



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Bangkok Office



# Inside the News

Challenges and Aspirations  
of Women Journalists in  
Asia and the Pacific



SWEDEN





# Inside the News

Challenges and Aspirations  
of Women Journalists in  
Asia and the Pacific

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# Forewords

## Forewords



Bangkok Office

Why does gender equality in the media matter? Because of the many influences that shape the way we see men and women, media are among the most powerful. Media shape our daily lives, infusing their messages into our social consciousness and impacting our behaviors and values.

Unfortunately, media outlets too often perpetuate unrealistic, stereotypical and limiting perceptions of men and women. They reflect and sustain socially endorsed views of gender, emphasize traditional roles and sometimes contribute to normalizing violence against women.

The 2010 Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) reveals that women make up only 24% of the people heard, read about or seen in the news, and this trend of underrepresentation has carried over from traditional news media to online outlets. Moreover, despite the growing numbers of women in the profession, they still have relatively little decision-making power inside media organizations.

Many complex factors contribute to this exclusion of women's voices in the media. However, they are most often deeply embedded in the way news is gathered and produced and in cultural practices. Such ingrained practices are difficult, but not impossible, to change.

Twenty years after the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which highlighted for the first time the critical role of media in the attainment of gender equality and women's empowerment, this study provides first-hand insights into how issues of gender impact the lives and work of journalists in Asia and the Pacific.

What does a snapshot of gender in the region's media scene look like today? What is the position of women in news production and in the management of media outlets? What are their working conditions and career development opportunities? What challenges do they face?

These questions are the focus of this report and it is my hope that the answers contained herein will contribute towards gender equality and women's empowerment in and through the media.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Gwang-Jo Kim'.

**Gwang-Jo Kim**

Director

UNESCO Bangkok

# Forewords



*“Advances in information technology have facilitated a global communications network that transcends national boundaries and has an impact on public policy, private attitudes and behaviour, especially of children and young adults. Everywhere the potential exists for the media to make a far greater contribution to the advancement of women. The continued projection of negative and degrading images of women in media communications – electronic, print, visual and audio – must be changed”. (BPfA 1995)*

Twenty years ago, at the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, world leaders agreed that the women’s equal participation in and access to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication should be assured. They also agreed that a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media must be promoted in ending gender-based discrimination.

Yet, twenty years later, globally only 27% of top management jobs in media organizations are held by women, only 21% of filmmakers are women and only 23% of films feature a woman protagonist. We also see that the feminization of poverty is both a cause and a consequence of women’s limited access to and control over information and communication technology world-wide.

Social media is influential in ways that were unimaginable 20 years ago, in ways both negative and positive. They allow women and girls to express themselves and influence political, social and cultural attitudes and actions, unmediated by patriarchy. Through these channels women and girls - and men and boys who share this vision for an equal world- organise and are building a global movement of solidarity for gender equality while challenging a host of other intersecting inequalities. However, we are also seeing a rise and perpetuation of gender biases, misogyny and on-line abuse. Negative portrayals of women and false images of ‘perfection’ are causing young girls and boys to retreat into adverse behaviors and reinforce gender stereotypes.

The media both reflects and shapes social norms and values. But despite this penetrating influence, their impact on gender related norms and practices as well as women’s engagement in media bodies receives limited attention in research, data collection and analysis.

On the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, UNESCO and UN Women are pleased to co-publish this report which outlines the efforts, achievements and remaining challenges in Asia and the Pacific in the transformation of media approaches that advance a culture of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

It is our expectation that the report will deepen reflections as well as set the stage for further action, data collection and analysis in this critically influential area of work.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roberta Clarke".

**Roberta Clarke**  
Regional Director,  
UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific



# Forewords



In many countries across the Asia and the Pacific region, there has been a progressive and positive growth in the numbers of women in newsrooms, working as freelancers and in the online space as bloggers, writers and people of influence.

But the IFJ is acutely aware that the media is still very male dominated when the top positions are examined and in determination of what and who makes the news. We also know that women continue to be marginalised in the news, both in context of the work they do and in the opportunities they have to make their way through the profession and in the unions that represent them. The situation for those women in remote and regional locations or coming from an ethnic or religious minority or disadvantaged caste is even more challenged.

The IFJ research on media and gender in the Asia and the Pacific region is a major exploration into gender equity in the region's media industries. It delves into journalists' experience at work: on career progression and pay; the types of challenges journalists face; cultural and social attitudes; and what motivates them.

The research traversed seven countries from South Asia to South East Asia and the Pacific, canvassing the views of men, women and transgender individuals. Ultimately, the objective was to come up with an understanding of the journalists' experience on gender and collectively come up with solutions to some of the issues.

We would like to thank all our respondents for their commitment, honesty and bravery in expressing their opinions on tough issues like sexual harassment and gender discrimination within the workplace, and threats from governments or armed militants.

The research also highlights some real bright spots from which we can draw strong lessons. These gender equity leaders in trade unions, trailblazing media outfits and individual journalists demonstrate the pivotal role some play in bringing parity into the workplace and in breaking free of the stereotypes and discrimination that limit women's power at work.

Importantly, the media has a vital role to play in leading and influencing change from within the media environment as well as in the representation of women on issues more broadly such as equal pay for equal work, employment, promotions and leave provisions and the critical need for gender representation in decision-making roles.

Of course, gender equality is not a women's issue, it is a fundamental human right for all – men and women, as well as those who identify as transgender. There is no one single approach, but the approach must start with a strong commitment to the issue from governments, media and trade unions – and importantly, journalists themselves.

Here we put the case for change.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jane Worthington'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'J'.

**Jane Worthington**

Deputy Director

International Federation of Journalists

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# Acronyms

**ABC** Australian Broadcasting Corporation

**ACHPR** African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

**AINEF** All India Newspaper Employees Federation

**AJA** Asian Journalists Association

**APJC** Asia Pacific Journalism Centre

**APUWJ** Arunachal Pradesh Union of Working Journalists

**ASEAN** Association of Southeast Asian Nations

**ASNE** American Society of News Editors

**BBC** British Broadcasting Corporation

**BPfA** Beijing Platform for Action

**CAJ** Confederation of ASEAN Journalists

**CAPJ** Cambodian Association for the Protection of Journalists

**CMPF** Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom

**CSW** Commission on the Status of Women

**DUJ** Delhi Union of Journalists

**DW** Deutsche Welle

**EGM** Expert Group Meeting

**ESCAP** Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

**FATA** Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Pakistan)

**FMM** Free Media Movement (Sri Lanka)

**FNJ** Federation of Nepali Journalists

**GAMAG** Global Alliance on Media and Gender

**GMMP** Global Media Monitoring Project

**GSIM** Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media

**ICT** Information and Communication Technologies

**IFJ** International Federation of Journalists

**IJU** Indian Journalists Union

**IPS** Inter Press Service

**ISA** Internal Security Act (Malaysia)

**IWMF** International Women's Media Foundation

**MAV** Media Association Blong Vanuatu

**MDI** Media Diversity Institute

**NGOs** Non-Governmental Organizations

**NPU** Nepal Press Union

**NUJI** National Union of Journalists, India

**NUJM** National Union of Journalists, Malaysia

**NUJN** National Union of Journalists, Nepal

**OAS** Organization of American States

**OSCE** Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

**PACMAS** Pacific Media Assistance Scheme

**PFUJ** Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists

**RSF** Reporters Sans Frontières

**SAMSN** South Asia Media Solidarity Network

**SLWJA** Sri Lanka Working Journalists Association

**UJs** Unions of Journalists

**UN** United Nations

**UNESCO** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

**UNHRC** United Nations Human Rights Council

**UNU** United Nations University

**UN WOMEN** United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

**VCCI** Vanuatu Chamber of Commerce and Industry

**VIT** Vanuatu Institute of Technology

**VNPF** Vanuatu National Provident Fund

**VNS** Vanuatu National Statistics Office

**WACC** World Association for Christian Communication

**WFS** Women's Feature Service (India)

**WMC** Women's Media Centre (Cambodia)

**WMN** Women Make the News

**WWJ** Working Women Journalists (Nepal)



# Introduction

Freedom of expression, which includes freedom of information and freedom of the press, is a fundamental human right and a prerequisite for democracy. Over the past two decades, the concept of freedom of expression — traditionally based on the notion that state control is the primary threat to free expression — has been broadened to include several other aspects. An important dimension is the role played by gender in determining access to these freedoms.

“The undeniable link between freedom of expression and women’s human rights, which include the right to express their opinions, to have access to their own means of communication and to work in the existing mass media” was recalled by the 2010 Report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights to Freedom of Opinion and Expression.<sup>1</sup>

“Equal enjoyment of the right to freedom of expression remains elusive and historically disadvantaged groups – including women, minorities, refugees, indigenous peoples and sexual minorities – continue to struggle to have their voices heard and to access information of relevance to them”, observed the tenth anniversary joint declaration on “Ten key challenges to freedom of expression in the next decade” issued by the UN Special Rapporteur, together with colleagues from other parts of the world, in February 2010.<sup>2</sup>

The Declaration listed areas of special concern which included: the lack of adequate self-regulatory measures to address the under-representation of historically disadvantaged groups among mainstream media workers, including in the public media; the inadequate coverage by the media of issues of relevance to such groups; and the prevalence of stereotypical or derogatory information about these groups in the media.

It is increasingly acknowledged across the world that, in order to enjoy freedom of expression, human rights and gender equality, people – including women, men and transgender persons – must be equally able to participate in the media in multiple roles and at multiple levels; express themselves through the media; and determine the nature and content of the media.

The Platform for Action emerging from the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (BPfA) in 1995 was one of the first UN documents to highlight the critical importance of media in the attainment of gender equality and women’s empowerment. Section J of the BPfA focused attention on Women and Media as one of the 12 critical areas of concern for the advancement and empowerment of women. It stressed the

1 United Nations Human Rights Council 2010, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression*, UNHRC. <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G10/130/49/PDF/G1013049.pdf?OpenElement> (Accessed 25 October 2014)

2 UN 2010, *Tenth anniversary joint declaration: Ten key challenges to freedom of expression in the next decade*, the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Representative on Freedom of the Media, the Organization of American States (OAS) Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR) Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information, New York: UN <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G10/125/34/PDF/G1012534.pdf?OpenElement> (Accessed 25 October 2014)



need to “increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media as well as new technologies of communication”, and “promote balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media”.

Subsequently, a number of internationally endorsed documents have recognised and affirmed the right of both women and men to be informed and to have their voices heard.

An UN Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on women’s participation in and access to the media in 2002 highlighted the fact that the status of women and the status of the media are both key indices of the development and democratisation of a society.<sup>3</sup> Media, in all their forms, are central to women’s advancement and empowerment. Women’s right to freedom of expression and to information, which includes their right to speak and be heard, as well as their right to enter and participate in media professions, are fundamental to the realisation of all their rights and freedoms. Participants in the EGM called for the convergence of debates about women’s rights and about communication systems so that women’s concerns about their access to media and their right to freedom of expression and communication are taken into account in discussions on matters relating to the freedom, ownership and control, and structures of the media. The key outcomes and recommendations emerging from the EGM were presented at the 47th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in 2003.

