widely spoken in Umerkot, Tharparkar, Rahim Yar Khan and other desert areas of Pakistan. In Tharparkar it is also known as Thari language. Bharu Mal also mentioned one of the famous poetry books in Dhatki, called Humro Chalisi. He ended his talk by narrating a story in Dhatki and with a poem entitled, "Preetam preet laga kae, deesa dur mat ja."

Parveen Malik said that **Chhachhi** language has 3 dialectical connections with Pothohari, Hindko and Dhani. She also mentioned that Kamalpur, an area in Punjab has a diverse population, where this language is predominately spoken. Due to interaction

of more and more people, Chhachhi language speakers have similar accents. Parveen suggested that the Chhachhi language should be brought into the written form so that we can preserve its original form.

Dr. Fakhruddin Akhundzada talked about the languages spoken in Chitral and Gilgit Baltistan regions. He said that there are **8 languages** which are spoken there. Even recently a new language **Manyalee** was discovered at Mansehra, and it has around 400-450 speakers. He emphasized on institutional support to preserve and protect dying languages. He said most of dying languages are only surviving due to poets who write in these languages but they can only survive until poets are alive. He highlighted the ways of preserving and documenting languages through publications, networking and advocacy.

Speaking about the **Shina** language he said it was influenced by **Kashmiri** and **Sanskrit** languages. It is widely spoken in the Hindukush and Himalayan regions which include some areas of India and some in Pakistan.

Dr. Ghulam Muhammad Khetran said the **Khetrani** language is spoken by 0.2 to 0.25 million people in Balochistan. The language is basically a mixture of Indo-Arian languages. He added that Khetrani language is full of feelings of love and compassion. Many wedding songs are written in the Khetrani language. The language has a strong influence of Sindhi, Balochi and Brahvi languages within it.

Dr. Salahudin Mengal, representing the **Brahvi** language said, British researchers have done a lot of work in this language. This is considered one of the most important



languages of the sub-continent. A Brahvi Academy has been established to preserve and document this language. The Academy has published over 400 books in or about this language. He said, Brahvi was the language of Qalat but the rulers of Qalat did not promote this language. He said the development of one language does not threaten other languages, so we can simultaneously promote many languages.

Said Alam said **Shina** was one of the largest languages of Gilgit-Biltistan region and has its roots in other parts of the region. He said, much more is needed to be done to promote Shina and other languages.

Treatment and Representation of Women in Mother Languages Literature

Writers in every language have different ways of portraying and representing gender in literature, poetry and fiction particularly women. There are also strong narratives in various languages about the rights of women. The speakers in this session presented a brief overview of how women are discussed, depicted and portrayed in the literature of these languages. The speakers talked about the strong voices and historical trends on this subject in their respective languages.

Moderator: Dr Humera Ishfaq

Zahida Hina gave a chronological account of development of **Urdu** literature in terms of how women are treated. She began with how the first novel written by a woman in 1881 (which was not published for 11 years and was only printed when her son grew up and printed it in his name) to more recent examples from Ismat Chughtai's "Nanhi ki Naani" and Qazi Abdus Sattar's Hazrat Jan.

"We cannot forget the language that most of our poets have used in describing and fantasizing about women, including Sufi poets" Zaida Hina

She said, the earlier works produced in Urdu were mostly fiction, in which the beauty and features of a woman were discussed in great detail. "A woman's intelligence and her other abilities were not important, her intoxicating beauty was considered important," she said.

The writer said that important historical figures and 'giants' who had left their marks on the history of the region, and on the development of literature and languages, and who were considered progressive, were also against the empowerment of women. For example, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan only talked about educating men and was against women's education.

"We cannot forget the language that most of our poets have used in describing and fantasizing about women, including Sufi poets. I cannot imagine men like Mir Dard describing women and their bodies like one looks at meat at a butcher's shop," she said.

There are also writers such as Mirza Azeem Chughtai, who was one of the first to respect women in his writings, Zahida added. He wrote about the mistreatment of women in various regimes and how women that one cannot marry, a man's *moharramat*, were also disrespected.

She also spoke about Allama Rashidul Khair, who wrote about the feelings of women

and the hardships they face. *“It is true that he wrote about purdah, but this was in 1908 and it could not be expected of him to write about the woman of today although he no doubt paved the way for the woman of today,”* she said.

Sultana Waqasi was invited to talk about the representation of women in **Sindhi** literature. She remarked that many Sindhi writers celebrated women in their work. For example, *“Shah Abdul Latif addressed women when talking about his woes because he knew that women care more. He created the courageous character of Sohni, who is married against her will and still goes to meet the man she loved. In our society, women*

“Shah Abdul Latif addressed women when talking about his woes because he knew that women care more, he brought Sohni to life because he wanted people to understand women’s feelings”
Sultana Waqasi

like that are condemned and killed but he brought Sohni to life because he wanted people to understand women’s feelings,” she said.

“Shah Latif also portrayed patriotic women characters like Marui, where Umar is a king and kidnaps Marui, whom he loves. He could have done whatever he wanted to her but he

waited for her to consent,” she said. She spoke of Umar as a positive character and opined that both should be celebrated because Marui showed her extremely strong will for her people and motherland whereby Umar, failing in getting her consent, finally let her go, also exhibiting strong character.

Sultana said it was important to acknowledge that whether strong or weak women were represented in writings. It is true that we have treated women badly but she is there, even if it is a man infatuated with a woman’s beauty and writing poems about her. A woman, seems, has remained his weakness and his need and his support.

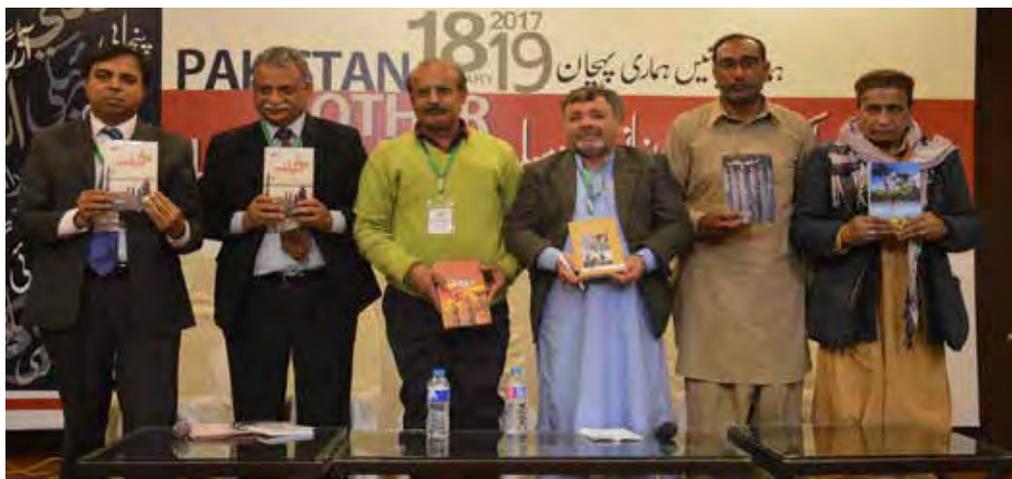
“our language needs us, needs our service, we need to cherish it and take care of it like our mothers used to take care of us”
Zahid Hassan

Shehnaz Hunzai presented a women’s portrayal in **Broshaski** language. She said, Broshaski is one of the 10 most endangered languages of the world and no written works were produced in the language until recently. The oral literary traditions depict respect for women since ancient times. Since there is not much literature in the language, Ms. Hunzai supported her argument for the respect women are given by citing a few common idioms, most of which appeared to give respect to a woman by comparing her to a man.

For instance, a woman will show how proud she is of her daughter by saying her daughter is equal to 100 women, and if she is very proud of her she will say her daughter is equal to 100 men.

Seema Sehar, representing **Hazargi** language said that the language is mostly spoken in Quetta, Karachi, Hyderabad and Islamabad by the people of the Hazara community. This language has been ignored in Pakistan and only protected by its native speakers. Recently the Hazargi Academy has started the preservation of the language by publishing books in this language. Some valuable works have recently been printed in this language.

Mussarat Kalnchvi spoke about the strong presence of women in **Seraiki** literature. She started off with a kafi of Hazrat Khawaja Ghulam Fareed who focused on women's praiseworthy character. However, like all other languages women have been suppressed due to widespread discrimination against them in society. She highlighted the important role played by Radio Pakistan Bahawalpur to promote women's issues in a native language, which resulted in the emergence of Bakhtawar Kareem as the most influential fiction writer in Seraiki.



Launching of New Novels in Mother Languages

In this session five newly published novels in five different languages were launched. All these novels were published in 2016. The moderator introduced each author and her/his book and invited the writer to briefly talk about the book and present some examples of the work from it. One of these novels "Angristanu" by Zafarullah Parvaz is the first novel ever written in Khowar language.

Moderator: Dr. Hakim Ali Buriro

Zahid Hassan author of a **Punjabi** novel "**Tassi Dharti**" while speaking about his novel said it was important to write in local languages in all genres. He said poetry had a strong tradition in Punjabi but other forms of writing need to be strengthened. He said our language needs us, needs our service, we need to cherish it and take care of it like our mothers used to take care of us. He said "Tassi Dharti" was not his first novel but it has achieved high recognition in a short time.

Nazir Bhatti spoke about his **Hindko** novel “**Phull Kekran Dey**”. He said the novel depicts the issues of the region where Hindko language is spoken. He said writing in our own language is important as it teaches us how to behave in our own society.

Prof. Habeeb Mohana while speaking about his **Seraiki** novel “**Khare Dende Han Sadray**”, said the language of Seraiki has its roots embedded in four provinces. He believes everything, a place and even a person has a story. It is up to you how you understand and interpret a story. His novel is also a reflection of this approach which has tried to tell a story in a way the writer has perceived it.

Zafarullah Parvaz launched his **Khowar** novel “**Angristanu**”, which is the first novel in that language. While speaking, he said the novel was a story of a woman’s journey through the challenges of her domestic life. Her first marriage, was arranged, then she was sold twice and in the end, she got married to her love. Various stages of this transition of her life are portrayed in the novel. While speaking about why he chose to write the novel in Khowar, he said “even if you learn dozens of languages, you will be perfect only in your mother language”.

Ishaque Ansari spoke about his recently published **Sindhi** novel “**Piyar Daryah**”. He described how he conceives a story. He said to be able to tell a good story, we need to understand what was written before and in what context, and learn from it. He said his novel is a story of people living along the banks of many rivers including the Indus, Ganges, Jumna and Brahmaputra. He said the story has many aspects of love, anger, joys and sorrows of these people.

“There is very little in our history books about local heroes. Most history consists of the tales of rulers and invaders ... There is a need to differentiate heroes from villains,” Inam Shaikh



Peoples History in Mother Languages

There is strong tradition of oral and hidden history in Pakistan which provides an alternate view of what is being taught and written in the official narrative. The speakers in this session contributed to providing an alternate view of history, or worked on an alternate narrative. They spoke about their own or others' work for creating alternative narratives of history.

