

AIPS Short-term Grant Report

With the help of AIPS short term grant, I was able to spend around two months with the hijra community in Pakistan. The aim of my trip to Karachi was to add to my research I already conducted in December 2017. I started my research early August and continued till early October 2018 with a hijra household, well connected within its kinship network in the city and all over the country. Due to this connection I met hijras from all over Pakistan. As a researcher, my role with the hijra community was that of a participant observer with little to no interviews or questioning. With this approach, I wanted to be less intrusive yet learn from them about their community structure, rituals, and customs. By spending everyday with them for two months, I learned hijra argot known as *farsi*. I was able to attend their ceremonies and events from parties to memorials. One of the elements that I was aiming to learn from hijras was their association with dancing and sex work, as these professions are being targeted by rights-based and/or respectability discourse of Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs), Community-based Organization (CBOs), and the media. I was able to learn a great deal about these two aspects of hijra lives, which I am incorporating in a chapter of my dissertation. I also met and interacted with those who participate in the visibility politics, appear in the media, and work in the non-governmental and non-profit sector. I also attended and participated in protests that were organized by a CBO. Aspects of affective non-profitization of rights-based discourse is another aspect that I am also exploring in my dissertation. So, interaction with those hijras or trans identifying individuals working in the non-profit sector was helpful in this regard. My dissertation is primarily driven by media criticism but I wanted to contextualize it in lived realities and everyday lives of hijras. AIPS grant helped me achieve my dissertation research goals.