UNESCO has been pursuing the objective of promoting women’s participation in the media through several initiatives over the years. Its annual Women Make the News (WMN) initiative has two goals: to promote gender equality in media operations at all levels of the organizational structure; and to ensure equality in news reporting on women and men. In 2012, in cooperation with the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and several other partners, it released the Gender Sensitive Indicators for Media (GSIM), a set of indicators, to gauge gender sensitivity and formulate the required policies and strategies to address gaps detected in order to promote greater diversity in the media.<sup>4</sup>

More recently, it convened the first Global Forum on Media and Gender in Bangkok in December 2013, which culminated in the launch of the Global Alliance on Media and Gender (GAMAG), a global movement to promote gender equality in and through media. UN Women is a co-sponsor of the First Global Forum on Media and Gender. UN Women Regional Office for

3 UNESCO 2014, *About Women Make the News*, Communication and Information Sector. <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/crosscutting-priorities/gender-and-media/women-make-the-news/about/> (Accessed 12 February 2015)

4 UNESCO 2012, *Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media*, Communication and Information Sector, Paris: UNESCO. <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/crosscutting-priorities/gender-and-media/gender-sensitive-indicators-in-media/> (Accessed 12 February 2015)

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Asia and the Pacific has joined UNESCO and other media counterparts from all over the world to form the Global Alliance on Media and Gender (GAMG). The 2014 UNESCO report on “World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development” incorporates information and insights relating to the gender dynamics of media freedom, pluralism and independence, including the safety of media workers.<sup>5</sup>

In the run-up to the 59th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW),<sup>6</sup> which reviewed progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 20 years after it was adopted, governments as well as civil society across the globe have been engaged in a process of evaluating the situation and renewing their pledge to move forward on gender equality and women’s empowerment.

At the regional level, during the Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: Beijing+20 Review, held in Bangkok in November 2014 under the auspices of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in collaboration with UN Women, member states recommitted themselves to the implementation of the BPfA through a Ministerial Declaration.

On the issue of women and the media, the Declaration noted that measures have been taken to foster equitable access to and use of information, communication channels, media and information and communication technologies (ICT), including education and training programmes, and media programmes that address the needs, concerns and interests of women and girls, and promote balanced and non-stereotypical portrayals of them; that, consequently, more women and girls are being empowered through ‘connection,’ which supports their right to freedom of expression and to challenge gender stereotypes, share opinions and ideas, build knowledge and access information; and that there is increasing media and digital literacy among women and girls, which is critical to their being full and active agents in social and public life.

However, the Declaration also expressed concern that women and girls continue to have less access than do men and boys to the media and ICT, hold fewer decision-making positions in the fields of media and ICT, and have less influence in the governance and development of media and ICT; that they continue to be subjected to harassment, stalking and violence online and to be subjected to messages and images that reinforce oppressive and prejudicial gender stereotypes; and that, despite the advances made, the media still, at times, promote discriminatory, degrading, stereotypical portrayals and depictions of negative practices that are detrimental to the rights, interests and empowerment of women.

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5 UNESCO 2014, *World Trends in freedom of expression and media development*, Paris: UNESCO.  
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002270/227025e.pdf> (Accessed 25 October 2014)

6 UN Women 2015, *CSW59/Beijing+20 (2015)*. <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw59-2015> (Accessed 12 February 2015)

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The concerns expressed in the Declaration are disturbingly reminiscent of those highlighted more than a decade earlier, in the official summary of the panel discussion on women and the media and ICTs during the CSW session in 2003:<sup>7</sup>

*"Participants were concerned that little progress had been made in improving the trend of women's employment in the media, especially at the decision-making level. Issues such as high attrition rates of women in media professions worldwide required a range of measures, including the setting of goals and targets and the adoption of gender-sensitive policies in human resources management..."*

"Women's portrayal in the media remained an urgent challenge that had to be addressed across all regions and all types of media. It was noted that an increase in the number of women in media professions had not necessarily led to a less sexist or stereotyped portrayal of women in the media. New strategies were needed to increase awareness among all media professionals to change the images of women conveyed by the media, as well as to improve media content..."

The similarity between these concerns – separated by a dozen years – underscores the fact that despite some progress, much remains to be done. In spite of increasing awareness about the gender disadvantage in access to freedom of expression (including in and through the media), and despite numerous, sincere, consistent efforts by a range of actors over the years to deal with various aspects of the problem in multiple ways, research across the world continues to reveal an uneven picture of women's participation and influence in media structures.

Gender equality in journalism and trade unionism has long been a central concern of the IFJ. The organization has regularly drawn attention to the contradiction between gender imbalances in media institutions and content, and the principles of democracy, free speech and freedom of expression.

A survey conducted by the IFJ in 2001, titled "Equality for Quality: Setting Standards for Women in Journalism", revealed that there was a long way to go before women could achieve equality in journalism. Among its many initiatives over the years to promote gender equality and improve gender balance in the media is the handbook for journalists titled "Getting the Balance Right: Gender Equality in Journalism".<sup>8</sup> The 2009 publication covers the status of women media professionals, the portrayal of women in the media, and the role unions, professional organizations and union activists can play in fostering equality, especially by ensuring that women are properly represented in decision-making bodies – their own and those of media houses.

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<sup>7</sup> UN Women 2003, *Panel discussion on participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communication technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women Summary submitted by the moderator, Commission on the Status of Women, 47th session, 3-14 March 2003*, UN Women. <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw47/CRP5.PDF> (Accessed 13 February 2015)

<sup>8</sup> IFJ 2009, *Getting the Balance Right: Gender Equality in Journalism*. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001807/180707e.pdf> (Accessed 13 February 2015)



More recently, in January 2014, the IFJ and the South Asia Media Solidarity Network (SAMSAN) launched a report titled “The Stories Women Journalists Tell”, which provides a snapshot of the experiences of women journalists in South Asia.<sup>9</sup> Viewing fair gender portrayal as an integral part of ethical journalism, the IFJ has also initiated discussions on gender and media ethics and issued guidelines on matters such as reporting on violence against women.

Overall, the numbers of women in media professions have increased in recent years, but gender imbalances remain acute in the upper echelons of media organizations. While gender equality policies have been adopted by many media houses in several countries in the region, implementation mechanisms are often weak or non-existent. While measures to address inequalities – such as gender-sensitive recruitment procedures, training and awareness-raising – have been put in place in some media systems, gender-based differences continue to limit the exercise of women’s full professional potential in many parts of the world. This is the situation a full two decades after the BPfA first flagged the issue in an official, global forum.

## Recent global resources on women in media

According to the European Commission’s High Level Group on Media Freedom and Pluralism in Europe, “*The journalistic profession should ... reflect the diversity in the general population and media outlets must be encouraged to reflect the diversity of the population in their newsroom and on-screen*”.<sup>10</sup> Gender balance is an obvious prerequisite for pluralistic media reflecting the diversity of any given population. However, popular perceptions and depictions of the present-day preponderance of women in the media are not borne out by current data.

Notwithstanding the growing and visible presence of many successful, high profile and highly regarded media women, both internationally and in individual countries, the International Women’s Media Foundation’s 2011 Global Report on the Status of Women in News Media, covering over 500 media companies in nearly 60 countries, revealed that in most parts of the world women continue to be under-represented as professionals working in both print and broadcast media.<sup>11</sup>

Aggregated data presented in the report show men representing nearly two-thirds (64.9 percent) of the total media workforce across regions and women making up just over one-third (35.1 percent). There is less of a gap in certain categories of jobs (particularly at the senior professional level where senior writers, anchors and producers are placed), with men at 59 percent and women at 41 percent globally. However, women’s representation shrinks

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9 IFJ APAC 2014, *The Stories Women Journalists Tell: IFJ Report on Women in Media in South Asia*. [http://issuu.com/ifjasiapacific/docs/women\\_in\\_media\\_in\\_south\\_asia](http://issuu.com/ifjasiapacific/docs/women_in_media_in_south_asia) (Accessed 13 February 2015)

10 European Commission (EC) 2013, *A free and pluralistic media to sustain European democracy*. The Report of the High Level Group on Media Freedom and Pluralism. <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/sites/digital-agenda/files/HLG%20Final%20Report.pdf> (Accessed April 2013)

11 International Women’s Media Foundation (IWMF) 2011, *Global Report on the Status of Women in News Media*, Washington: IWMF. <http://www.iwmf.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/IWMF-Global-Report-Summary.pdf> (Accessed 25 October 2014)

# Introduction

progressively in the higher echelons of media companies, in both editorial and non-editorial positions (including management and governance). Across the globe women hold an average of just over a quarter of the jobs in top management (27 percent) and governance (26 percent).

It must be noted, the gap notwithstanding, that women's presence at those levels has more than doubled in the two decades since the last global study looking at gender patterns in media employment, which found that women occupied – on average – only 12 percent of the top management positions in the mid-1990s.<sup>12</sup> Also, two regions have now crossed the one-third Rubicon, with the Global Report recording that women occupy 33 percent and 43 percent in top management and governance jobs respectively in Eastern Europe, and 36 percent and 37 percent in Nordic Europe.

The Asia and the Pacific region is at the other end of the scale, with women occupying only about a fifth of governance positions and holding less than 10 percent of top management jobs.<sup>13</sup> Data gathered from 82 news companies of varied sizes in ten countries suggest that men outnumber women by 4:1 across this region.<sup>14</sup> The highest representation of women in the region's newsrooms are found in the occupations associated with reporting and editing: professional positions at the senior level (32 percent) and junior level (24 percent). However, even here they represent less than one third and one quarter of the professional staff at these levels.

With less than a quarter (22 percent) of all 59 nations included in the survey having achieved some gender balance at various levels, including top management and governance, parity – especially in the elevated ranks of media organizations – is clearly still a distant goal in many countries.<sup>15</sup>

The picture that emerges from the Global Report, based on the only recent, extensive global study of its kind, is largely corroborated by findings from separate surveys in at least one region and several nations.<sup>16</sup> In addition, perception studies and anecdotal evidence from a

12 UNESCO 1995, *An Unfinished Story: Gender Patterns in Media Employment*, Paris: UNESCO. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0010/001016/101613eb.pdf> (Accessed 25 October 2014)

13 The Asia and Oceania region was represented by ten countries in this study: Australia, Bangladesh, China, Fiji, India, Japan, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines and South Korea; only two of these – India and Pakistan – are included in the present research on media and gender in Asia and the Pacific

14 The ratio was 4:1 in India and 5:1 in Pakistan, the two countries from the region that figure in both the Global Report and the present research on gender and media in Asia and the Pacific.

15 IWMF 2011, op. cit.

16 For example, Made, P. and Lowe Morna, C. (eds.) 2009, *Glass Ceilings: Women and Men in Southern Africa Media*, Johannesburg: Gender Links; Lowe Morna, C. et. al Oct 2010, *Gender and Media Progress Study Southern Africa*, Johannesburg: Gender Links; Lowe Morna, C. and Rama, K. (eds.) 2009, *Glass Ceilings: Women and Men in the South African Media*, Johannesburg: Gender Links; Linabary, J. 7 Apr 2012, *Percent of women in newsrooms unchanged in latest ASNE Newsroom Census* (report on the American Society of News Editors' 2012 Newsroom Census), The Gender Report. <http://genderreport.com/2012/04/07/percent-of-women-in-newsrooms-unchanged-in-latest-asne-newsroom-census/> (Accessed April 2013); 2012 *TV and Radio News Staffing and Profitability Survey*, Radio Television Digital News Association – quoted in: Mitsu Klos, D., *Status of Women in US Media 2013*, New York: Women's Media Center ([http://wmc.3cdn.net/51113ed5df3e0d0b79\\_zzzm6go0b.pdf](http://wmc.3cdn.net/51113ed5df3e0d0b79_zzzm6go0b.pdf), accessed in April 2013); *Sex & Power: Who Runs Britain?*, Centre for Women & Democracy/Counting Women In coalition, 2013, pages 37-38. <http://www.hansardsociety.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Sex-and-Power-2014.pdf> (Accessed April 2013); Holt, G. 29 May 2012, *Women hold fewer than third of top jobs - BBC research*, BBC News. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-18187449> (Accessed April 2013); *Developing Our Story: Equality and Diversity at the BBC*, 2012. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/diversity/strategy/equalityreport2012/> (Accessed April 2013)

wide range of countries across the world indicate that, while the number and percentage of women working in the media are steadily growing, they are still under-represented in some sectors of media work (including certain branches of journalism) as well as in decision-making positions.