Moderator: Mazhar Arif

Speaking as the Moderator, Mazhar Arif said some history is written by historians from the perspective of a ruler, but alternate history has been written by people themselves through art and literature. He said these writers have depicted a true picture of social and political realities which historians representing rulers have failed to capture. All Pakistani mother languages are full of such realities.

Prof. Shamim Arif said that it is an established fact that peoples' history has never been written by rulers, but it has always been written and documented by the common people of any given time. The **Seraiki** language is about 1000 years old, and it has a rich literature. Many ballads had been written in Seraiki, which depict the role of heroes in wars in their respective areas. Lots of ballads had also been written about the brave son of Muzaffar Khan from Multan.

Inam Shaikh said that the history being taught at schools and colleges had everything but the history, struggle and achievements of the common people. As an example, he pointed to the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai in **Sindhi**. Shaikh said that Bhittai wrote about the land and its people, and lamented how modern Punjab had forgotten its heroes such as Ranjit Singh. *"There is very little in our history books about local heroes. Most history consists of the tales of rulers and invaders ... There is a need to differentiate heroes from villains,"* said Shaikh. He called for promoting the Indus Valley Civilization as opposed to the Ganga-Jamuna civilization.

Saleem Raz said that our writers and intellectuals have never supported kings and elites throughout history. We fought against the Moghul empires. He said **Pashtun**



writers have never allied themselves with conquerors. Khush'hal Khan Khattak played an important role in documenting the history of people. He said there was a need to revisit history, especially which had been written after partition. He said that successive governments in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa had paid millions to clerics and seminaries, but it did not extend patronage to the Pashto language. He said Pashto writers have not only written but taken practical steps to protect the motherland. He said currently the government is promoting and financing madrassas but literary organizations are not being supported, and no effort is being made to correct this imbalance.

Rana Fazal Hussain provided an historical perspective of the **Gojri** language. He said that it is an Indo-Aryan language spoken by the Gujars of Northern Pakistan and in India. The language was known as Gujjar bhasha, "Gojari" or more recently Gujjar Apabhramsha. It was used as a literary language as early as the 12th century. He said that in history many poets of the Gojri language have written poetry about the heroes of different eras.

Role of Mother Languages in Promoting Critical Thinking

In this session, a link between mother tongue based education and the promotion of critical thinking was explored. To foster critical thinking among children and youth, it is important that they ask the right questions, and that is only possible when they are taught in a language that they can relate to.

Moderator: Mosharraf Zaidi

Introducing the topic, the Moderator said creative thinking is not possible without critical thinking and critical thinking cannot be fostered without primary education in a mother language. He said in this session, we will explore practical examples of how it is possible to promote a mother language without engaging with the politics of the topic of mother languages. He said mother language issue tend to be a political issue but our speakers today will explore how innovative approaches could be adapted in teaching a mother language. He said our elite is very good in communication in English, but they hardly understand the language their people speak.

Shahid Rahman runs a mobile school in the **Gojri** language. He mentioned examples of how their students compete with other schools because they teach in a mother language. He said critical thinking is possible in mother languages. He said *"we have proved that the performance of students studying in mother language is better than those going to English medium private schools"*.

Zaman Sagar **said** his institute Forum for Language Initiatives is working on mother tongue based education particularly for **Northern Areas languages**. For many languages, oral tradition is sustainable but the written word is disappearing and many of the wider spoken languages are threatening the small languages. He said that with the support of UNESCO, they are running various programs for teaching in mother languages. The Forum has also started working with poets, writers and people who

know languages to seek their help to formulate a curriculum. UNESCO and various other international organizations have recognized through research that performance improves when you teach in mother languages. He said the dropout rate is more in those schools where mother language is not adapted as a medium. It is difficult to learn a concept if it is not taught in a mother language therefore critical thinking cannot be promoted if primary education is not in mother languages. He mentioned that after primary education in a mother language we transition children to second and third languages. He added that it is possible to develop languages and teaching methods in languages which are not very developed.

Dr. Ghafoor Shad said in Balochistan, **Balochi** is not used as a medium of instruction. The Constitution of Pakistan provides for protection of languages but the Balochi language is not used as medium of instruction, and this is one of the main reasons why children from Balochistan are not at par with students of other languages. Some experiments have been done in past but they have not been successful, because there was no political will to make it succeed. The reason for this failure was that there are no trained teachers or an alphabet to build consensus. Languages should be promoted at official as well as unofficial levels.

Raja Hasrat while representing **Hindko** language said we have been working on the promotion of Hindko since 1997 through the Hindko Language and Cultural Society. We have conducted research on different dialects of Hindko with the help of international experts and reached a consensus on a central dialect from Abbottabad. Based on that we have developed primers, a curriculum and teaching methods with the help of writers and poets. We have now established a school in Hindko medium which started with 6 children in 2014, and now it has increased to 44 within two years. This is first school in KPK which is based on a local language. He said there are more girls in the school than boys. We are working on language training for teachers, and this is the biggest challenge.

Nargis Sultana representing Foundation Open Society Institute said that when it comes to discussing mother languages, the quality of education becomes very important. Because the quality of public schools has declined, parents are sending their children to private schools where conceptual learning is not promoted. Speaking about a critical thinking program she said it is important to promote critical thinking, and this is only possible through providing quality education in mother languages. She said it is important to devise a language policy which does not negate the need for learning English or Urdu, but it should be based on “phasing” of language learning. In the initial years of a child, it is important to impart education in mother language as young children tend to think in their mother language. She said we want to impart democratic values among children but that is not possible without allowing them to ask questions in the language that they understand.

Bushra Iqbal Malik who is a prominent writer and teaches **Urdu** in Germany, in her remarks said acquiring language competence takes at least 12 years and in the case of the children in Pakistan, we are continuously insisting on teaching other languages

in the primary years. She said all under developed and poor countries are neglecting mother languages and as a result they face the “brain drain”. She said all developed countries are teaching children in their mother languages till 12th year of age. But we confuse our children by trying to impose other languages on them. She said critical thinking can only be fostered when children can relate to their own language with other languages.

Launching of New Poetry Books in Mother Languages

In this session nine new books of poetry in different languages were launched. All these books were published in 2016 or 2017. The moderator introduced each poet and their book and invited the writer to briefly talk about the book and present some examples of the work from it.

Moderator: Bushra Saeed

Bushra Saeed in her opening remarks gave a brief introduction to her own book “**Baatein**” which is a collection of **Urdu** poems. She said her poems explored conversations which are never held in our lives and those which are given less importance in our daily lives.

Ali Muhammad Farshi introduced his book “**Mohabbat Se Khali Dino Mein**”. He also provided the audience with a background of **Urdu** nazam, its main influences as well as the people who influenced his own style of writing. He described Saqib Farooqi as the main person who influenced his career and school of thought. The audience also learnt about the time when Farshi was a student himself, and started his foray into literature through short-story writing but soon realized that he was meant to become a poet with nazam being his preferred form of expression.

Farshi concluded his remarks by reciting a few nazams from his latest book.

Dr. Sarwat Zahra’s book of poems translated in **Sindhi** “**Koonj Kurlae Thee**” was launched. The book is translated by Kaylash, a renowned Sindhi writer and critic and the life partner of Sarwat Zahra. Zahra introduced the book and shared her poetic journey with the audience. She attributed much of her success to her husband referring to him as her peer. Zahra then presented a few poems from her book. It was beautiful rendition in Sindhi in Zahra’s powerful and unique style of narration. She then recited her Urdu poem Marvi to great applause and ended her speech.

“Diversity and the heterogeneous characteristics of the country have been ignored and the language issue has been used to oppress people”.

Muhammad Ziauddin

Muhammad Ziauddin introduced his **Hindko** poetry book “**Bayad-e-Safoot Ghayoor**”. His book was dedicated to the martyr who was a victim of a suicide bombing. His book

is an ode to peace and those who die for peace. At the end, Mr. Ziauddin recited a poem from his book.

Samina Qadir introduced her **Pashto** poetry book, “**Spazlay-e-Jazbay**” which is her second and latest book of poetry. She recited a Pashto ghazal from the book which was written in the context of recent terrorist attacks in the country. Samina recited another Pashto ghazal which she also translated into Urdu for the better understanding of the audience.

Noor ul Ain Saadia introduced her **Punjabi** book poetry “**Mach**”. She said her book was dedicated to the first Punjabi female poet Pero Preman. Saadia said she has dedicated her literary career to the promotion of Punjabi language and literature. She said in her poetic expression she follows the realist school of thought. She then recited a poem from her latest book.

Sultana Waqasi introduced her **Sindhi** poetry book “**Sawal**” to the audience which is her second published work. She recited a few poems from the book on various subjects such as the candle light vigils which take place in our country after a terrorist attack, and questioned what is achieved through such vigils. She then recited a poem in which she highlighted and underscored challenges of womanhood in the 21st century. Her last poem was about the day when Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto was martyred.

Ijaz briefly introduced his latest **Punjabi** book, “**Be Barkatay Dinan De Katha**” which is a collection of poems. It was his third published work. He then recited two poems from the book, which were written in the context of terrorism in the country.

Aslam Javed was the last author who joined the rest of the speakers on stage towards the end of the session. He very briefly described his latest **Seraiki** poetry book, “**Sat Serai**” which is his fourth published work.

Market and Political Economy of Languages in Pakistan

Protection and promotion of languages depends on a market and political economy associated with the languages. In this session, the speakers spoke about the market and political economy aspects underlying the politics of languages. The speakers emphasized the need for state patronage of all languages spoken in the country and to promote linguistic diversity.

Moderator: Rahat Saeed

Introducing the session, Moderator Rahat Saeed said except for a brief period under the Aryan ruler Ashoka, the language of the rulers and the people in the subcontinent was never the same. This has been a cause of tension and deprivation of languages which have not received the patronage of rulers.

Naseer Memon in his remarks said sections of the powerful elite in the subcontinent promoted Urdu language in Pakistan at the cost of languages spoken by the people. He



said the issue of language has its roots in the history before the colonial period. In Shah Abdul Lateef Bhittai's era rulers promoted Persian over Sindhi and other languages, but even at that time they faced resistance. He said Pakistan was created on the pretext that people of various regions will get their due rights and recognition but this promise was not fulfilled and people were denied their rights to mother languages soon after the creation of Pakistan. He said even before partition official work in Sindh was being done in Sindhi and all revenue records existed in Sindhi. Diminishing these tools has affected the economic relevance of languages. He said hundreds of jobs are always linked to the language. If the state wants to promote a language, there will be thousands of jobs for the speakers of that language. He quoted the example of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, and mentioned that teaching Chinese is flourishing in Pakistan which has created many jobs, and if we give similar recognition to our own languages, more employment will be created in these languages and people will not switch to language other than their own for the mere reason of no economic opportunities in their mother language.

“Except for a brief period under the Aryan ruler Ashoka, the language of the rulers and the people in the subcontinent was never the same”. Rahat saeed

Asim Sajjad Akhtar in his remarks said that languages and politics have always been linked together and languages that bring power have been promoted at the cost of other smaller languages. He said resource distribution for languages has always been dominated by the notion of one language. He said language is a cultural and expressive symbol but important political battles are fought over the issue of languages.