According to a 2013 policy document on media freedom and pluralism in Europe, “If media freedom provides the possibility to express oneself and to access information, then media pluralism is the degree of outreach of this freedom – i.e., the outcome being that every group in a society can enjoy this freedom”.<sup>17</sup> In other words, enabling the presence of a range of voices, values and perspectives in the media – thereby facilitating inclusive public debate, generating open discussion between various sub-groups and systems within a society, and reflecting diverse interests and concerns – is an essential aspect of media freedom.

However, available global data on women’s representation in media content as sources of news, information and opinion is discouraging. The 2010 edition of the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), which covered 108 countries, recorded that women constitute less than a quarter (24 percent) of the people heard or read about in print, radio and television news across the world.<sup>18</sup>

This does mark a significant improvement from the first GMMP (1995), which found that only 17 percent of the people featured in the news were women.<sup>19</sup> However, despite the slow but steady increase in women’s presence in the news over the past decade (the corresponding figures were 18 percent in 2000 and 21 percent in 2005),<sup>20</sup> the world depicted in the news media still remains predominantly male.

Globally only a fifth of the authoritative news sources quoted in the news were women (19 percent of spokespersons and 20 percent of experts), according to the 2010 report. The picture is not significantly better in different parts of the world covered by the GMMP, which is the world’s longest-running and most extensive research on gender in news media. In Asia only 20 percent of news subjects were female; the corresponding figure for the Pacific region

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17 CMPF 2013, *European competencies in respect of media pluralism and media freedom*, EUI RSCAS PP; 2013/01; Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom (CMPF). [http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/26056/RSCAS\\_PP\\_2013\\_01.pdf?sequence=1](http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/26056/RSCAS_PP_2013_01.pdf?sequence=1) (Accessed April 2013)

18 The World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) 2010, *Who Makes the News: Global Media Monitoring Project 2010*, GMMP 2010 Reports. <http://whomakesthenews.org/gmmp/gmmp-reports/gmmp-2010-reports> (Accessed April 2013)

19 MediaWatch 1995, *Global Media Monitoring Project: Women’s Participation in the News*, GMMP 1995 Reports. [http://cdn.agilitycms.com/who-makes-the-news/Imported/images/reports\\_1995/gmmp\\_1995.pdf](http://cdn.agilitycms.com/who-makes-the-news/Imported/images/reports_1995/gmmp_1995.pdf) (Accessed April 2013)

20 WACC 2000, *Who Makes the News: Global Media Monitoring Project 2000*, GMMP 2000 Reports. [http://cdn.agilitycms.com/who-makes-the-news/Imported/reports\\_2000/gmmp\\_2000.pdf](http://cdn.agilitycms.com/who-makes-the-news/Imported/reports_2000/gmmp_2000.pdf) (Accessed April 2013); WACC 2005, *Who Makes the News: Global Media Monitoring Project 2005*, GMMP 2005 Reports. [http://cdn.agilitycms.com/who-makes-the-news/Imported/reports\\_2005/gmmp-report-en-2005.pdf](http://cdn.agilitycms.com/who-makes-the-news/Imported/reports_2005/gmmp-report-en-2005.pdf) (Accessed April 2013)

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was 25 percent.<sup>21</sup> The GMMP 2010 survey found that only 22 percent of the people heard or read about in the news in India was female; the corresponding figures for Malaysia and Nepal were the same: 15 percent.<sup>22</sup> Although women's presence in the news had improved by 6 percent in Latin America and 5 percent in Europe between 2005 and 2010, other regions had either stagnated or registered minimal gains.<sup>23</sup>

Internet news was introduced in the 2010 edition of the GMMP for the first time, on a pilot basis, and monitoring covered 76 national news websites in 16 countries, besides eight international news websites. Women were found to comprise only 23 percent of the news subjects in stories from the total of 84 news websites included in the survey.<sup>24</sup> This finding suggests that the under-representation of women in traditional news media has been carried over into the virtual news world.

Significantly, GMMP data is more or less corroborated by smaller studies across the world, both regional and national.<sup>25</sup>

Over the past decade several resources have been created at the global, regional and national levels to improve gender balance in the media in terms of both personnel and content. Among these are the Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media (GSIM), a non-prescriptive global framework initiated by UNESCO, together with the IFJ, to gauge gender sensitivity and

21 The countries included in the GMMP 2010 survey in Asia were: Bangladesh, China, India, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, The Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam. The countries included in the GMMP 2010 survey in the Pacific were: Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Tonga. Four of the Asian countries – India, Malaysia, Nepal and Pakistan – are included in the present research on media and gender in Asia and the Pacific. Since the Asia regional report was not available on the GMMP website, these figures have been sourced from the global report.

22 The Pakistan country report was not available on the GMMP website.

23 The regional and national reports of the GMMP 2010 are available here: <http://whomakesthenews.org/gmmp/gmmp-reports/gmmp-2010-reports> (Accessed 13 February 2015); the Asia regional report and the Pakistan country report were not available on the website in October 2014 or February 2015.

24 WACC 2000, op. cit.

25 For example, Gender Links & Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) 2003, *Gender and Media Baseline Study*, Johannesburg: Gender Links & MISA. <http://www.genderlinks.org.za/page/media-gender-and-media-baseline-study> (Accessed April 2013); Lowe Morna, C. et. al 2010, *Gender and Media Progress Study Southern Africa*, Johannesburg: Gender Links. <http://www.genderlinks.org.za/article/gender-and-media-progress-study-southern-africa-2010-10-06> (Accessed April 2013); Pesta, A. 31 May 2012, *Men Rule Media Coverage of Women's News*, The Daily Beast. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/05/31/men-rule-media-coverage-of-women-s-news.html> (Accessed April 2013); *Silenced: Gender Gap in the 2012 Election Coverage*, Montpelier: The 4th Estate. <http://www.4thestate.net/female-voices-in-media-infographic/> (Accessed April 2013); Bawdon F. et al. 15 Oct 2012, *Seen but Not Heard: How Women Make Front Page News*. *Women in Journalism*. [http://womeninjournalism.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Seen\\_but\\_not\\_heard.pdf](http://womeninjournalism.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Seen_but_not_heard.pdf) (Accessed April 2013); Abdulla R., *Diversity Observatory Report 1: Media Diversity During Egypt's Parliamentary Elections (November-December 2011)*, Media Diversity Institute (MDI). [http://media-diversity.org/en/additional-files/documents/News%20Documents/MDI\\_Media\\_Monitoring\\_Report\\_1\\_EN.pdf](http://media-diversity.org/en/additional-files/documents/News%20Documents/MDI_Media_Monitoring_Report_1_EN.pdf) (Accessed April 2013); Abdulla, *Diversity Observatory Report 2: Media Diversity During Egypt's Presidential Elections (May-June 2012)*, MDI. [http://media-diversity.org/en/additional-files/MDI\\_Egypt\\_Media\\_Monitoring\\_Report\\_2\\_with\\_Introduction.pdf#sthash.wupvaXwY.dpuf](http://media-diversity.org/en/additional-files/MDI_Egypt_Media_Monitoring_Report_2_with_Introduction.pdf#sthash.wupvaXwY.dpuf) (Accessed April 2013); Abdulla 12 Feb 2013, *Diversity Observatory Report 3: Media Diversity during Egypt's Constitutional Referendum (November-December 2012)*, MDI. <http://media-diversity.org/en/additional-files/documents/b-studies-reports/MDI%20Diversity%20Observatory%20Report%203.pdf#sthash.wupvaXwY.dpuf> (Accessed April 2013)

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promote greater diversity in the media.<sup>26</sup> The two sets of indicators are meant to encourage and help media houses to analyse their own policies and practices and take necessary action towards better gender balance in their workforce and content.

While the GSIM are fairly comprehensive, they are not intended to be exhaustive or definitive. The indicators can be modified, if necessary, to suit specific contexts. They are meant to be used by media organizations, media workers' unions, professional associations and self-regulatory bodies to internally assess their own operations and practices, set goals, monitor progress and conduct training in order to achieve the professionally sound goals of social inclusivity and diversity among media personnel, as well as in media content.



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<sup>26</sup> UNESCO 2012, Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media, op. cit.

# Executive Summary

- Women are entering the media professional in large numbers, yet their representation across all areas of the media remains inadequate.
- On average across Asia and the Pacific, women make up 28.6 percent of the media workforce. The proportions are lower in decision-making roles in media organizations where women make up 17.9 percent of executive roles, 19.5 percent of senior editorial and 22.6 percent of mid-level editorial positions.
- There is a clear gender pay gap, with women on average earning US\$436 per month, compared with men earning US\$506 per month. In Malaysia, the pay gap is the smallest with women earning much higher money and at more equitable levels than the regional average. In contrast, Cambodia and Pakistan had the widest gender pay gap with men earning much higher salaries. Arguably, in Cambodia this could be due to more women journalists recently joining the profession.
- Women continue to be restricted by stereotypical beats, and face more job insecurity, lower wages and gender discrimination but they are multi-skilled and usually working across more beats than men.
- More than half the survey respondents felt that a gender policy would contribute to gender equity in the media.
- Sexual harassment remains a key issue with 34 percent of journalists in Asia and the Pacific saying they had witnessed sexual harassment at work. At least 17 percent of female journalists have personally experienced workplace sexual harassment and 59 percent of the time it is a superior who is the perpetrator.



- While unions continue to work on improving the rights of journalists, women are still struggling to have their voices heard generally as well as in decision-making roles. The average age of female union members was 37 and for men it is 38 years old. Most respondents (72 percent) supported quotas for women in unions or proportional representation.
- Journalists are positioned to impact the way women are presented and stereotyped in the media in their writing and reporting, yet across the region they are not challenging existing cultural expectations of women and gender stereotypes. In South Asia, women are more likely to be depicted in the media as 'victims', while in South East Asia and the Pacific they are depicted as 'family figures'. Women believe that increasingly they are also depicted as 'sexual objects'.
- For women journalists in Cambodia, often the greatest challenge is overcoming cultural barriers and stereotypes that means many women are not encouraged, or in fact actively deterred, to join the journalism profession. For those who do persevere, they are met by an extremely male-dominated industry with few women in decision-making roles and a significant gender pay gap. Nevertheless, many women are making headway in radio journalism and online. Professional training in Cambodia also rated as a high focus area among both men and women compared to other countries in the study.
- In India, the well-established and strong media landscape is full of women journalists. Yet while the advantage of class, caste and higher education has seen some women climb to the top rungs of the profession, the majority of women journalists today are still concentrated on the middle and lower rungs of the profession. Sexual harassment remains a critical issue for the industry. So too, while more men are found in full-time contract roles, large numbers of women in the country are moving or being pushed into freelance roles.
- Malaysia has a strong female workforce across the country and this is well-evident in the media sector where working conditions and pay for media workers is the most balanced of all countries in the study. But ultimately women are still facing impediments in rising to key decision-making roles and sexual harassment was identified as a major area in need of action.
- In Nepal, the lack of security in women's employment and poor working conditions have created a sense of fear and instability among women journalists who occupy just a quarter of the media industry. Nevertheless, women are striking out and achieving in areas such as radio and some media unions have taken affirmative actions on women's representation at decision-making level. There are also strong examples of women's networks strengthening the capacity of women in media.



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- Pakistan has a vibrant media industry that continues to overcome many obstacles and challenges. But the media and its unions remain extremely male-dominated with women coming up against 'glass ceilings' and slowed down by 'sticky floors', evidenced in the lack of women in decision-making roles. The country also has one of the worst gender imbalances evidenced in the research in terms of the gender pay gap. Nevertheless, women within the industry are strong and defiant and are regularly challenging this status quo on gender rights issues and sexual harassment with some media companies leading the way on gender approaches and policies.
- In Sri Lanka, with a media industry plagued with instability and where journalists are regularly threatened, intimidated and often killed, it is little surprise that gender issues and inequities are sidelined over safety. Inherent stereotyping also means women journalists are increasingly pushed to cover 'soft beats' such as gender issues, arts and culture. Nevertheless, some media outlets and women journalists in ethnic-minorities in the North are making positive changes for gender equity and blazing a trail for others with programmes such as active mentoring.
- With a very small media industry and workforce, working conditions and wages have been the first casualty in media in Vanuatu for both men and women. Yet women are proving themselves as deft multiskillers, covering a wide subject range. While the number of women in the media comprised nearly 40 percent, men still strongly outnumber women in decision-making roles. Training, rights at work policies and gender policies and approaches are areas requiring urgent attention.

## Professional context

- Survey participants were, on the whole, well-educated with 41.6 percent of respondents having completed a university degree, and 42.6 percent having completed post-graduate studies.
- More than half the respondents (69 percent) chose 'love of journalism' as their primary motivation for joining the profession.
- The largest number of survey respondents (42.5 percent) had over ten years behind them in the industry.
- Journalists employed or working in newspapers were the largest group in the survey (57.3 percent).
- The largest proportions of respondents (64 percent) were full-time regular employees – this applied generally across all age groups.
- The proportion of freelancers in the media industry increased with age. Among the 18-25 age group, only 9 percent were freelancers, compared with 45 percent in the age group 56 years and above. Interestingly, women made up 74 percent of the freelancers in the age group 18-25 years.



- On average 40 percent of respondents said they could choose their beats/subject areas 'to some extent'.
- Men outnumbered women most noticeably in the youngest age group 18-25 and the 46-55 age group.
- More women (30 percent) said they covered 'gender issues' in their reporting than men (8 percent).



## Gender equity in media organizations

- The largest proportion of respondents working in media organizations (48 percent) said that women made up less than 10 percent of positions at executive level.
- At senior editorial level, the largest group of respondents working or employed in media organizations (50 percent) said that women comprised less than 10 percent of employees in those roles. This was followed by 18 percent in the 10-25 percent bracket.
- In South East Asia, nearly half all respondents (48.6 percent) said they had women represented at executive levels in their media organizations. This contrasted with 37.2 percent of respondents in South Asia. Cambodia had the highest response rate to this question in the region (52.8 percent), compared with Vanuatu, who had the lowest with 31.8 percent.

## Working conditions and satisfaction

- More than half all respondents (55.4 percent) from across the region felt that men and women received equal wages for equal work in their organization. Another 17.3 percent of respondents disagreed – this comprised 20.80 percent of females and 12.2 percent of male respondents.
- Only 8.5 percent of respondents described their experience in terms of opportunities for recruitment and career advancement as 'excellent'. The highest response for both groups was 'good', with 37.4 percent of men and 33.5 percent of women.
- Women generally comprised between only 10-25 percent of all participants in trainings attended, according to just over a quarter of respondents to this question (26.2 percent). Another 22.7 percent said women comprised 25-50 percent of participants in trainings.
- Significantly more men (65 percent) than women (51 percent) reported that their workplaces offered training and/or professional development opportunities.

## Executive Summary

- 67 percent of all respondents had not received any form of safety training.
- The least available workplace provision appeared to be childcare, with only 2.9 percent of respondents saying they had access to such a service. In Malaysia, not one respondent said that they had this facility in their workplace. India had the highest response, with just 2.2 percent saying they had access to childcare facilities at work.
- In Cambodia, 43.1 percent of respondents rated the leave and re-entry for women after childbirth in their workplace as 'acceptable'. In each of the other countries, on average, 30 percent of respondents rated it as 'good'.
- Journalists in the survey were the best paid in Malaysia, with 80 percent earning more than US\$800 a month, including 82.5 percent of women and 75.7 percent of men.
- In Nepal (49.5 percent), Pakistan (23.3 percent), Vanuatu (27 percent) and Cambodia (28.3 percent), the highest proportion of journalists earned between US\$80-250 per month.
- In Sri Lanka, 31.1 percent of journalist earned US\$251-400 per month and in India 24.6 percent earned US\$401-600 and more than US\$800 per month.

### Professional associations and unions

- More than half the respondents (54.8 percent) were members of a national union or association.
- Malaysia had the biggest gender breakdown in favour of males with 80 percent of male respondents' officials or office bearers, compared with only 33.3 percent of women.
- Almost half of all respondents (48.5 percent) said women 'did not have enough representation or visibility within unions'.



- Most survey respondents (71 percent) supported the introduction of 'quotas for women or proportional representation' in union leadership.
- Of the 54.8 percent of respondents who said they were members of a national union or a media/journalism association, the largest proportion came from the oldest age group, 56 and above. Most of those respondents (84.2 percent) were members of a national union or media/journalism association.
- The smallest proportion of union members came from the youngest age group (18-25 year olds) with just 40.9 percent saying they were members of a national union. The growth in membership was on average 10 percent per age group.
- Only 11.9 percent of all respondents across the region felt that unions and journalism organizations 'already promote gender diversity and equity' in their country.



## Sexual harassment

- More than a third of all respondents (34 percent) had witnessed workplace sexual harassment.
- Of those that experienced sexual harassment, 59 percent said the harassment had been committed by a 'superior at work' followed by a 'colleague' (51 percent).
- 40 percent of women in the survey had 'witnessed sexual harassment', compared with 25 percent of men.
- Sri Lanka and Malaysia had the highest incidence of sexual harassment among respondents in the survey with 27.7 percent and 20.6 percent respectively. The lowest incidence was 8.8 percent in Cambodia and 10 percent in Vanuatu.
- 'Shame', 'embarrassment', worries it 'would affect their job' and 'fear of repercussions' were the most common key reasons for victims not reporting the incidents.
- Nearly half all respondents (42.5 percent) said there was no official complaints cell or anti-sexual harassment policy in their workplace and a further 25.5 percent were unaware of such mechanisms.
- 'Stronger laws' was selected as the most popular strategy to effectively combat sexual harassment (26 percent). This was followed with 'awareness-raising among women' (22 percent) and 'effective complaints mechanism' (20 percent).

# Executive Summary

## Promoting gender equity

- Only 24 percent of respondents in media organizations said a gender policy existed and was in operation in their workplace. A further 35 percent saying they were unaware if such a policy existed.
- Cambodia had the highest proportion of respondents saying they had a gender policy in their current workplace (45 percent). In contrast, Malaysia had the lowest proportion with only 6.6 percent. Vanuatu also poorly performed in this question with only 16.6 percent of respondents saying they had such a policy.
- More than half of all respondents (59 percent) agreed that a gender equity policy would 'contribute to gender equity' in their organization.
- The most popular strategies suggested for promoting gender equity in media workplaces seemed to be: 'having more women in the media at every level' (22 percent) and 'having more women in decision-making roles' (22 percent).



- More than a quarter of all respondents (25.6 percent) said ‘unions and journalism organization should work more with employees on joint strategies for gender equity’, with a further 21.9 percent stating that they ‘need to improve their work on gender equity’.

## Gender balance in media content

- A substantial proportion of respondents (43.2 percent) seemed to think that the presence of women in the news as news sources or experts was between 10-30 percent, while a slightly smaller number (40 percent) estimated their presence at less than 10 percent.
- More respondents (18 percent) felt that women were most frequently depicted as ‘victims’, 16 percent felt they were depicted as ‘family figures’ and 14 percent felt that women were depicted as ‘sexual objects’.
- In South Asia, respondents felt women were most commonly depicted as ‘victims’, whereas in South East Asia and the Pacific respondents felt women were mostly commonly depicted as ‘family figures’.
- ‘Enforcement of guidelines on gender equity’ (27 percent) and ‘more women in decision-making roles’ (26 percent) were identified as the strongest measures to promote gender equity in news content.



## Research Framework

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Women's representation in newsrooms in many countries across the Asia and the Pacific region has been slowly but surely improving over the years. However, media in the region continue to be male-dominated, especially towards the top of organizational hierarchies, both editorial and management. Women are still more or less marginalised in the news media, in terms of the content of their jobs and in the opportunities they get to develop their skills and advance in their careers. They also tend to be sidelined in the professional unions that are supposed to represent them.

The IFJ and its affiliates are convinced that the capabilities and priorities of women journalists must be recognised and addressed. They also believe that, if journalists' organizations are to improve conditions for women in the news media, they may have to reform their own structures and ensure that women are properly represented in the governing bodies of unions.

In this context, the South Asia Media Solidarity Network (SAMSN), a network of IFJ affiliates and journalist unions and associations from South Asia, organised a series of roundtables on gender equity, media rights and safety in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka between February and July 2013. The roundtables culminated in the first-ever SAMSN Gender Networking Conference in Kathmandu, Nepal, on 21 July 2013 and the adoption of a charter on gender equity, "Building Resistance, Organising for Change", at the 11th annual SAMSN meeting, held in Kathmandu on 21-22 July 2013.<sup>27</sup>

As part of the SAMSN-IFJ project on gender equity, safety and media rights, the roundtables helped articulate the pressing issues that women journalists in South Asia face and highlight the need to develop a strong network and campaign strategy on issues relating to gender and the media. While some issues flagged during the roundtable discussions were country-specific, others were clearly more universal since they were raised repeatedly. The primary concerns expressed related to gender stereotypes and gender biases in recruitment, representation, work assignments and promotions; the impact of the contract system and consequent growing job insecurity; the need for gender policies in the workplace; social and cultural barriers to career advancement; personal safety and security on the job and sexual harassment at the workplace.

The IFJ and its affiliates have a strong understanding of the challenges and issues that women in media professions face at work. They also recognise the need to build on that shared knowledge with sound research to gather data that can provide a clear picture of women's achievements and challenges in media workplaces and content, and a firm basis for strategies to bring about meaningful change to benefit both women and the media in the Asia and the Pacific region. This research project, focusing on media and gender in Asia and the Pacific, jointly initiated by the IFJ-Asia Pacific and SAMSN, with support from UNESCO and UN Women, represents a serious effort to fulfil that need.