Mazhar Arif said that to understand the link between languages and the market is extremely important. The issue of the Seraiki language identity surfaced in 1973 when its recognition was limited to being a dialect of Punjabi. This was frightening for native speakers of Seraiki and triggered protests. When the radio station was established in Multan, Seraiki was promoted and various courses were offered in Seraiki language by universities. In past, the issue of South Punjab was limited to the recognition of Seraiki as a language, but because it was not acknowledged this led to a demand for the separate Seraiki province.

Muhammad Ziaudin from Gandhara Hindko Academy Peshawar, in his remarks said the popular narrative is that Pakistan has one national language and four languages spoken in the province, which means that all other languages have been ignored. He said diversity and the heterogeneous characteristics of the country have been ignored. He said the language issue has been used to oppress people in Pakistan. He suggested that the languages should be linked with the economy. There should be the opportunity to employ people in mother languages. To some extent Sindhi and Pashto languages are linked with the market but there needs to be more work done for all languages in this regard.

Short Stories in Mother Languages

The speakers in this session spoke about tradition, development and trends in short story writing. They provided a brief overview of short story writing in their language, and provided some examples of such traditions.

Moderator: Irfan Ahmed Urfi

While introducing the session, Irfan Ahmed Urfi said the roots of short stories in **Urdu** were initially in the *dastans*. Later, during the colonial period, it was inspired by English, French and Russian literature. He said in this session, he will explore similarities and differences in the evolution of short stories in Pakistan's mother languages.

Mr. Zarab Haider began his discussion by narrating the evolution of short stories in **Sindhi**. He said story writing is very strong in Sindhi literature. He added that in 1914,



one hundred years of Sindhi short stories were celebrated and in that way the history of Sindhi short stories is spread over two hundred years. He said Sindhi stories, like Urdu, started with dastans as there were readers and singers of these *dastan*. With the suppression of artists by various oppressive regimes, these people adapted symbolic ways of telling stories, which then evolved into modern short stories. Sindhi literature, he said has produced some great short story writers. He said subjects in Sindhi short stories are inspired by political developments and socio-cultural traditions. Problems of Sindhi women and social and cultural barriers faced by them are also highlighted in Sindhi short stories. He said the customs like honor killings (*karo kari*) have been widely condemned in Sindhi fiction. He said one can feel the influence of Urdu short stories on Sindhi stories. He especially highlighted the stories written in the context of partition of the sub-continent written by Sindhi writers on both sides of the border.

“Subjects in Sindhi short stories are inspired by political developments, social and cultural traditions” Mr. Zarab Haider

Dr. Sagheer Ahmed said that there is a connection between the stories and the valleys of Kashmir. The people of Kashmir stay in their houses due to severe climatic conditions, therefore they listen to stories in their leisure time. The short stories in **Kashmiri** language are not lengthy and are written about the beautiful valleys and people living in these valleys. The people living in Azad Kashmir and Indian Occupied Kashmir speak Pahari, while the people living in Jammu Kashmir speak Punjabi. There are lots of short stories about terrorism, the freedom struggle and the drastic conditions of Kashmir. These stories are mainly based on injustice and atrocities committed against the people of the valley. He said in **Pahari** language, the number of short stories is limited. However, recent short stories are inspired by displacements following the construction of the Mangla Dam. He said in general, Pahari short stories are inspired by the Progressive Movement.

Farooq Sarwar spoke about the evolution of **Pushto** short stories. He said several classical and folktales have been written in Pushto. Highlighting the works of Qalandar Mohmand, Gul Afzal Khan, Rahat Zakir, Zaitoon Bano and others he said the Pushto short story relates to the historic traditions as well as with modern times. He said women writers like Zaitoon Bano have inspired several young Pushto female writers to start writing, which was considered a taboo in the past. He said the political and social context is reflected in Pashto short stories. The geo-political situation in Pakistan and Afghanistan, wars and extremism have been the main subjects of short stories whether written in Baluchistan, KPK or Afghanistan.

“In the creative field comfort of expression is more important than the audience you reach. He said not writing in Punjabi is one of my great regrets” Hameed Shahid

Hameed Shahid said despite his mother language being Punjabi he chose to write in **Urdu** because he was not privileged enough to get primary education in Punjabi. He said Punjabi has some great short story writers who have inspired his fiction writing. He said writing in Urdu reaches to a wider audience but in the creative field comfort of expression is more important than the audience you reach. He said, “not writing in Punjabi is one of my great regrets”.

Zahida Hina: in her remarks said she writes in **Urdu** because Urdu was her mother language. *“I have grown up with Urdu that’s why I am more comfortable in writing in Urdu, and cannot be a good writer in any other language”*, she said. Some writers, she said, are better in writing in another language rather than their mother language, but not all writers are comfortable in another language. She quoted the example of Salman Rushdie whose mother language is Urdu but he writes better English than native English speakers. She said within Pakistan translations of mother languages literature should be promoted so that the potential of these languages is known at the national level.

Writing for Resistance

The intersection of literature and politics in Pakistani mother languages literature was discussed in this session.

Moderator: Mujahid Barelvi

Introducing the session, Mujahid Barelvi said literature and poetry of resistance has enjoyed convening power in the political and democratic movements in Pakistan. He said the poems of Jalib against Ayub Khan, Yahya and Zia- ul- Haq’s dictatorships have had a great impact on the people and have had the power to shatter the confidence of dictators.

Harris Khalique, the panel expert on **Urdu** literature, spoke about the lack of attention given to indigenous languages of the country, referencing a Senate debate on whether to recognize another eight to 12 languages spoken in the country as



national languages. He added that there are almost 70 languages spoken in Pakistan. He also said that the language issue is connected to power and is essentially a political one in which Urdu has acted as a unifier and a divider. He said there are many literary figures who wrote in Urdu even though it was not their mother tongue, and for many Urdu was not the native language four or five generations ago.

“The language issue is connected to power and is essentially a political one in which Urdu has acted as a unifier and a divider”.

Harris Khalique

He said language conflict is a neo-colonial tool to divide countries, and if these questions are left for the people of Pakistan to resolve, they can do a great job in addressing these issues. He said there is no animosity between the languages of the people, but it is an issue of politics and power. He said more Urdu books are read in the interior of Sindh than any other urban centers of Pakistan.

Inam Shaikh, the panel expert on **Sindhi** literature, said *“the Sindhi mind is non-conformist.”* Relating the history of Sindhi resistance in the subcontinent, he said people from Sindh have supported democracy since the creation of Pakistan. Mr. Shaikh also spoke about well-known Sindhi poets such as Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai and Shaikh Ayaz, and said there have been many great Sindhi poets since Shaikh Ayaz, however Shaikh Ayaz was not just a poet but an era.

Mazhar Nawaz, the **Seraiki** expert said *“Sindh was the name of a civilization, within which there are innumerable languages and the more widely spoken of these include Sindhi, Seraiki and Punjabi, among others”.* He said Seraiki has not been considered a separate language in Punjab, which is why it was natural for resistance to emerge in Seraiki literature, adding that its uniqueness as a language was even recognized by the British. Mazhar Nawaz said there are examples of resistance in the poetry of Sufi poet Khawaja Ghulam Farid.



Abid Mir, the panel expert on Balochi literature, said resistance was central to folk and modern literature, noting several figures from Balochi folk literature and history. He said there is strong connection between folk literature and resistance literature. He said the romantic literature and resistance go together in Balochi literature.

Mushtaq Mughool, the panel expert on **Hazaragi**, spoke briefly on Hazaragi literature and recited a poem on the dangers and consequences of mixing religion and politics.



Kamran Achakzai, representing **Pashto** literature, said Pashto literature is not lagging when it comes to resistance. He said some Pashto writers are pioneers of satire in which they speak about resistance. In modern literature, Noor Muhammad Tarakai was the pioneer of resistance literature as his short stories and novels are full of resistance topics. Darvesh Durrani is another important name in writing for resistance. He said Noor Muhammad Tarakai and others have challenged all kinds of power centers like Syeds, Mullahs and Khans in their writings.

Multi-Lingual Mushaira (Poetry Recitation)

A multi-lingual mushaira (poetry recitation) was arranged at the end of first day of the festival. The mushaira this year was dedicated to all female poets to celebrate and acknowledge the great contributions of female poets and writers for mother languages of Pakistan. Over 30 female poets from 10 Pakistani languages were invited to recite their poetry.

The mushaira was presided over by Urdu poet Mohtarma Sarwat Zahra, whose book of poetry translation was launched earlier in the day. The evening was moderated by Seraiki poet and broadcaster Kausar Samreen.

“In the creative field comfort of expression is more important than the audience you reach not writing in Punjabi is one of my great regrets”. Hameed Shahid

The mushaira was live streamed through the Lok Virsa website. It was a colorful and engaging event as the audience included speakers of all participating mother

languages, hence each poetess who graced the stage with renditions in her mother language, was heard and understood by the audience. This generated great applause and encouragement for the poets.

In the closing remarks Dr. Sarwat Zahra, congratulated the speakers and audience, for a beautiful gathering. She expressed deep pride and satisfaction on the participation of audience in such a cultural gathering as, according to her, this was a sign that we as a nation are moving in the right direction regardless of the security threats that we continue to face. Ms. Zahra also recited a select collection of her poems.

Following poetesses recited their poems in their mother languages.

- **Punjabi:** Noor ul Ain Saadia
- **Balochi:** Zahida Raeesi, Dr. Zeenat Sana
- **Brhavi:** Ambreen Mengal, Humaira Sadaf Hasni
- **Urdu:** Sarwat Zehra, Rubina Shad, Fakhra Noreen
- **Pushto:** Brekhna Shahzad, Noreen Shama, Nazia Durrani
- **Sindhi:** Gulshan Laghari, Nasreen Altaf, Sultana Waqasi
- **Siraiki:** Kosar Samreen, Mussarat Kalanchvi
- **Hindko:** Bushra Farukh, Suraya Hussam
- **Pahari:** Amina Bahar Roona
- **Hazargi:** Sima Sahar





Day - II Concurrent Sessions

Launching of New Books in Mother Language

Moderator: Fiza Qureshi

Seven new books on variety of subjects written in different mother languages were launched in this session. The moderator asked each writer to introduce their book and briefly speak about it. The books that were launched included:

Aftab Soomro introduced his Sindhi book “Bangkok je Bazaran Tayen” which was a travelogue of China and Thailand written during an official visit. He said he was lucky to be selected for these visits which was like a miracle for him as in government sector not everyone gets equal opportunities. He said the book is written in the context of his participation in a languages course for participants from over 30 countries.

Panah Baloch spoke about his Urdu book “Lahoot La Makan” published by Lok Virsa. He said this book is also a travelogue and documents the interesting events occurred during his travel between Shahbaz Qalandar’s shrine in Savhan and Shah Bilawal Noorani’s shrine in Lahoot La Makan. He said, unfortunately, both of these shrines have recently been attacked by terrorists. He said the book highlights the spiritual journey of devotees of these shrines. It is research based work that highlights the places and rituals attached to these journeys.