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27 IFJ APAC 2014, op. cit.

This research study is multi-pronged, consisting of a survey, interviews, case studies and content analysis. It explores the situation of women in media workplaces in seven countries of the Asia and the Pacific region: Cambodia, India, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Vanuatu. In view of the work undertaken in South Asia over the past decade and a half, the research has a strong South Asia focus but also includes two countries in South East Asia and one in the Pacific.

The study aims to document and evaluate the situation of women in the region's media, assessing the progress made since the adoption of the BPfA in 1995. It seeks to inform debates on gender and the media in the region by (a) generating data on the number and relative position of women in media organizations and unions; (b) gathering information on women's experiences and feelings with regard to their work in the media, the issues they want addressed and the problems and solutions they identify; (c) finding out what media organizations are doing to address the prevailing gender disparity in the media; and (d) gathering examples of good practices that can inform future campaigns and activities in the area of gender and media.

The research probes the challenges, obstacles and needs of women in media, building on the knowledge and understanding gained by the IFJ Asia-Pacific and its affiliates through work on these issues across the region over the years. It examines the number of women in senior and decision-making positions and the issues that affect this representation; the role that media workers' unions, professional associations and women's networks play in advancing women in media careers; the coverage and representation of women in media content; and good practice case studies of campaigns, media organizations, media workplaces, gender policies and codes. It also explores existing and possible strategies to increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media, and the promotion of gender balance in media coverage, looking in particular for ideas for further action.

The research is being conducted at a critical time in the global arena. As the time-frame of the Millennium Development Goals draws to a close in 2015, the status with regard to achievement of the goals is under review across the world and a new international framework for development is in the process of being negotiated. At the same time, the 20-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), which has been taking place at national and regional levels, has culminated in a global, inter-governmental review of the status quo with regard to the 12 identified critical areas of concern (including Women and Media) at the March 2015 meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York, as mentioned earlier. UN Women will also be organising a Global Leaders' Summit on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, expected to be convened back-to-back with the September 2015 Post-MDGs Summit to adopt the new development agenda for the world.

These events provide various stakeholders and actors with forums where they can recommit themselves to development that incorporates the goals of gender equality and women's

# Research Framework

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empowerment, and make concrete pledges – including financial resources and investments – towards achieving gender equality through the safeguarding of women’s rights and promotion of women’s empowerment. The research is expected to feed into regional and global reviews of the implementation of Section J of the BPfA, addressing the critical area of concern: “Women and Media”. It will complement and inform the BPfA +20 review process at the regional and global levels and add to available qualitative and quantitative data on the 10th critical area of concern in the BPfA: “Women and the Media”.

Recommendations emerging from the research will be useful to national, regional and international media organizations, associations and unions, journalism education and training institutions, governments, non-governmental/civil society organizations interested in promoting the cause of gender equity and balance in the media.

## The survey

The seven-country survey aimed to identify the minimum standards, principles and actions required to move towards gender equity in the media in the Asia and the Pacific region. The questionnaire was posted online and distributed through union networks between 28 August and 23 September 2014. The 72-question survey sought to elicit responses from journalists and other media workers (men, women and others) that could provide a picture of the relative positions of women, men and sexual minorities in media organizations and unions in the region. Respondents were also asked to identify strategies that, in their opinion, could lead to more gender-equal media workplaces and more gender-balanced media content.

Efforts were made to ensure balance and representativeness among survey respondents in terms of gender, age, language, religion, caste/ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, geographical location, and media form (print, electronic, online). Survey participants completing the questionnaire were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality. They were assured that if the researchers wished to feature any identifiable information in the report emerging from the study, prior permission would be sought from the concerned participants.

This report incorporates a regional overview of the survey findings as well as country-specific case studies highlighting good practices in promoting gender equality. As an extension of this report, country-specific chapters that place the information and opinions provided by media professionals in each location within the context of local realities and the media industry, were drafted. These chapters are accessible at: <http://www.ifj.org/regions/asia-pacific/reports-handbooks/situationalreports3/>

## Key Findings

The survey aimed to garner 100 responses from each of the seven focus countries.

It was open to female, male and trans media workers, but the research guidelines proposed a specific mix of respondents: two-thirds women, one-third men, with space for those who identify as 'other.' Nearly 700 (697) journalists from seven countries participated in the survey, 433 of them women (62.1 percent), 258 men (37 percent) and six self-identified as 'other' (0.86 percent). The country totals of respondents were broadly in keeping with population size of each country: India 138, Pakistan 137, Malaysia 111, Cambodia 106, Nepal 103, Sri Lanka 80 and Vanuatu 22.

Table 1: Gender of respondents<sup>28</sup>

| What is your Gender? | Total      | Percentage     |
|----------------------|------------|----------------|
| Other                | 6          | 0.86%          |
| Male                 | 258        | 37.02%         |
| Female               | 433        | 62.12%         |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>697</b> | <b>100.00%</b> |

### Profile of respondents

Almost all those who participated in the survey were nationals of the countries they were working in, with only seven expatriates among the participants. They were fairly well spread across the states/provinces of each country, with respondents based in 20 states in India, 11 in Malaysia; 10 in Nepal, six in Pakistan, five each in Cambodia and Sri Lanka, and two in Vanuatu.

Table 2: Country of work of the respondents

| What Country do you currently work in? | Total      | Female     | Male       | Other    | Female        | Male          | Other        | Percentage     |
|--|------------|------------|------------|----------|---------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|
| Cambodia                               | 106        | 45         | 61         | 0        | 42.45%        | 57.55%        | 0.00%        | 100.00%        |
| India                                  | 138        | 102        | 34         | 2        | 73.91%        | 24.64%        | 1.45%        | 100.00%        |
| Malaysia                               | 111        | 78         | 33         | 0        | 70.27%        | 29.73%        | 0.00%        | 100.00%        |
| Nepal                                  | 103        | 74         | 28         | 1        | 71.84%        | 27.18%        | 0.97%        | 100.00%        |
| Pakistan                               | 137        | 79         | 57         | 1        | 57.66%        | 41.61%        | 0.73%        | 100.00%        |
| Sri Lanka                              | 80         | 45         | 33         | 2        | 56.25%        | 41.25%        | 2.50%        | 100.00%        |
| Vanuatu                                | 22         | 10         | 12         | 0        | 45.45%        | 54.55%        | 0.00%        | 100.00%        |
| <b>Total</b>                           | <b>697</b> | <b>433</b> | <b>258</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>62.12%</b> | <b>37.02%</b> | <b>0.86%</b> | <b>100.00%</b> |

Almost half the survey participants (46 percent) were in the 26-35 year age group. The sample was, by and large, youthful, with over four-fifths of the respondents (82 percent) aged between 18 and 45.

<sup>28</sup> All the tables and graphs below have been developed by the IFJ and UKS Research Center within the frame of the project "Research study on gender and media in the Asia and the Pacific Region."

Table 3: Age of the respondents

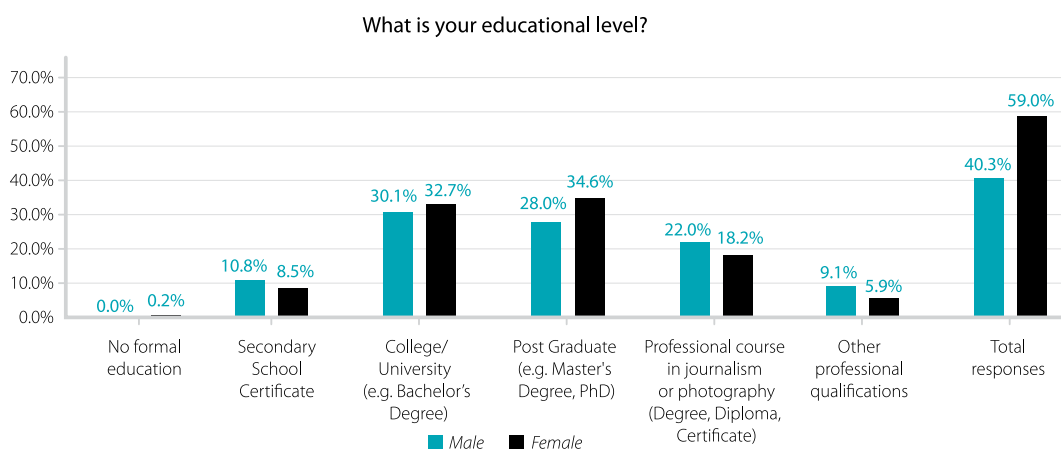
| What is your age? | Total      | Female     | Male       | Other    | Female         | Male           | Other          |
|-------------------|------------|------------|------------|----------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 18 - 25           | 128        | 103        | 25         | 0        | 23.79%         | 9.69%          | 0.00%          |
| 26 - 35           | 319        | 203        | 116        | 0        | 46.88%         | 44.96%         | 0.00%          |
| 36 - 45           | 128        | 72         | 55         | 1        | 16.63%         | 21.32%         | 16.67%         |
| 46 - 55           | 84         | 40         | 43         | 1        | 9.24%          | 16.67%         | 16.67%         |
| 56 and above      | 38         | 15         | 19         | 4        | 3.46%          | 7.36%          | 66.67%         |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>697</b> | <b>433</b> | <b>258</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>100.00%</b> | <b>100.00%</b> | <b>100.00%</b> |

The largest number of respondents identified themselves as Muslim (29 percent) and Hindu (27.8 percent) and a sizeable number as Buddhist (22.4 percent). Christians made up nearly 10 percent of the sample and the rest were evenly divided among other religions, including those describing themselves as agnostic or atheist (6 percent). Sikhism and Jainism received one selection each.

Only about a fifth of the participants (21.5 percent) said they belonged to an ethnic or religious minority or caste in their respective countries. The sample in every country included members of minority communities, the two largest categories being ethnic minority (37.3 percent) and religious minority (36 percent).

Survey participants were, on the whole, well-educated with 41.6 percent of respondents having completed a university degree, and 42.6 percent having completed postgraduate studies. Another 26 percent had completed a media-related professional course (journalism, photography, etc.), while nearly 10 percent had other professional qualifications.<sup>29</sup>

Graph 1: Educational level of the respondents



29 Respondents were free to select all the applicable educational categories provided in the survey form.

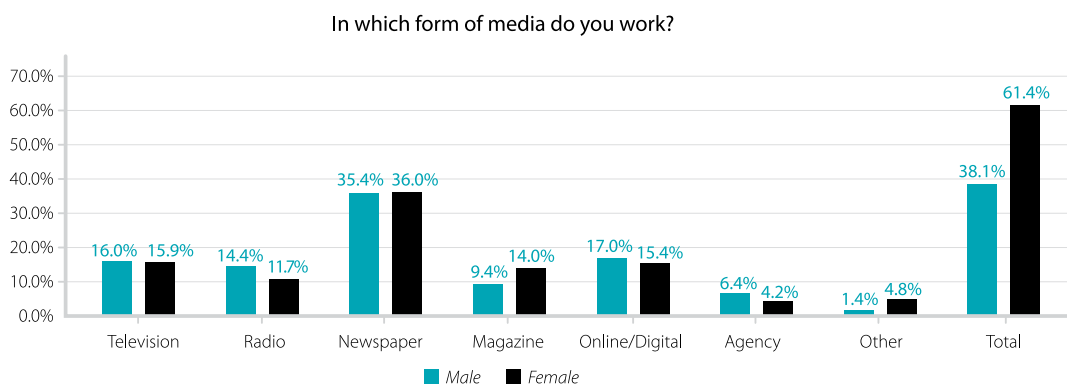
## Key Findings

More than half the respondents (69 percent) chose 'love of journalism' as their motivation for joining the profession, while over a quarter (38 percent) cited their wish to 'make a difference/call the powerful to account' as the reason.<sup>30</sup> While more men (73 percent) than women (67 percent) chose the former, the ratio was reversed in the latter (42 percent female respondents to 31 percent male respondents). There was hardly any gender differential with regard to the other options.