“One of the important functions of technology is documentation to preserve our languages”. Dr. Waseema Shahzad

Usman Alam spoke about the collection of **Urdu** short stories “**Dharay**” written by five young writers. He said it is a collective effort of these writers to redefine fiction. He said these stories were written after discussions between these authors. We pre-decided a topic, discussed it, and then went back to write a story about it. He said we also considered various literary traditions and theories while writing these stories. This was an innovative work which has generated a good debate and we are planning to continue this kind of work. The writers of this book included Muhammad Usman Alam, Jawad Hasnain Bashar, Fatima Usman, Tayab Aziz Malik and Shahnawaz.

Iqbal Hussain Afkar spoke about his new **Pushto** book “**Da Wafa Mini Khkola Pa Lor**”. The book compiles articles of Mr. Afkar written between the 1980s and 2000s regarding his travels in Pakistan and Afghanistan and his participation in numerous literary gatherings. He said the book provides his perspective on various political, literary, social and cultural developments in Pakistan.

Khalid Azad spoke about three volumes of a “**History of Children’s Literature**” in **Sindhi** for the last 150 years. The book is not only a history of children’s literature but also of various movements involving youth and children. He said initial work in Sindhi started with children’s books.

“Khyber Pakhtunkhwa now only has two or three cinemas in Peshawar, which have only survived because their owners produce movies to keep their cinemas running”.

Akbar Hoti

There are numerous profiles of writers and publishers. The book is published by the Sindhi Language Authority. He said it is a series of reference books for researchers. The book also provides a history of children’s literary and political organizations, magazines, newspaper pages for children and various other aspects of children’s literature.

Ahmed Saleem spoke about a **Sindhi** book “**Anwar Pirzado-Toon Kedo Door Halio Wayo Aan**” about the life and works of the prominent Sindhi writer and journalist Anwar Pirzado. The book contains over 100 obituaries written about Anwar Pirzado. It contains articles and poetic tributes paid to Anwar by 120 writers and poets. Great people like Sobho Giyanchandani, Rasool Bux Palijo, Benazir Bhutto, Muhammad Hanif, Jam Saqi and others have also written about the personality and contribution of Anwar Pirzado.

Afsar Ali spoke about his book of Khowar proverbs. He said he has conducted research from various Khowar speaking people to compile the proverbs and seek their explanations.

Language and Technology

Moderator: Dr Khawaja A. Rehman

In this session, IT experts and linguists focused on the state’s inability to support regional languages for their digital promotion. With Pakistan boasting

a telecommunications density of over 70 per cent, signifying the penetration of cellphones and technology into the daily life of Pakistanis, regional languages are still struggling to come to terms with it.

Amar Fayaz, a computer specialist in the **Sindhi** Language Authority (SLA), complained that the government had been supporting greater technological adoption for Urdu, adding that the only word processor for Urdu remains the computer program InPage. By contrast, he said, Sindhi can be written in Unicode and is widely written in MS Word and all other office packages. He added that the Sindhi dictionary had 650,000 words – most for any South Asian language. He, however, said that SLA was building a Codex for Sindhi language. Further, he said that the Authority has digitized 675,000 compilations of academic writings and 2,185 literary books including Shah Jo Risalo. These have been made available for reading online. He said state, particularly the federal government's patronization is necessary for promoting technology in languages in Pakistan.

He said, even Urdu has not received proper attention of the government.

He recommended coordination between various languages and academic institutions, so that advancement in one language could be shared with others and duplication of efforts is avoided.

“It is the prime responsibility of the government to make efforts to facilitate local cinema and keep local languages alive. Unfortunately, the film industry in Pakistan in every era followed government's policies”. Iqbal Qaiser

Zahida Raeesi in her talk about digitizing **Balochi** language, literature and culture, said that when she first set out to research the subject in 2004-05, she only found Balochi songs online. This, she said, encouraged her to start an initiative to digitize the language. Seeking assistance from the Roman style used for Urdu, she remapped the keys to write in Balochi. Eventually, she managed to prepare a comprehensive guide to type Balochi in computer by first preparing a PDF and then Android versions.

Dr. Nassrullah Wazir said that a lot of work had already been done to digitize the **Pushto** language. Now, he said work was being done to translate words, phrases and other texts from Pushto to other languages. Apart from the federal government, he urged provincial governments to also work to promote mother languages.

Mustafa Alkhani said that unlike other mainstream languages, the **Hazargi** language was endangered and that they were still facing difficulties in developing a keyboard for it. He said the written history of Hazargi is only two decades old. He added that Hazargi is commonly confused with Persian which is not true as Hazargi has some unique letters and sounds which are not part of Persian.

Dr. Waseema Shahzad stated that technology has different levels of learning – formal and informal language learning. It depends on us how we use the technology as it has both merits and demerits. Current technology plays a very important role in teaching, learning and conducting any research, and there are a variety of software available

that makes research work easier. One of the important functions of technology is documentation to preserve our languages. Another very important function of technology is translation. She suggested formulation of a comprehensive policy on the use of technology to promote mother languages in Pakistan. She said translation of other languages is important and now technology has also made it easier to translate between languages.

“we need to redefine our identity and take pride in our languages and cultures”.
Dr. Tariq Rehman

Rehmat Aziz represented his work by stating that he has designed three versions of the keyboard which could be used for forty languages. Furthermore, he said by making a keyboard we can save our languages and through languages, cultures survive. He said the first keyboard of the **Khowar** language was developed by him.

Aftab Ahmed said that to preserve our language we have designed a keyboard and dictionary of the **Torwali** language which is supported by Google. He explained that there are about one hundred thousand speakers of Torwali language. Until the year 2000 no Torwali literature was available in a published form, but now they have started publishing books in Torwali. We also have launched a website to learning this language. Besides, he suggested that this language should be integrated with other national languages so that it can survive.

Cinema in Mother Languages

Panelists in this session discussed the situation of Cinema and Films in mother languages. Overallly, they were not very optimistic about the future of cinema in mother languages, noting that the production of Balochi and Sindhi language films has already stopped, and the situation is not much better for Punjabi and Pashto films. The



panelists also mentioned the film industry was not able to become an independent industry such as Bollywood or Hollywood. They said political influence has ruined Pakistani cinema, and criticized the widespread screening of Indian movies in Pakistan.

Moderator: Naz Sahito

Ijaz Gul attributed the downfall of Urdu cinema to commercialism and local story subjects. However, he added that the production of good quality **Urdu** language movies like *Manto*, *Bol* and *Khuda Ke Liye* in recent past gave him hope for the revival of film industry in Urdu. Ijaz Gul said Urdu films have played an important role throughout the history of the subcontinent. *“The subjects, even at the initial stages of Urdu films, were very bold. The silent movie Daughter of Today, produced in 1924, had a very strong message about the role of women in society and talked about women’s rights. Films like Chakori, Qulli, Chotay Sahib were blockbuster movies because they had strong storylines”*. He added that when movies are being produced using the same routine storyline with ‘*six vulgar songs and nonsense comedy*’, they fail; whether they are in Urdu, Punjabi, Pashto or any other language.

“Pakistan is the only federal country in the world which has one national language”.
Jami Chandio

Akbar Hoti, spoke about **Pashto** masterpiece movies such as *Urbal*, *Dekkan*, *Badamala* and other films that were very successful. *“At that time, our films had strong and diverse subjects, including the domestic and social history, politics, and many others. However, the downfall of Pashto cinema began in the 90s, when violence and vulgarity became an essential part of every movie.”* Akbar Hoti said that the government also did not play a role in protecting and promoting this medium of art, and there was no censor board to regulate film content. He said Khyber Pakhtunkhwa now only has two or three cinemas in Peshawar, which have only survived because their owners produce movies to keep their cinemas running. He said they are producing commercial films and are not aiming to promote art or cinema itself.

Iqbal Qaiser, a **Punjabi** film critic, blamed the government for not protecting mother language cinema, saying; *“It is the prime responsibility of the government to make efforts to facilitate local cinema and keep local languages alive. Unfortunately, the film industry in Pakistan in every era followed government’s policies”*. For example, if we had a dictatorship we produced movies according to their policies and if we

“Punjabi aristocrats or elite class did not want to promote Punjabi language as they had made huge investments in Urdu and other languages”. Hussain Naqvi

get freedom of expression from the government we consider it a license to show vulgarity in films.

Haibtan Umer spoke about the state of **Balochi** cinema. He said in 1986 documentary and short films based on social issues were made. In the

1990's a young generation uplifted Balochi cinema, but since then it has seen a decline. He said there is no financial and economic incentive in Balochi cinema.

Naz Sahito, who was also the moderator of the session, spoke about **Sindhi** cinema. He said Sindhi cinema was as developed as Urdu until the 1970s. It produced artists like Mustafa Qureshi and playback singers like Humera Channa and Roona Laila. He said singers like Noor Jahan, Lata Mangeshkar and many others performed for Sindhi cinema. He attributed the decline of Sindhi cinema to the policies of the state in the 1980s who prevented all creative voices. The current state of the cinema in Sindhi is that it is non-existent.

Indus Valley – Evolution of Languages and Civilizations

Moderator: Uzma Anjum

In this session, speakers spoke about the evolution of language and cultures belonging to the Indus Valley Civilization. They highlighted how the languages and cultures were developed in Indus valley civilization. Introducing the session, Uzma Anjum spoke about the notion of imposing a monolithic superficial identity and language on a society which had alienated existing languages and cultures.

Dr. Tariq Rehman said the Indus Valley was one of the greatest centers of civilization and it was a peaceful civilization. But unfortunately, its script has not been deciphered as yet whereas some of the Indus Valley Civilization language symbols are still in use. This shows there is a connection between people of this age and the ancient civilization. However, our state only links the 'civilization' of this region with Arabs in the name of religion. He said the languages spoken today must have had links with this civilization. He said we need to redefine our identity and take pride in our original history, languages and cultures.

"It is our right to read and write in our mother languages. The state should provide us with this basic right and pass the Bill which is pending with the Senate".
Israr Ayub:



Dr. Khadim Hussain in his remarks said calling Pakistan's native mother languages as 'smaller' and 'local' languages are stigmatization of the speakers and of these languages and denial of their ownership of the civilization they have owned for thousands of years. He said no language is small or local but this stigmatization is created to capture power and create empires. He said small and local languages are created to oppress these people and strengthen the centralization of power. Another reason for stigmatization of so-called smaller languages is to control the narrative and communication and only one language is used to curb diversity. He said languages can only be promoted when they become a source of knowledge and education.

Jami Chandio said, every civilization of the world is a living civilization and none of them is static. The Indus civilization has also never been static. Its languages and cultures have remained diverse and alive. He said no other language of the world is small or big based on the number of speakers of that language. He said languages are not only a medium of communication but they are a reflection of social, cultural and political expression of its speakers. He said it is unnatural to impose a single-language narrative on people who are historically diverse. He said Pakistan is the only federal country in the world which has one national language. In any country, the official or communication language could be one which is understood by most people but declaring one language as a national language is not justified for multi-lingual and multi-ethnic country like Pakistan.

Dr. Zulifqar Ali Kalhoro said, even though the Indus script is not deciphered, the symbols of that era are still in use. He said these symbols and signs are also used in rock art in the north of Pakistan. He said Sindh Civilization is not limited to Mohenjo Daro and Sufism or Makli but it goes much beyond into the mountainous regions of Khirthar. He said folk and mural art of the 17 and 18 centuries is also reflective of symbols of Indus. He said linking symbols with certain religions was not appropriate.

Aziz Ali Dad said, the notion of Indus Valley Civilization is problematic as it cannot be limited to one region. He said in Gilgit-Baltistan there are a variety of languages but the formation of these languages have

"we are not great readers of our own literature". Akhtar Raza Saleemi

their roots in Indus civilization. He said traditional world view shaped the understanding of languages which has been damaged by modernity and cultural diversity has been affected by geographical divisions. He said geographical divisions have also led to cultural disintegration in the region. After partition, the Government of Pakistan did not strengthen the institutions to protect culture. Oral cultures have been taken over by written languages. He said technology may overcome this problem as it can link written words and other mediums of communication and may become much easier for illiterate people to document their oral knowledge and experience. We need to empower communities to decide about their future and preservation of cultures.



Dr. Ijlal Hussain said, insular thinking has compelled us not to recognize over 70 languages of Pakistan. It is ironic that after 70 years of existence, Pakistan is still not teaching their children that they belong to a diverse country containing 70 languages and different cultural units. He said many smaller languages are struggling for their survival in Pakistan.

Dr. Khawaja Abdul Rehman in his remarks said that the Indus Civilization can be divided into two phases. The first is pre-Indo Arian and the second is post Indo Arian. This was an urbanized and civilized society which was equally advanced as its contemporary cultures. He said evidence shows that the language of Indus Civilization was one of the Darwinian languages. Brahvi is one of the languages from this family. He said the first linguist of the world was Panini who wrote the first grammar of the world and he was born in this region. He said Buddhism broke the monopoly of Sanskrit on knowledge and Buddha promoted education in local languages, and he introduced knowledge in Pali. After that Persian, Arabic and English became influential in various periods. He said ignorance of our own languages has disconnected us from our roots.

“Currently there is a strong trend of writing novels and a good number of new novels are being published every year”.
Ishaque Ansari:

Impact of Media on Mother Languages

The impact of the media on mother languages was discussed in this session. Speakers called on the government to make major languages of Pakistan part of the school curriculum and demanded that a Bill regarding local languages, which is currently before the Senate, be passed immediately.

Moderator: Mujahid Barelvi

Mujahid Barelvi, speaking as moderator, said that the Pakistani media focuses more on ratings and is not so concerned about languages other than **Urdu**. He said this is the reason why there is a dearth of TV channels and newspapers in other languages of country. He said that media networks produce more and more political talk shows for better ratings and do not make an effort to promote indigenous languages.

Hussain Naqi, said that the **Punjabi** elite and feudal are the biggest hurdles in the promotion of Punjabi language in the media who, he said, were more interested in the promotion of Urdu. He said Punjabi is a secular language and it does not propagate violence and extremism. Mr. Naqi shared the findings of some research he had conducted together with human rights activist I.A Rehman, and said that Urdu is being consciously propagated. He narrated *“I joined the Karachi University soon after the creation of Pakistan and I saw that they had Urdu, English and Persian departments. When I demanded that a Sindhi department should also be set up, I was suspended from my job,”* he said. Naqi also shared his experience about publishing the first Punjabi newspaper, Sajan, and said that Punjabi aristocrats or elite class did not want to promote Punjabi language as they had made huge investments in Urdu and other languages and use it as a tool to rule on people speaking different languages and having different cultures.

Khurshid Malik (from **Siraiki**) *“If you are a federation or a country with more than one language, you cannot impose one language on all the people. No language is less than any other language”.*

Dr. Tariq Rahman:

said that his organization broadcasts in 23 regional languages every day and that transmissions of Radio Pakistan reach even the remotest places in Pakistan. He said speaking in mother languages is the safest and most reliable method of communication. Khurshid Malik said that the number of people listening to news in their mother languages exceeds the number of people listening to news in more common languages. He said it is the duty of educated class to promote mother languages and that all mother languages should be included in the curriculum, which will also promote regional integration.

Israr Ayub a columnist representing **Kashmiri**, said *“We Kashmiris used to be ashamed of speaking in our mother languages. There was a complex of inferiority in speaking Pahari. But our hesitation ended with the establishment of a channel in our mother language. It is our right to read and write in our mother languages. The state should provide us with this basic right and pass the Bill which is pending with the Senate”.*

Atta Rajar representing **Sindhi**, said that Sindhi media has a huge influence on the language and that Sindhi was the official language of Sindh even before partition. He said the curriculum and official work have always been in Sindhi. There are more news channels and newspapers in Sindhi than in any other regional language, and it is also taught in schools, colleges and universities.

Haibtan Umar Baloch representing **Balochi** said that the media is not serious about promoting languages of Pakistan. He added that Pakistan Television allows very little air time for reports in Balochi and that there is only one private Balochi channel, two or three daily newspapers and about five magazines in the language. He urged the relevant authorities to focus on the issue of promoting mother languages of Pakistan.

Nazam (Poem) in Mother Languages

Nazam (poem) is one of the most popular genre of modern poetry. It is written in all Pakistani mother languages and there are different trends in each language. In this session, prominent poets and literary critics spoke about the modern trends in their mother language poems.

Moderator: Ravish Nadeem

Introducing the session, Ravish Nadeem said, while prose is relatively new, writing poetry is an old tradition in mother languages. He said *nazam* is an important genre and is commonly known in all mother languages and comprises most part of literature in these languages. He said in this session we will explore modern trends of *nazam* in each of the languages represented.

Ali Muhammad Farshi in his remarks said modern *nazam* in **Urdu**, is equally strong in its craft as well as thought. He said Iqbal is one of the pioneers of modern Urdu poem and we still do not have any equivalents of some of his poems. When Miraji and Noon Meem Rashid emerged,

“Mother language can bring people together but it can also be used to tear a society apart”. Neil Buhne:

the biggest challenge was how to move beyond Iqbal’s *nazams*. Therefore, after Iqbal; Rashid, Miraji, Majeed Amjad and Faiz Ahmed Faiz became prominent names of the poem way of expression in Urdu poetry. They represented progressive thinking in poetry, however, poetry in progressive thought was strong in ideas but the craft of poetry remained behind. He said in current times, Aftab Iqbal Shamim, Habib Jalib, Ahmed Shamim, Amjad Islam Amjad are also legend poem writers. He walked





the audience through contours of Urdu poem through various periods. He quoted numerous other examples of poets who are considered architects of the modern poem. He acknowledged the contribution of Saqi Farooqi and Jilani Kamran.

Qadeer Ansari said, modern **Sindhi** poems have recently begun to travel from resistance to romance and softness, otherwise it has been known as very vocal poetry. He said classical Sindhi poem was dominated by epics. He said modern Sindhi poem started with Sheikh Ayaz, Niaz Hamayuni, Shamshir ul Haidri and others who started challenging the conservative and religious thoughts in poetry. After partition the subjects of Sindhi poem were changed and in 1970s it was dominated by a language crisis.

“Language is the bedrock of our national and cultural identity.” Najmul Huda

After the 1970s due to continuous dictatorships resistance poetry became dominant. He said the strong tradition of *nazams* still continues in Sindhi and there are number of poets who follow the footsteps of Shaikh Ayaz but also try to find their own ways. Hassan Dars, Ayaz Jani, Haleem Baghi, Mazhar Laghari, Khalil Kumbhar and many others are carrying the torch of *nazam* lit by Ayaz.

Ziaul Rahman said modern Balochi *nazam* began after the 1950s. Mir Gul Khan Naseer was the pioneer of Balochi *nazam*, who initially started with Urdu and Persian but later transitioned to Balochi. He was a contemporary of Sheikh Ayaz in Sindhi, Faiz Ahmed Faiz in Urdu and Ajmal Khattak in Pushto. Gul Khan Naseer, he said, was one of the strongest voices of resistance. Later poets like Azad Jamaldini followed the path of free verse and wrote “*azad nazams*”. He said Atta Shad was another poet who refined modern Balochi poetry and introduced new diction. He said modern Balochi poetry is not limited to subjective feelings but it has very strong expression of objectivity and oppression.

Ijaz said, modern Punjabi *nazam* has three major contributing factors. First, there were those poets who were known to write in Urdu later moved to writing in Punjabi,

second there were those who always wrote in Punjabi, and finally there were those who are a new generation of Punjabi writers. He said contemporary Punjabi poets are connected with tradition on one hand and experimentation with new dictions on the other hand. He said Munir Niazi is considered to be pioneer of modern Punjabi *nazam*. Other prominent names were Ahmed Saleem, Iqbal Qaiser and others. He said that there has been very little research and critique of Punjabi *nazam*.

The Novel in Pakistani Mother Languages

Moderator: Zahid Hassan

Zahid Hassan introduced the session. He said in this session we will explore the journey of some of the writers of novels present here, and also talk about the history and evolution of the novel in various Pakistani mother languages.

Akhtar Raza Saleemi elaborated the history and evolution of the **Urdu** novel written in India and Pakistan. He said Urdu has some of the greatest novels of the world. However, we are not great readers of our own literature. He said *Basti* by Intezar Hussain was a great novel but it only got international recognition when it was translated into English. He also narrated his own story of his transition from being a poet to a novelist. He said his first identity was established as a poet but after that he moved to writing novels.

Abid Mir said, **Balochi** has very strong tradition of oral literature mainly dominated by poetry but the history of written literature actually starts in the 1950s. The first Balochi novel was published in 1976 written by Syed Zahoor Shah Hashmi. He was a pioneer of Balochi literature in all fields. The number of novels since then are very few. The next big name in Balochi novel writing is Ghani Parvaz. Aslam Dostain and Fazal Khaliq are also important names.

From 1976 to 1996 in 20 years, there were hardly 5 novels in Balochi. After that Balochi was blessed with Munir Badini who has so far written over 90 novels, out of which over 50 are published. We call him the novel writing machine for Balochi literature.

He said Balochi novel may have technical flaws but at an intellectual level it has not remained behind and is very strong in content and diversity of subjects and topics. Dr. Hanif Sharif is an important name in the contemporary period and his novel is based on the current history of the last 10-15 years.