In terms of family reactions to the respondents choosing journalism as a profession, 57 percent reported that their families were supportive. Well over half the female respondents (58 percent) said their families had supported their decision to join the media, while a little over a quarter (27.8 percent) said their families maintained a neutral stance and only 11 percent said they had faced opposition or negative reactions. There was little difference in male and female responses to the question of family reaction, more men (36.05 percent) than women (27.8 percent) said their families were neutral. While gender differentials were negligible in most of the countries, it was intriguing to note that a significantly larger proportion of women reported support from families in India and Nepal, and opposition from families in Sri Lanka, possibly due to the perceived risks of media in a conflict situation. Similarly, more men than women in Malaysia and India said their families were neutral, whereas more women than men said the same in Vanuatu.

The largest number of survey respondents (57.2 percent) were working with newspapers.<sup>31</sup> Television, online/digital media, radio and magazines were a distant next, registering 25.8 percent, 25.4 percent, 20.3 percent and 19.5 percent respectively. There was not much gender differentiation among media forms, except in the case of magazines (22 percent women to 15 percent men), radio (23.6 percent men to 18.5 percent women) and, to a lesser extent, news agencies (10.5 percent men to 6.7 percent women).

Graph 2: Form of media the respondents are working in



30 Respondents were free to select all the applicable motivating factors provided in the survey form.

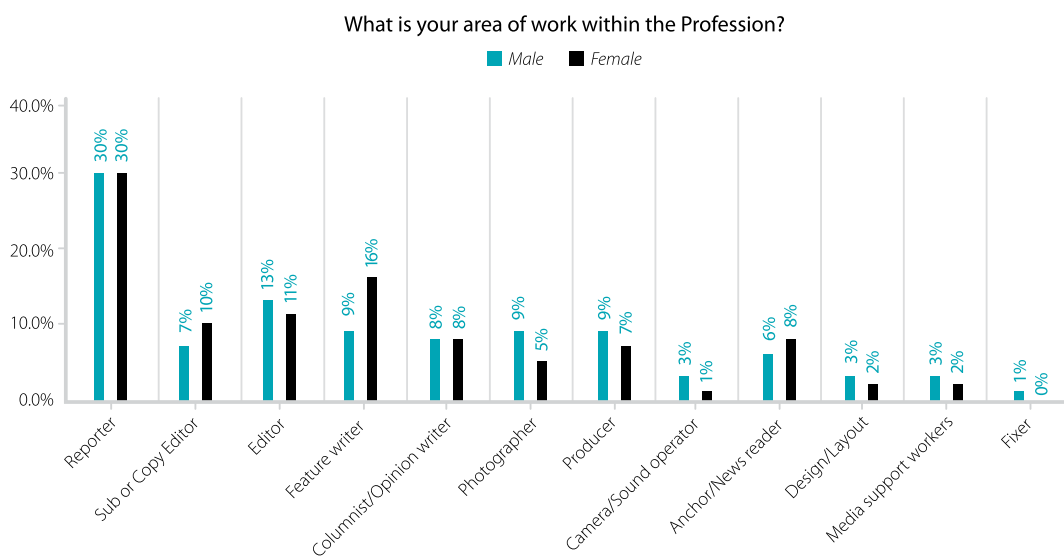
31 Respondents were free to select all the applicable forms of media provided in the survey form.

In terms of age breakdown, every age group – over 30 percent – worked in newspapers. Newspaper employees were the strongest represented by the survey respondents, followed by television for the younger age groups (18-25 and 26-25 years). In the 36-45 years age group there was a shift with an equal second for television and magazine. This shift was evident in the 46-55 and 56 years and above age groups with magazines been the second highest count.

Table 4: Area of work of the respondents (gender breakdown)

| What is your area of work within the profession? | Reporter   | Sub or copy editor | Editor     | Feature writer | Columnist/Opinion writer | Photographer | Producer   | Camera/Sound operator | Anchor/News reader | Design/Layout | Media support workers | Fixer     | Total       |
|--|------------|--------------------|------------|----------------|--------------------------|--------------|------------|-----------------------|--------------------|---------------|-----------------------|-----------|-------------|
| <b>Male</b>                                      | 30%        | 7%                 | 13%        | 9%             | 8%                       | 9%           | 9%         | 3%                    | 6%                 | 3%            | 3%                    | 1%        | 100%        |
| <b>Female</b>                                    | 30%        | 10%                | 11%        | 16%            | 8%                       | 5%           | 7%         | 1%                    | 8%                 | 2%            | 2%                    | 0%        | 100%        |
| <b>Other</b>                                     | 25%        | 0%                 | 63%        | 0%             | 0%                       | 0%           | 0%         | 13%                   | 0%                 | 0%            | 0%                    | 0%        | 100%        |
| <b>Total</b>                                     | <b>85%</b> | <b>17%</b>         | <b>86%</b> | <b>24%</b>     | <b>16%</b>               | <b>13%</b>   | <b>15%</b> | <b>16%</b>            | <b>14%</b>         | <b>5%</b>     | <b>6%</b>             | <b>2%</b> | <b>100%</b> |

Graph 3: Area of work of the respondents (gender breakdown)



The majority of respondents were working or had worked as reporters (62.7 percent).<sup>32</sup> Feature writer was the next most popular choice (27.3 percent) followed by editors

<sup>32</sup> Respondents were free to select all the applicable areas of media work provided in the survey form.

## Key Findings

(24.8 percent). Also among the respondents were sub/copy editors (17.9 percent), columnists/opinion writers (16.5 percent), producers (15.5 percent), anchors/news readers (14.8 percent) and photographers (12.6 percent). There was only a small representation of design/layout persons, media support workers and fixers. Significant gender-based variation was evident only in feature writing (33.2 percent women to 17.8 percent men) and photography (17.8 percent men to 9.7 percent women). The numbers involved in camera/sound, design/layout, etc., were too small to reveal any credible difference.

Survey respondents represented media in over a dozen languages.<sup>33</sup> Nearly half (48.4 percent) worked in English media, while substantial numbers worked in media in Urdu (11.5 percent), Khmer and Nepali (11 percent each) and smaller numbers in Tamil (3.4 percent), Hindi and Malay (3.1 percent each).

Nearly two-thirds (64.8 percent) of the participants said they were full-time regular employees of media organizations, while 11.9 percent said they were full-time employees on contract. A substantial proportion of the respondents (14.3 percent) were freelancers. The remaining were part-time regular employees, part-time employees on contract, stringers and others.

Table 5: Work status of the respondents (gender breakdown)

| What is your work status? | Female        | Male          | Other        | Percentage     |
|---------------------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|
| Freelance                 | 17.09%        | 9.69%         | 16.67%       | 14.35%         |
| Full-time contract        | 10.85%        | 13.95%        | 0.00%        | 11.91%         |
| Full-time regular         | 61.89%        | 69.38%        | 83.33%       | 64.85%         |
| Other                     | 0.92%         | 0.78%         | 0.00%        | 0.86%          |
| Part-time contract        | 2.77%         | 1.55%         | 0.00%        | 2.30%          |
| Part-time regular         | 5.54%         | 3.49%         | 0.00%        | 4.73%          |
| Stringer                  | 0.92%         | 1.16%         | 0.00%        | 1.00%          |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>62.12%</b> | <b>37.02%</b> | <b>0.86%</b> | <b>100.00%</b> |

In every country, the majority of the respondents were on full time regular. The second highest category in Cambodia was that of full time contracts; in India and Malaysia it was freelance; in Nepal, Pakistan and Vanuatu full time contract.

As for the age break up, the only age group where full time regular employment was not the highest was 56 and above. The number of freelancers appears to increase in each age group, starting with 9 percent in 18-25 year olds and finishing with 45 percent in 56 and above.

33 Bislama, Chinese, English, French, Hindi, Khmer, Malay, Nepali, Punjabi, Sindhi, Sinhala, Tamil, Urdu and "others".

## Employment Patterns

Only full-time or part-time employees of media organizations were asked to respond to survey questions about employers, terms of employment, working conditions, opportunities for training and professional development, unions and professional associations, and the representation of women in their organizations.

41.7 percent of respondents who were employed in media organizations worked in medium-sized media houses with 100-1500 employees. Fewer numbers worked in small organizations with less than 100 employees (31.9 percent) and large organizations with over 1500 employees (26.7 percent). It is, of course, important to remember that these categories would be viewed quite differently in the countries included in the study, from relatively small ones such as Vanuatu and Sri Lanka to much larger ones like Pakistan and India.

The largest number of survey respondents (42.5 percent) had over ten years of work experience, while more than a third (36.6 percent) had worked for three to ten years and just over a fifth (20.9 percent) for less than three years. Women were relatively more evenly distributed among the three categories: 39 percent in the middle group, 35.3 percent in the ten plus group and 25.6 percent in the less than three years group. On the other hand, more than half the male respondents (53.5 percent) were concentrated in the ten plus group followed by a third (33 percent) in the middle group and a mere 13.6 percent in the less than three years group. The average age among men in the sample was evidently higher than the average age of the women. In Cambodia and Malaysia the majority had worked 3-10 years, whereas in the remaining countries the majority had 10 years or more of work experience.

*Table 6: Professional experience*

| How many years have you worked? | Female        | Male          | Other        | Percentage     |
|---------------------------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|
| 10 and above                    | 35.33%        | 53.49%        | 83.33%       | 42.47%         |
| 1-3 years                       | 25.64%        | 13.57%        | 0.00%        | 20.95%         |
| 3-10 years                      | 39.03%        | 32.95%        | 16.67%       | 36.59%         |
| <b>Total</b>                    | <b>62.12%</b> | <b>37.02%</b> | <b>0.86%</b> | <b>100.00%</b> |

The majority of the respondents (42.7 percent), of which 45 percent was female, placed their work status in the middle rungs of their organizations, while over a third (40 percent) of whom 50 percent was male, said they had reached a senior level. Only 16.6 percent categorised themselves as junior.

Considering the positions of the survey participants within their media organizations, it is not surprising that the largest number were concentrated in the middle of the income spectrum provided in the questionnaire, with 23.2 percent reporting monthly incomes of

## Key Findings

USD 80-250 and 16 percent salaries of USD 251-400 per month. Similarly, the 12.3 percent who reported earning less than USD 80 is consistent with the percentage of juniors among the respondents. However, the fact that the highest number (26.8 percent) said their salaries were over USD 800 is surprising, though also encouraging. At the same time, the percentage of respondents in the two higher income levels (35.9 percent) is more or less consistent with their reported representation at senior levels of their organizations.