“Sufi Music is my life. I would promote it throughout the world”. Sanam Marvi:

Ishaque Ansari said, **Sindhi** alphabet is very old that is why we have a great number of books published in Sindhi. He said the first Sindhi novel was the translation of an English novel in the 18th century. Then we got a great writer Mirza Qaleech Baig who

translated numerous novels from international literature. Mirza Qaleech Baig was also the writer of the first original novel in Sindhi. After partition when the educated Sindhi Hindu middle class, including very prominent Sindhi writers, migrated to India we witnessed a silent period in Sindh. However, when Sindhi literature reemerged in 1960s, we were not lagging behind in novels. After partition the historical novel of Muhammad Usman Diplai in the context of Hurr Tahreek was an important work. In the 70s and 80s Manik (Munir Ahmed Manik) started new trends in Sindhi novels by writing abstract, surrealist and psycho-social novels. He said in recent years Sindhi novels have increased in quantity as well. Later, Siraj, Agha Saleem, Agha Rafiq, Ghulam Nabi Mughal, Mahtab Mehboob and Tariq Alam Abro were prominent names of the novel who laid the foundations of modern Sindhi novels. Siraj's trilogy was a great innovative piece of work on the history of Sindh. Then Mohenjo Daro by Ali Baba was also an important contribution as he crafted the story of Mohenjo Daro in a mythological way. Currently there is a strong trend of writing novels and a good number of new novels are being published every year.

“Abdullah Hussain was man of controversies but his only profession was writing”. Ahmed Saleem

Irshad Taunsvi said, **Seraiki** novels are not written in great quantity but we have very important novel writers in Seraiki. He said partition had affected the Seraiki region as well and this has become a topic of many novels.

Farooq Sarwar said, **Pushto** novels have contributed to great social change. Former President of Afghanistan Noor Muhammad Tarakai's novel actually brought about a revolution, which is not the case in any other languages. Tarakai wrote four novels which have pioneering importance in Pushto. Another important novelist is Syed Rasool Rassa who was a feminist writer, which is rare in Pushton society for a man to be feminist. He said there are several contemporary and modern writers who are continuously writing novels.

Language Policy and Planning – South Asian Experience

Moderator: Mustafa Talpur

In this session, Pakistani and international speakers shared the experiences of evolution of language policy and planning in South Asia. Introducing the session, Mustafa Talpur said the South Asian region was a mosaic of various cultures and languages which, while presenting a diversity, has also bred conflict. *“Whoever was dominant, also determined the status of languages. But the people have carried the essence of the local traditions”* he said.

*“Jamaldini shaped the Baloch identity”.
Tariq Raheem Baloch*

Dr. Tariq Rahman said, the one-language policy imposed in the country since the

creation of Pakistan, is defective and needs to be revised. And a balance should be found between the languages spoken in the country. He said it is the responsibility of the state to determine the status of the languages as it is linked to publishing, creating jobs and making it a medium. He said *"If you are a federation or a country with more than one language, you cannot impose one language on all the people. No language is less than any other language"*. He added that there was much to learn for Pakistan from the way some other South Asian countries had managed their language issues. He added that the dilemma of the subcontinent was that for thousands of years, foreign rulers had promoted languages which were alien to the locals, a trend still being perpetuated by the elite in Pakistan.

Neil Buhne, UN Resident Humanitarian Coordinator for Pakistan, while sharing experiences of Bhutan and Sri Lanka in dealing with language issues, said it was important for any country with multiple languages to find the right balance between its various languages and give each its due share and space. He added that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on education and reducing inequalities was also linked to the presence of diverse languages as the questions of language in education and government remains unsolved. *"Mother language can bring people together but it can also be used to tear a society apart ... Sri Lanka is an example where language has brought people together and also divided them under two different policies"* he said. He emphasized the need for South Asian countries to find a balance between the global and the local languages.

"Agha Saleem was one of the best fiction writers as well a great researcher on Sufi music and poetry". Zubaida Birwani

Najmul Huda, the political counsellor at the Bangladesh High Commission, said that his country had presented a resolution to UNESCO – co-sponsored by Pakistan – to declare 21st February as the world Mother Languages Day. *"More than half of the languages being spoken around the globe today are facing the threat of extinction,"* he said and emphasized the importance of initial school education in one's mother language. *"Language also connects one to their roots,"* he said. Mr. Huda said although over 98 per cent of Bangladesh's population spoke Bangla, the government was still printing pre-primary school books in five other languages for children. These books are distributed free among the speakers of those languages. *"Language is the bedrock of our national and cultural identity",* he maintained. He said Bangladesh celebrates the month of February as the month of languages. He said language is an inalienable right of a human being therefore it is a national and global responsibility of nation states to protect and promote languages. He said the South Asia region should make efforts to preserve the languages in their respective countries. He said the primary purpose of UNESCO's day of Mother Languages is to highlight the importance of education in the mother language. He said education in mother language connects children with their roots. He said Bangladesh is monolingual country as more than 98% people speak Bangla but we have about 45 other languages.

Readings from Pakistani Mother Languages

In this session, readings of selected translations in Urdu from different mother languages were presented. Selected works from Torwali, Pushto and Sindhi were presented.

The following presenters participated in the readings:

Moderator: Tahira Baloch



Rahim Sabir presented folk tales from the **Torwali** language. He first read out the original excerpts of the stories in Torwali followed by their translation in Urdu.

Tazeen Gul spoke about the translations from **Hindko** to other languages specially Urdu. She presented some pieces of translation from other languages to Hindko.

Asma Shah presented selected translations from different Pakistani languages into Urdu. These included pieces of poetry as well as short stories.

Noseqa Syed also presented translation of short stories from different Pakistani languages into Urdu.

Premiere of “Marvi- The Mystic Muse” (Documentary)

Moderator: Naz Sahto



Among the festival's signature events was the Pakistan premiere of the award winning documentary film "Marvi: the Mystic Muse", directed by American-Canadian film maker Tanya Panjwani. A few of the film's expert contributors were also attendees of the premiere, including Naz Sahito, Inamullah Sheikh and Irfan Ali Ansari. In October 2016, this film made its international premiere in Toronto as part of the Global Community Film Festival, and was the recipient of prestigious 'Making a Difference Award', for a film that endeavors to make a positive difference in society and the world.

The film embarks on a journey through Pakistan with renowned singer Sanam Marvi to discover her roots in Sindh and Punjab, through the shrines of the saints that inspired her to deliver the message of Sufism that permeates the land. It follows her creative process to spread this message through live concert performances, and documents her challenges in spreading the Sufi message in Pakistan and all over the world. The film exposes the saints of Pakistan such as Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai, Laal Shahbaz Qalandar,

"these festivals are an indication of success of language movements around the world." Dr Joan Bart

Sachal Sarmast, Bulleh Shah, and Shah Hussain through the eyes of Marvi, and presents reflections from teachers and experts who were a part of her mystical journey.

Tanya Panjwani, the director of the film, said the premiere was something she had been looking forward to for months: *"This film is a labor of love for me. It is my humble gift to the Sufi saints, to the land they hail from, and to Sanam Marvi, who all had such a deep and positive impact on my life. I never would have imagined two years ago, when shooting the film that I would be able to share it with the world, and bringing the film to Pakistan is a privilege to showcase the story in the country where it all began."*

Sanam Marvi shared different moments of her interactions with Tanya. When she initially heard from Tanya, she was thrilled to know that someone from abroad wanted to film her personal life and challenges. Speaking about her musical journey she said *"In earlier days of my career it was very difficult to learn the music, my father used to beat me while learning to sing. But here I am today and I think Sufi Music is my life. I would promote it throughout the world."*

Dr. Fouzia Saeed said that it was good to watch Sanam's difficulties and tribulations through the documentary. Now she is an international star and an inspiring folk music singer. Through promoting her music, we can share the message of tolerance across the world and this is one of the best ways to fight the extremist mind-set.

Syed Sardar Shah said that *"Abdia Parveen and Sanam Marvi are the rivers of Sindhi music that flow from south to north, and have become legends"*. According to him, extremism is spread from north to south (including Sindh) in Pakistan while these legends were born in the south and their magical voice is being heard and appreciated across Pakistan including the northern part.

Jami Chandio said that the documentary is not only about Sanam Marvi but it is also about the Sufi tradition of Pakistan. He said Sufi's inspiration is a savior of our society as emotional and civic courage is brought forward by Sufi traditions.

One Message Many Voices

In this session, the speakers highlighted the works of prominent Sufi poets of Pakistan's various mother languages.

Moderator: Fiza Qureshi

Introducing the session, Fiza Qureshi said Pakistan has a very strong tradition of creative expression by prominent Sufi poets. She said across Pakistan, the Sufi poets have written in different languages but they have spread the same message in different ways. She said in this session we will explore the contribution of prominent Sufi poets in different Pakistani languages.

Dr. Ismail Gohar spoke about prominent **Pushto** poet **Khushhal Khan Khattak**. He said he is known as the poet of revolution and resistance and that is the most prominent aspect of his poetry. He said Allama Iqbal also recognized Khushhal Khan Khattak as poet of resistance in 1923. He said Iqbal compared quality of Khattak's poetry with ancient Arab poetry. He said Khushhal Khan Khattak was one of the greatest poets of the world and this claim has not been negated. He said the variety and diversity of subjects in Khush'hal Khan Khattak's poetry is not comparable to any other poet of the world.

Akhtar Dargahi spoke about the prominent poet **Sachal Sarmast**, who is known as a multi-lingual poet of Pakistan. He said Sufi poets are futuristic poets. Unlike historians who document the past, Sufis in **Sindhi** have predicted the future and their poetry is equally relevant in today's time despite the passage of centuries. He said Sachal was the poet of not only spirituality but also revolution. He said, after Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai, Sachal was a breakthrough in Sindhi Sufi poetry. His name was Abdul Wahab who later became Sachal because of his honesty and Sarmast because of his boldness of expression. He said Sachal's style resembled Bulleh Shah.

“there was a consensus during the two days discussion that Pakistan is a multi-lingual and multi-ethnic country and promoting diversity will not be against the national interest”.

Munawar Hassan Memon

Dr. Nusrat Nisar spoke about a **Kashmiri** Sufi poet, **Sheikh Noorudin Wali**. She said he was a poet and saint from the 14th century. He is recognized by people from all walks of life. She said he has written “*Shurog*” which is a four-line stanza. She also said that Sheikh Noorudin Wali has written on many aspects of Islam and interpreted it from a Sufi and spiritual perspective.

Wahid Bux Bozdar spoke about **Jam Duruk** who was a **Balochi** poet. He said Jam Duruk was not like other Sufi poets of Pakistan because Balochi poetry does not fit into the framework of usually known Sufi poetry. They had the message of love and peace but they were not like other Sufi poets. He said another important indication of Jam Duruk being a Sufi poet is that he was a selfless person who negated the self.

Prof. Malik Nasir Daud spoke about **Sain Ghulam Din Hazarvi**. He said Sain Ghulam Din Hazarvi was born in the mid-19th century. His work was not published in his lifetime but during the last 20 years significant research has been conducted on his life and works. He has written poems and “Charbatay” a Pushto genre in **Hindko** language.

“If big crowds like this can gather to celebrate their languages, we can no doubt force the government and its institutions to act and protect the languages”. Nargis Sultana:

Humra Khalique spoke about **Amir Khusro**. She said Amir Khusro’s message was like all Sufis, who loved people like they loved Allah. She said Khusro was not a poet of the past but he is savior of our future as well. She

said he was known for his **Urdu** poetry and he has written in other languages as well.

Obituaries

Unfortunately, some of prominent personalities of literature in mother languages deceased this year. This session was dedicated to highlight the contribution of those great writers and artists who were no more in this world.

Moderator: Manzoor Veesrio

Ahmed Saleem spoke about **Abdullah Hussain**, a famous **Urdu** novelist. He also talked about the book of obituaries on Abdullah Hussain which he had compiled. He said Abdullah Hussain was most famous for his novel *Udaas Naslen* written about sixty years ago. He has written other novels and short stories. He said Abdullah Hussain was man of controversies but his only profession was writing. His other famous works



included *Bagh*, *Ashob* and *Nadar Log*. He was a humble man and would never hesitate to seek help from juniors. He said he regretted not writing in Punjabi, and he wanted to translate his famous novel *Udaas Naslen* in Punjabi but he never had the opportunity. He said if I am of any importance, it is because I lived in the time of Abdullah Hussain.

Zubaida Birwani presented her tribute to **Sindhi's** famous writers, historians and poets **Ali Baba, Hamida Khuhro, Ayaz Jani, Saeed Memon and Agha Saleem** who all died in this year. She specifically focused on Ali Baba who had written a modern classic novel *Mohenjo Daro* and many short stories, plays and poetry. Talking about Agha Saleem, she said he was one of the best fiction writers as well as a great researcher on Sufi music and poetry. She said she was lucky to have been close to Agha Saleem. Ayaz Jani and Saeed Memon who were leading names of modern Sindhi poetry, and known for modern *ghazals* and poems. Talking about Hamida Khuhro she said people like her have been shaping the political and social conscience of the people of Sindh. She was a prominent historian and her last works included a concise history of Sindh for children.

Mushtaq ul Rahman Shafaq talked about the flawless contributions of great **Pashto** writers **Prof. Rahmatullah Dark and Dr. Khaliq Zyar**. He said Khaliq Zyar was a progressive poet and writer. Ideologically he was a follower of Bacha Khan and served as *Khudai Khidmatgar*. Talking about Rahmatullah Dark he said Dark was very well read and knew the modern trends as well as classical approaches to *ghazal*. He said after Hamza Khan Shinwari, Dark was a prominent poet of modern *ghazal* in Pashto. His poetry includes seven books which have been compiled in a Kuliat in 2013. He quoted their famous poetry stanzas and shared examples of their sympathy and love to the world. He said that Pashto is relatively hard to understand but literature available in it has a great impact on the rest of the world when it is translated. Dr Khaliq Zyar had translated Pashto writings in many languages and also disseminated it to international platforms.

“Festival organizers have actually done what is the responsibility of the State of Pakistan”. Syed Sardar Ali Shah

Tariq Raheem Baloch paid tribute to famous **Balochi** writer **Abdullah Jan Jamaldini** for his invaluable services in the field of literature, politics and media. He said Abdullah Jan Jamaldini devoted his entire life to the promotion of literature and spreading knowledge among the people. He said Jamaldini shaped the Baloch identity. He was a name in an era and history. He also had the honor of establishing the Balochi Department in the University of Balochistan, and played an important role in introducing Balochi literature and culture across the world including Japan, UK, Italy, Sweden, Norway, Iran and Afghanistan. He said he actively participated in politics of the National Awami Party (NAP), Communist Party and other progressive movements.

Dr. Humera Ashfaq talked about a renowned Pakistani novelist, playwright and short story writer **Bano Qudsia** and her famous *Dastan Saaray* and *Dastan Go*. She said

that Bano Qudsia was spiritually inspired by her husband Ashfaq Ahmed and both partners supported each other's writings. Qudsia is best known for her novel *Raja Gidh*. Qudsia also wrote for television and stage in both **Urdu** and **Punjabi** languages. Her play *Aadhi Baat* is known as a modern classic. Bano Qudsia has described in great detail differences between the development and welfare in her novels of Asian and European countries. She said recently Bano Qudsia was subject to undue criticism on social media for her female characters. But we should respect her views and criticize her on technical and literary grounds. She said Bano was also criticized for influence of her husband Ashfaq Ahmed, but that was not true as she and Ashfaq Ahmed were both influenced by the same spiritual leader.

Irshad Ameen presented tribute to **Ustad Ahmed Khan Tariq**, a famous **Seraiki** poet who is popular as a poet of civilizations and celebrated as a legendary poet in Seraiki. He has written many "*Dohray*" and "*Kattay*" in Seraiki language. His basic identity was Dohray and his poetry was full of symbols of the Indus River and its civilization. He said his two poetry collections were prominent, and he also presented some of his poetry.



Science Fun *Mela* (festival)

In order to make The Mother Languages Literature Festival attractive to kids and young audiences, the ECO Science Foundation (ECOSF) in collaboration with Pakistan Science Foundation (PSF) and Pakistan Science Club (PSC) joined hands with ICF to organiz a



two-day “Science Fun *Mela*”, simultaneously exhibiting science activities in the festival. The idea of organizing the Science Fun *Mela* along the Mother Languages Literature Festival (MLLF) was to inculcate among children the urge for learning science around us and in the universe; so as to promote quest for science as part of our culture.

The Science Fun *Mela* for children was opened by the President ECOSF Professor Dr. Manzoor Hussain Soomro. In his opening remarks, Dr. Soomro welcomed the children and accompanying teachers and parents in the Science Fun *Mela* and introduced the purpose and activities to be conducted during the two days. He mentioned that the science activities would be combination of demonstration and hands on activities which would enthrall the children to interact scientifically. A planetarium show and mobile scientific laboratory was also set up alongside. Children as well as teachers and parents experienced the demonstration of planets, stars, galaxy through an imaginary projector and video in a planetarium show. The scientific models placed in the bus were also liked by the children and students. There were many other small but very interesting activities demonstrated and participated in by a large number of children/ students, teachers and parents in *mela*. This presented a different angle to the overall literary discourse in the festival and people sensed need of seeking scientific approach in mother languages and culture. Towards end of the *mela*, Munawar Hassan, General Secretary ICF deeply acknowledged the support of ECOSF, PSF and PSC and presented Souvenirs and Certificates to delegates and volunteers.

Closing Ceremony

In the closing ceremony, the key note speech was followed by vote of thanks by the organizers to all distinguished guests, volunteers and partners. The 2-day Pakistan Mother Languages Literature Festival 2017 ended with the musical night in which famous singer Sanam Marvi, Akhtar Dargahi and Nabiha Isphahani gave exceptionally melodious performances.



Dr. Joan Bart noted linguist and Associate Professor at the Summer Institute of Languages was the keynote speaker. In his remarks, he said, some languages which were initially facing extinction are now on the path to revival due to a campaign to bring such languages into the mainstream. He said these festivals are an indication of success of language movements around the world. He said these kinds of festivals can make a difference for languages for Pakistan and languages of the world.

Munawar Hassan Memon Secretary General of the Indus Cultural Forum in his remarks said that this year's festival was a bigger success than last year and the organizers are committed to continue the pace every year. He announced that next year's festival will be held on 17-18 February 2018 at Lok Virsa.

He said, this festival has generated valuable debate on promotion and protection of languages. He said a common thread in all discussions of the festival has been the demand from the government to own and promote all languages of Pakistan. He said there was a consensus during the two days discussions that Pakistan is a multi-lingual and multi-ethnic country and promoting diversity will not be against the national interest. There should be a proper process on national languages policy. He appreciated that the parliament has started a discussion on the status of languages. He insisted that the institutions created for promotion of literature, languages and cultures should play their proactive role. The federal institutions of literature, art, culture and languages belong to all provinces, hence they should open their doors, like Lok Virsa, for the promotion of literature, art, languages and cultures of all provinces and regions.

Dr. Fouzia Saeed, Executive Director of Lok Virsa, reiterated her support for the festival and said that we have observed greater ownership of the festival this year and Lok Virsa looks forward to continue with this festival every year. She said, institutions like Lok Virsa are public institutions and need volunteers like ICF colleagues to make these institutions vibrant. She said we need to work collaboratively to revive culture, because promotion of languages and cultures is dependent on state patronization and it is the responsibility of the state to provide due status to mother languages and native cultures.



Nargis Sultana from the Foundation Open Society Institute in her remarks said we need to show civic responsibility to save our languages. *“If big crowds like this can gather to celebrate their languages, we can no doubt influence the government and its institutions to act and protect the languages”*. Nargis said, education in mother languages was the only viable means to protect and promote the languages. She said mother languages can help younger generations in thinking critically. She said the Foundation Open Society Institute was proud to be part of the festival and it is looking forward to a positive impact the festival would generate. She said one of the key themes of FOSI was to promote critical thinking and we can only promote critical thinking by promoting a reading culture. She said her institute was supporting the Children’s Literature Festival as well, and was happy to see that governments have also started to support these festivals.



Syed Sardar Ali Shah, Minister for Culture, Tourism and Antiquities Department, Govt. of Sindh in his remarks said he has thoroughly enjoyed the two days festival and the discussions here were a true reflection of Pakistan’s diverse society, culture and languages. He said we need to promote these kind of spaces which is the only answer to a growing wave of extremism in the country. Sardar Shah said the festival organizers have actually done what is the responsibility of the State of Pakistan according to Pakistan Resolution of 1940. He said the festival had a great impact for today and for the future.

Dr. Muhammad Qasim Bughio, Chairman Pakistan Academy of Letters said we shall celebrate all languages and cultures of Pakistan. He said these festivals are important not only as isolated events but they are part of a larger movement for cultural revival of Pakistan. He said terrorists are afraid of arts, education, literature and poetry but these festivals are a befitting response to them.



Monitoring and Evaluation

Pakistan Mother Languages Literature Festival 2017 was organized with effective partnership between three major organizations; Indus Cultural Forum (ICF), Strengthening Participatory Organisation (SPO) and Lok Virsa. All three organizations demonstrated effective volunteer and cooperative spirit to make the event successful.

To monitor the success of this event, following indicators of success were developed to measure its overall impact on the society:

1. *Number of languages and writers represented in the festival*

Around 150 writers and intellectuals representing more than 15 languages participated in this festival which was more than the expectation for a two days literature festival with very limited resources.

2. Diversity of topics and literary, linguistic genres reflected in the event.

The topics and subjects came under discussion during the MLLF 2017 ranged from emergence and evolution of pure literature in Pakistan's mother languages to society, economics, gender, media, history and politics of mother languages. It was evident from holding of 25 concurrent sessions and launching of 19 new books in mother languages in these two days.

3. Extent to which the debate to promote mother languages is mainstreamed in the media as well as among policy makers.

Huge number of articles and news items in Pakistan's leading newspapers and magazines written by the top journalists and intellectuals (Refer to section on media coverage in the end of the report) was an evidence to contribution to this indicator. The mention of this festival by the Chairmen Parliamentary Committee of the Senate on Public Hearing of National Languages Bill, is another evidence of mainstreaming discourse of need for clear policy on mother languages in Pakistan.