Table 7: Monthly professional income (gender breakdown)

| What is your monthly professional income? | Female        | Male          | Other        | Percentage     |
|---|---------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|
| Less than US \$80                         | 15.01%        | 8.14%         | 0.00%        | 12.34%         |
| US \$80 - \$250                           | 24.71%        | 21.32%        | 0.00%        | 23.24%         |
| US \$251 - \$400                          | 14.78%        | 17.05%        | 50.00%       | 15.93%         |
| US \$401 - \$600                          | 12.70%        | 12.40%        | 16.67%       | 12.63%         |
| US \$601 - \$800                          | 8.55%         | 9.69%         | 16.67%       | 9.04%          |
| More than \$800                           | 24.25%        | 31.40%        | 16.67%       | 26.83%         |
| <b>Total</b>                              | <b>62.12%</b> | <b>37.02%</b> | <b>0.86%</b> | <b>100.00%</b> |

### Nature of work

Nearly half the respondents (48.9 percent) said they had been given the opportunity to choose beats to work on, while more than a third (35.4 percent) gave a qualified answer, saying 'to some extent', and 15.6 percent said they had not. A larger proportion of men (59.7 percent) than women (42.7 percent) felt they had been able to choose their beats, while a higher proportion of women (41.1 percent) than men (25.6 percent) felt they had had some say in the matter. The percentage of men and women who felt they had not been given the freedom to choose was more or less the same. Age did seem to impact the ability to control the choice of beats. In the 18-25 age group, 42 percent reported that they had the freedom to choose beats, while 40 percent said they had freedom to some extent. In the 46-55 age group, the figure for those who said they had the freedom to choose jumped to 64 percent.

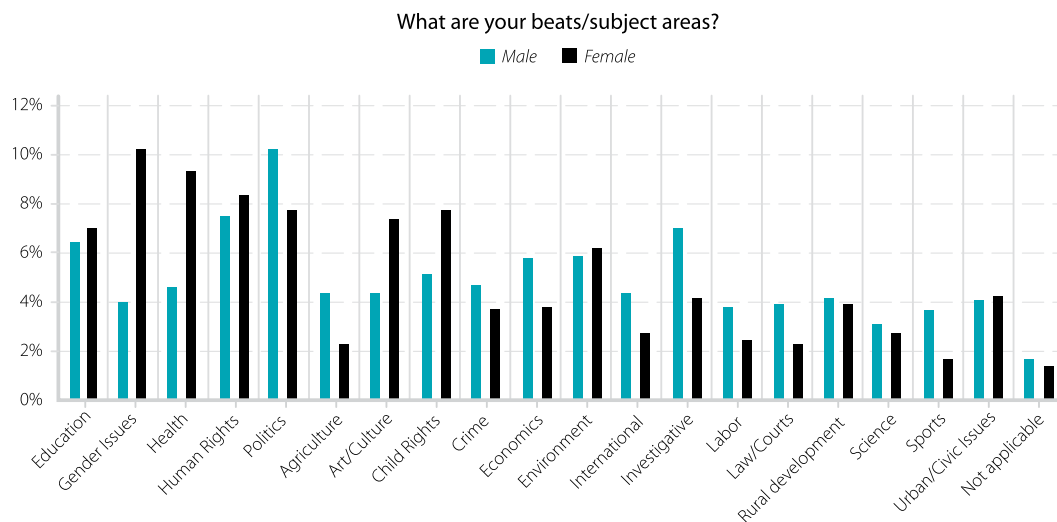
Politics (42.1 percent), gender issues (39 percent), education (34.2 percent) and human rights (39.9 percent) were the beats covered by the largest number of respondents.<sup>34</sup> The least common beats among respondents were sports (11.9 percent), science and technology (14.6 percent), urban/civic issues (22.1 percent) and law/courts (14.8 percent). A significant gender gap was evident only with regard to coverage of gender issues, with 49.2 percent of the women and only 21.3 percent of the men indicating work in that area.

<sup>34</sup> Respondents were free to select all the applicable beat options provided in the survey form.



On average women cover four beats, while men on average covered five beats. In terms of a gender breakup, interestingly, 'investigative journalism' garnered an equal number of responses – 88 from both male and female. The ratio women to men in most other beats was on predictable gender lines: Arts/Culture (3:1); Human Rights (2:1); Urban/Civic (2:1); Child rights (3:1).

Graph 4: Subject areas of the respondents (gender breakdown)



Nearly half the respondents (44.6 percent) reported that they were able to determine the content of their work 'most of the time' and a little over a quarter (26.6 percent) said they were always able to do so. Just under a quarter (23.8 percent) said they were able to do so 'to some extent'. Only a tiny minority (1.8 percent) responded with 'never'. Interestingly, almost half the female respondents (47.8 percent) and only 40 percent of men opted for 'most of the time'. Over a quarter (26.3 percent) of the women were also positive about being able to determine the content of their work to some extent, while less than a fifth (19.4 percent) of the men seemed sure about that. Significantly, however, while more than a third of the men said they could always determine the content of their work, just over a fifth of the women were as confident.

Well over a third of the respondents (39 percent) said they were able to influence the coverage of news and views in the publication or channel they worked in 'to some extent', while more than a quarter (28.6 percent) said they could do so 'most of the time'. At opposite ends of the spectrum were the 14.7 percent who said they were always able to influence coverage and the 10.1 percent who said they were never able to do so. The majority of the female respondents (43.4 percent) opted for 'to some extent', while more than a quarter chose 'most of the time' and a smaller number (12 percent) selected 'always'. Nearly a third of the male respondents seemed to feel their influence worked 'most of the time' (32.1 percent) and 'to some extent' (31.4 percent), while nearly a fifth (19.7 percent) were evidently confident it 'always' did.

# Key Findings

## Working conditions

Between a quarter and a third (29.7 percent) of the survey participants estimated that women constituted five to 20 percent of the media workers in the department they worked in, while just over a quarter (26.2 percent) were more optimistic, pegging their presence at 21-50 percent. About a fifth put the figure at less than five percent.

Table 8: Percentage of women media workers

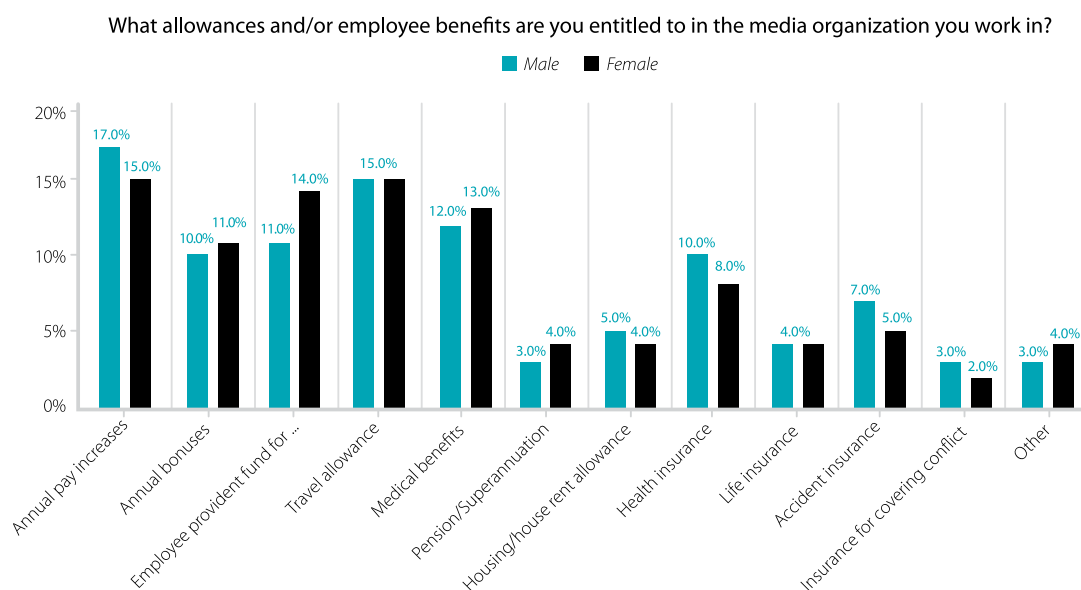
| What is the percentage of women media workers in your department? | Total      | Percentage     |
|---|------------|----------------|
| Less than 5%  | 119        | 20.17%         |
| 5% - 20%  | 175        | 29.66%         |
| 21% - 50%   | 155        | 26.27%         |
| 51% - 75%   | 81         | 13.73%         |
| 76% - 100%  | 35         | 5.93%          |
| Not applicable  | 25         | 4.24%          |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>590</b> | <b>100.00%</b> |

Over a third (34.9 percent) of the respondents rated opportunities for recruitment and advancement in the media organization they work for as 'good', based on their own experience. While just over a fifth (21 percent) said such opportunities were only 'fair', the number who said the situation was 'very good' was only slightly less at 18.3 percent. Only a small number (8.47 percent) opted for "excellent". The gender differences in the responses were revealing. While men rated their opportunities as 'good' (37.4 percent), 'very good' (20.9 percent), fair (15.7 percent), "excellent" (12.2 percent) and 'poor' (10.9 percent), women's rankings were as follows: 'good' (33.5 percent), 'fair' (24.2 percent), 'very good' (16.6 percent), 'poor' (12.7 percent) and excellent (6.2 percent).

Contrary to the findings of international research<sup>35</sup> on the gender pay gap, more than half the survey participants (55.4 percent) were of the opinion that women and men receive equal pay in their organizations. Although only 17.3 percent said equal wages for equal work was not practised in their workplaces, it is perhaps significant that nearly a quarter of the sample said they did not know. There was some gender difference in perceptions, with nearly two thirds of the male respondents (66.5 percent) convinced about equal pay, compared to less than half of the female respondents (47.3 percent).

35 According to the "Gender Pay Gap in Journalism" report, nowhere do women's wages and benefits equal those of men, regardless of decades of equal pay legislation. Male wages and benefits exceeded female wages in all the countries studied. Additionally, predictors from trade union organizations warn that the global credit crisis will unfairly target women as jobs are cut and wages frozen (Gender Pay Gap in Journalism, Wage Indicator Global Report 2012, <http://www.loonwijzer.nl/home/documents/120307-IFJ-WageIndicator-PayGap-Journos-2009-2011.pdf>)

Graph 5: Allowances and/or benefits in the media organization (gender breakdown)

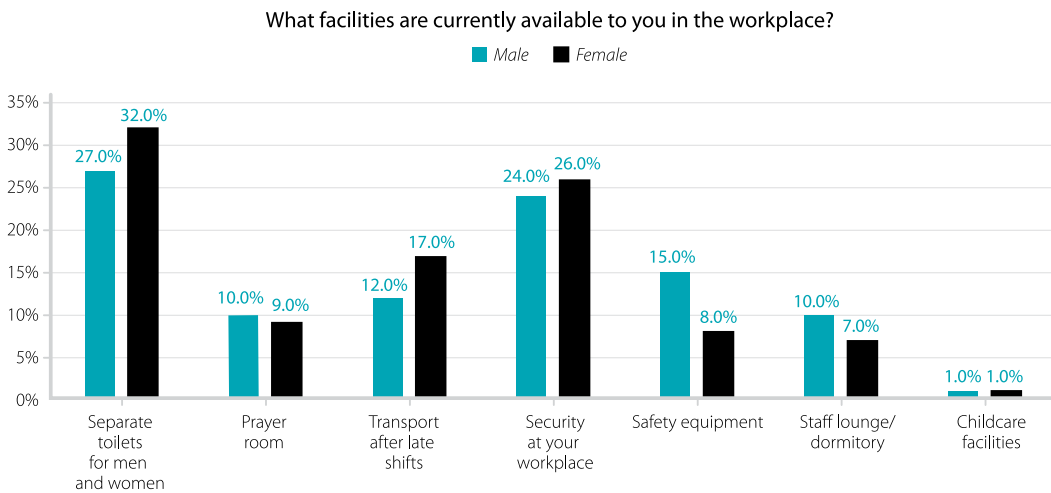


The types of allowances or benefits that the largest numbers of survey participants said they were entitled to in their workplaces were annual pay increases (cited by 49.3 percent of the respondents), travel allowance (47.4 percent), employee provident fund – or an equivalent financial provision involving contributions from both employers and employees (41.6 percent), medical benefits (40.5 percent) and annual bonuses (34.1 percent). The least commonly available seemed to be insurance for covering conflict (7.6 percent), pension/superannuation (11.7 percent) and life insurance (12.5 percent). Interestingly, health and accident insurance (cited by 28.5 percent and 18.8 percent of respondents, respectively) were obviously more prevalent than the other two forms of insurance listed among the options in the questionnaire. Nearly 16.3 percent of the male and 9.5 percent of the female respondents said they had been denied a benefit to which they were entitled.