4. Number of people visited the festival

It is commonly noted that people in Islamabad do not take much interest in literary programs and it is normally attended by selected gentry. However, owing to public face of this festival and a topic that is close to common people's heart an estimated 5,000 or more people attended this festival in two days. In this way, the message of promotion of literature and critical thinking in mother languages reached to thousands of people and families in this country.

Successes and Key Results

Pakistan Mother Languages Literature Festival is one of the unique initiatives to bring the languages and cultures of Pakistan together on one platform. Within two years, the festival has been successful in bringing the issue of promotion of mother languages into the mainstream debate in Pakistan.

This year's festival showcased the talks and works by over 150 writers representing 15 Pakistani languages. A majority of the speakers and panelists were those who do not get such opportunities at the national level as their languages are not discussed and showcased on these forums.

This year 19 new books in various Pakistani mother languages were launched. These books represented a wide range of subjects and literary genres. One of the books launched included a novel in Khowar language, which is first-ever novel written in that language.

The festival has received due attention from the policy makers and legislators. Last year, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Senator Parvez Rashid attended the concluding ceremony, where in his remarks, he acknowledged all Pakistani languages as national languages. This year, the recognition of the festival went beyond the Federal Government as Provincial Government of Sindh and Government of Gilgit Biltistan's ministers for culture participated in the festival in their official capacity.

One of the key successes of the festival is a Public Hearing on the status of languages by the Senate Standing Committee on Law and Justice, which coincided with the festival. The festival organisers were officially approached by the Senate of Pakistan to cooperate with the Committee to hold a public hearing. More than half of the invitees of the public hearing were panelists of the festival. The Senate Standing Committee on Law and Justice at that time was in the process of assessing a constitutional amendment bill to provide national languages status to major Pakistani languages. The Chairperson of the Committee Senator Murtaza Javed Abbasi opened the public hearing by acknowledging the festival and cooperation of the organizers. The committee has now cleared the bill submitted by Senator Sassui Palijo and Senator Aajiz Dhamrah of Pakistan Peoples Party, paving its way to be presented for vote in the plenary of the Senate. If approved from Senate, the bill will need to go to National Assembly. Even though it is still a long way, the very fact that the bill has attracted the attention of the lawmakers, who have sought the help of festival organizers, is a big achievement.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

The event was held just two days after a deadly suicide attack on a Sufi shrine of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar in Sindh, therefore ensuring the security during such a public event was a big challenge which was managed by the cooperation of Lok Virsa and the dedicated team of volunteers.

The event was a collaborative effort between ICF, Lok Virsa and SPO and many other supporters. To coordinate these efforts remained a challenge which was managed through strong leadership provided by the teams of the three organizations and their respective teams.

The contents of the event was designed through a series of meetings attended by an Advisory Committee comprising leading representatives and writers from different languages. Finding appropriate speakers for these many languages remains a challenge but it was managed through close coordination and continuous engagement with these representatives.

Media Coverage

Print and electronic media covered both days of the event through live transmission, news reports in hourly bulletins, headlines, special reports and current affair programs. Media reporters also interviewed writers, critics and linguists about the event and national policy on languages. The media was managed through a group of volunteers from ICF and Lok Virsa under the supervision of ICF member Board of Governors Nusrat Zehra.

Soon after MLLF, on 21 February 2017 the Punjab Assembly also passed a resolution about important of mother languages, whose reporting along with overall news coverage links for the MLLF 2017 are also presented below:

Media Coverage of Mother Languages Literature Festival 2017

http://epaper.dawn.com/DetailNews.php?StoryText=20_02_2017_153_001

http://epaper.dawn.com/DetailNews.php?StoryText=20_02_2017_153_004

http://epaper.dawn.com/DetailNews.php?StoryText=20_02_2017_153_002

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1315594/saving-languages>

http://epaper.dawn.com/DetailNews.php?StoryText=19_02_2017_152_006

http://epaper.dawn.com/DetailNews.php?StoryText=19_02_2017_152_003

http://epaper.dawn.com/DetailNews.php?StoryText=19_02_2017_152_007

http://epaper.dawn.com/DetailNews.php?StoryText=19_02_2017_152_007

http://epaper.dawn.com/DetailNews.php?StoryText=17_02_2017_152_006

<http://dailytimes.com.pk/e-paper/2017-02-17/lahore/9804/68155>

http://e.jang.com.pk/02-17-2017/pindi/pic.asp?picname=09_03.gif

https://epaper.tribune.com.pk/DisplayDetails.aspx?ENI_ID=11201702170053&EN_ID=11201702170022&EMID=11201702170009

https://epaper.tribune.com.pk/DisplayDetails.aspx?ENI_ID=11201702170050&EN_ID=11201702170021&EMID=11201702170009

https://epaper.tribune.com.pk/DisplayDetails.aspx?ENI_ID=11201702170053&EN_ID=11201702170022&EMID=11201702170009

<http://www.radio.gov.pk/16-Feb-2017/pakistan-mother-languages-literature-festival-to-begin-from-saturday-at-lok-virsa>

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/186852-Mother-languages-literature-festival-starts-tomorrow>

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1315204/mother-languages-festival-starts-tomorrow>

<http://haalhawal.com/haalhawal/lok-virsa-mlif/>

<http://haalhawal.com/shabir/mother-languages-why-must/>

<http://www.youlinmagazine.com/story/mother-languages-literature-festival-2017-at-lok-virsa-islamabad/Nzgw>

<http://urdu.channel24.pk/entertainment/2017/02/18/mother-language-literature-folk-festival-conducts-islam-abad/>

<http://urdupoint.com/n/924720>

<http://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/islamabad/16-Feb-2017/567197>

<http://radiomeezan.pk/%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%B1%DB%8C-%D8%B2%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%88%DA%BA-%DA%A9%DB%92-%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%A8%DB%8C-%D9%85%DB%8C%D9%84%DB%92-%DA%A9%D8%A7-%D8%AF%D9%88%D8%B3%D8%B1%D8%A7-%D8%A7%DB%8C%DA%88%DB%8C/>

<http://urdu.umang.tv/archives/3421>

<http://haalhawal.com/newsdesk/motherlanguage-literature-festival/>

<http://thebalochistanpoint.com/mother-languages-literature-festival-kicked-off-with-resolve-to-promote-linguistic-and-cultural-diversity-to-fight-extremism/>

https://epaper.tribune.com.pk/DisplayDetails.aspx?ENI_ID=11201702200364&EN_ID=11201702200116&EMID=11201702200057

https://epaper.tribune.com.pk/DisplayDetails.aspx?ENI_ID=11201702200371&EN_ID=11201702200118&EMID=11201702200058

https://epaper.tribune.com.pk/DisplayDetails.aspx?ENI_ID=11201702200372&EN_ID=11201702200118&EMID=11201702200058

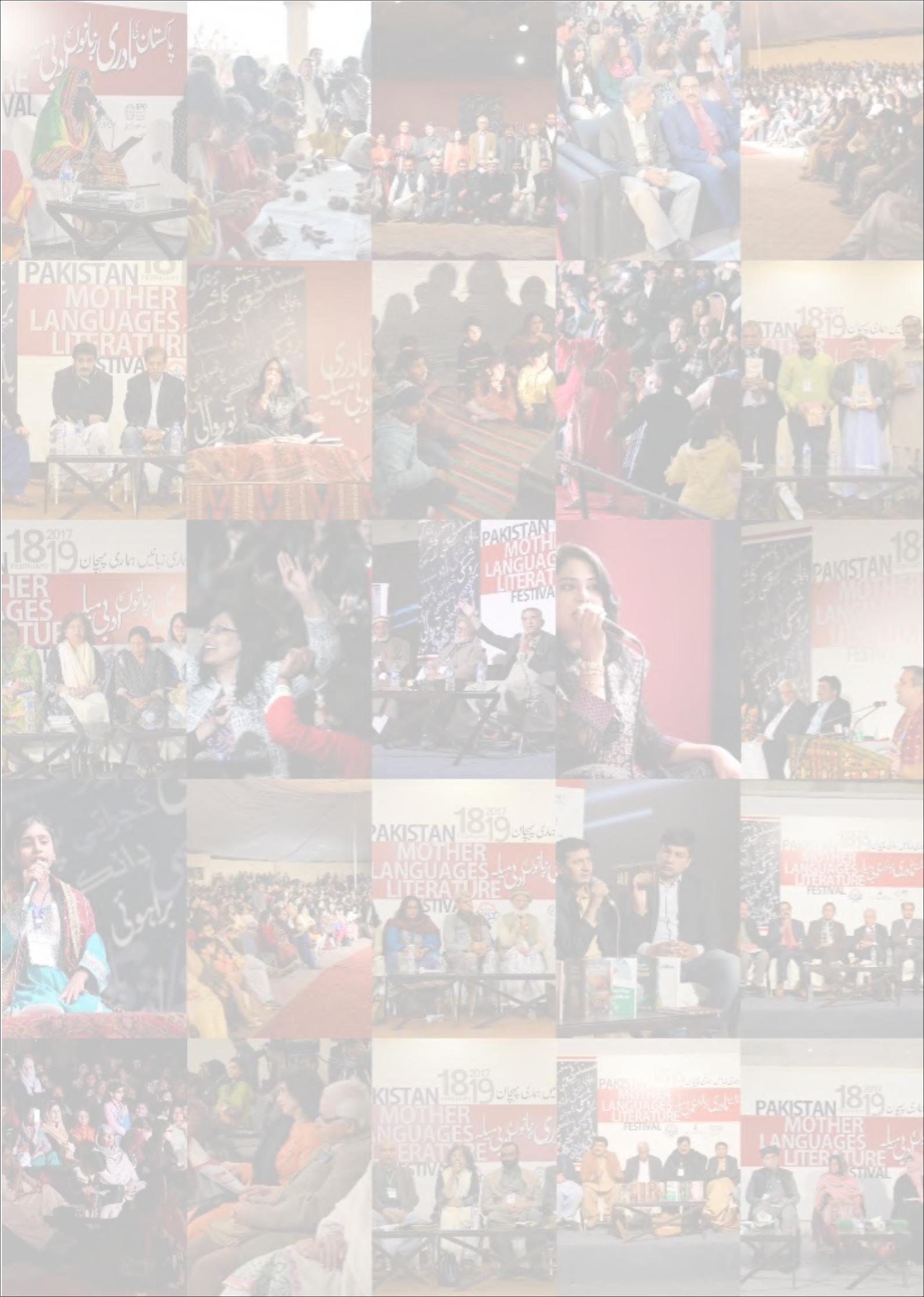
https://epaper.tribune.com.pk/DisplayDetails.aspx?ENI_ID=11201702200377&EN_ID=11201702200120&EMID=11201702200059

Public Hearing

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1316045>

<http://dailytimes.com.pk/sindh/21-Feb-17/recognising-regional-languages-will-guarantee-intact-federation>

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1316054/mother-languages-still-denied-due-status>





PAKISTAN ²⁰¹⁷ 1819 FEBRUARY ہماری زبانیں ہماری پہچان

MOTHER LANGUAGES پاکستان کی مادری زبانوں کا ادبی میلہ
LITERATURE

FESTIVAL