The workplace facilities most commonly available to employees seemed to be separate toilets for men and women and security, with 78.1 percent of all the respondents indicating that the former was available in their media organizations and 66 percent evidently happy with security arrangements at the workplace. The least available facility appeared to be childcare, with only 2.9 percent of the total respondents saying they had access to the service.

# Key Findings

Graph 6: Facilities at the workplace



More than two thirds of the survey participants in workplaces (64.7 percent) said they had access to sick leave, not including maternity leave. Annual leave came next, with just under two thirds (61 percent) of the respondents saying they were entitled to it, followed by casual leave, evidently available to just less than half of them (47.5 percent). It is, however, shocking that less than half the respondents (40 percent) said they were entitled to maternity leave. It is less surprising, though equally unfortunate, that just over one tenth (11.7 percent) said paternity leave was available to them. In another disturbing finding, 10 percent of the respondents said they had no access to any kind of leave. Under the circumstances, the fact that the overwhelming majority (89.4 percent) of the respondents had never been denied leave to which they were entitled is small consolation – even though both women (90.8 percent) and men (87.2 percent) seemed more or less equally confident about being granted leave.

Table 9: Denied paid leave

| Have you ever been denied paid leave that you are entitled to? | Female         | Male           | Other          | Percentage     |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| No   | 90.76%         | 87.21%         | 83.33%         | 89.38%         |
| Yes  | 9.24%          | 12.79%         | 16.67%         | 10.62%         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>100.00%</b> | <b>100.00%</b> | <b>100.00%</b> | <b>100.00%</b> |

On the other hand, few survey participants seemed to think the prospects in their organizations for women returning to work after childbirth were particularly bright, with only 14.2 percent deeming them to be 'excellent', less than a third (29.2 percent) saying they were 'good' and just over a quarter (27.8 percent) judging them 'acceptable'. While only 6.1 percent considered them 'poor', an almost equal proportion (5.1 percent) said they were 'non-existent'. The relatively narrow gender divide was along expected lines, with women less upbeat than men about their options upon re-entry into the workforce: 5 percent fewer women than men thought they were 'excellent' and 6 percent less thought they were 'good'.

Survey participants appeared to acknowledge the existence of glass ceilings preventing women from reaching the higher echelons of their media organizations. Respondents were split more or less equally on the question of female representation at the executive level of their media organizations, with 47.5 percent saying there were women at the executive level in their organizations and 52.5 percent saying the opposite. In terms of actual representation and numbers, opinions were more divided on the question of female representation in top level management, with 45.3 percent saying women constituted less than 10 percent of executive members of the board, chief financial officers, general managers, etc., 19.3 percent estimating that their presence at that level was 10-25 percent and 13 percent putting it at 25-50 percent.

There was a similar divide on the presence of women in senior editorial positions: 47.5 percent of the respondents figured it was less than 10 percent, while 16.9 percent opted for 10-25 percent and 15.8 percent for 25-50 percent.<sup>36</sup> Participants seemed more optimistic and more evenly divided about women's presence in middle level editorial positions: only 34.4 percent put it at less than ten percent, 25.8 percent at 10-25 percent, 20 percent at 25-50 percent. Only negligible numbers estimated women's presence at any of the above levels or positions at over 50 percent or admitted that they did not know.

The most popular strategies for promoting gender equity in media workplaces seemed to be: 'having more women at every level' (22 percent) and 'having more women in decision-making roles' (22 percent). But the other strategies listed in the questionnaire were not much further behind: 'more family-friendly working conditions' was selected by 19 percent, 'affirmative employment strategies' by 19 percent and 'having gender-sensitive men at every level' by 18 percent.<sup>37</sup>

Table 10: Strategies for promoting gender equity

| What strategies do you think make a difference to gender equity issues such as portrayal of women, career advancement etc.? | Female      | Male        | Other       | Percentage  |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Having gender sensitive men in the media at every level   | 19%         | 16%         | 29%         | 18%         |
| Affirmative employment strategies   | 20%         | 17%         | 14%         | 19%         |
| More family friendly work conditions  | 18%         | 22%         | 0%          | 19%         |
| Having more women in decision making roles  | 25%         | 17%         | 14%         | 22%         |
| Having more women in the media at every level   | 18%         | 28%         | 43%         | 22%         |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>100%</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>100%</b> |

<sup>36</sup> Positions such as director, editor-in-chief, managing editor, executive producer, bureau chief, photo editor and digital editor were included in this category.

<sup>37</sup> Respondents were asked to rank strategies in order of priority/preference.

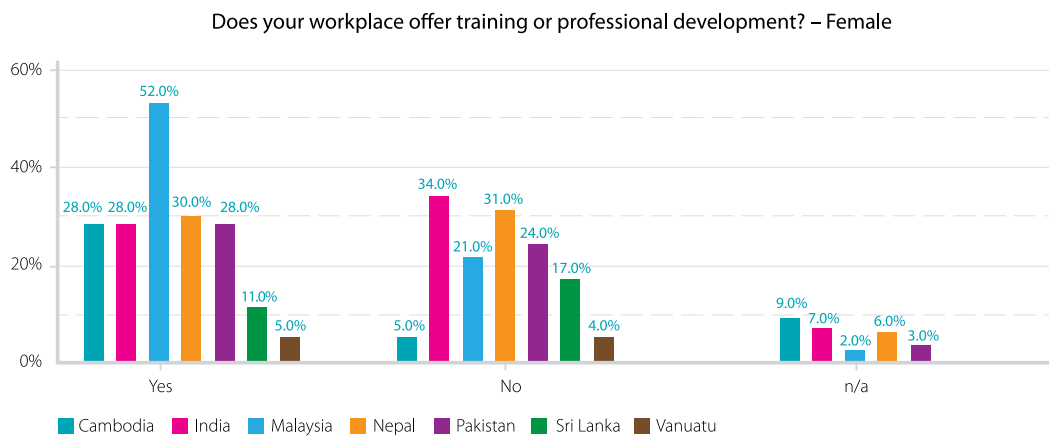
# Key Findings

The majority of the respondents were, on the whole, positive about their overall experience at the current place of work.<sup>38</sup> If only 13.6 percent found it 'positive and rewarding', only 4.3 percent found it had a 'difficult/hostile work atmosphere', only 2.9 percent were thinking of switching to another profession and just 2 percent thought their work was 'boring and tedious/just a job'. Most survey participants seemed to be somewhere between the two extremes: a quarter (25 percent) said they found the work atmosphere good and supportive, just over a quarter (27.4 percent) described the situation as challenging but felt the positives outweighed the negatives, and just less than a fifth (18.5 percent) said their experience was merely satisfactory, with room for improvement. Male respondents appeared more positive than their female counterparts, with 45 percent finding their work positive, rewarding and in a supportive atmosphere, compared to 35.3 percent of the women.

## Training and professional development

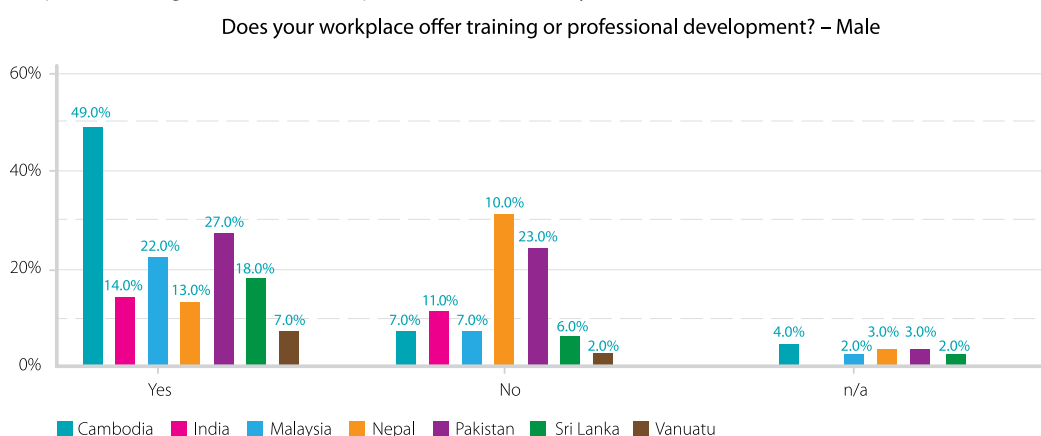
More than half the survey participants (56 percent) said they had been offered training and/or opportunities for professional development by their workplaces. Significantly more men (65 percent) than women (51 percent) reported that their workplaces offered training and/or professional development opportunities.

Graph 7: Training offers at the workplace for women (country breakdown)



38 Respondents were asked to select the answer that best described their experience.

Graph 8: Training offers at the workplace for men (country breakdown)



Interestingly, 80.9 percent of the respondents said they had been offered and/or undergone training through work and other avenues. Interestingly, slightly less women (79.2 percent) than men (85.6 percent) seem to have had access to opportunities for training and professional development.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and employers were identified as the top providers of training programmes, with 42.6 percent of those who had benefited from training crediting the former and 36.9 percent the latter. For men and women the majority had received training through NGOs and their employer. However, more women had undertaken training with the union than men, while more men had undertaken training with the IFJ than women.

Table 11: Provider of training offers (gender breakdown)

| Who offered you training through work or other avenues? | Male          | Female        | Other        | Total          |
|---|---------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|
| Employer  | 34.19%        | 35.55%        | 16.67%       | 34.82%         |
| Union   | 12.90%        | 13.03%        | 33.33%       | 13.14%         |
| NGO   | 38.39%        | 41.94%        | 16.67%       | 40.24%         |
| IFJ   | 14.52%        | 9.48%         | 33.33%       | 11.79%         |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>42.01%</b> | <b>57.18%</b> | <b>0.81%</b> | <b>100.00%</b> |

Just over a quarter of the respondents who had participated in training programmes (26.3 percent) said the proportion of women in those programmes was 10-25 percent. A smaller number (22.7 percent) estimated women's participation at 25-50 percent, while only 15.8 percent thought women made up less than 10 percent of the trainees. Significantly, however, a fifth of the respondents eligible to answer the question chose the 'no answer'

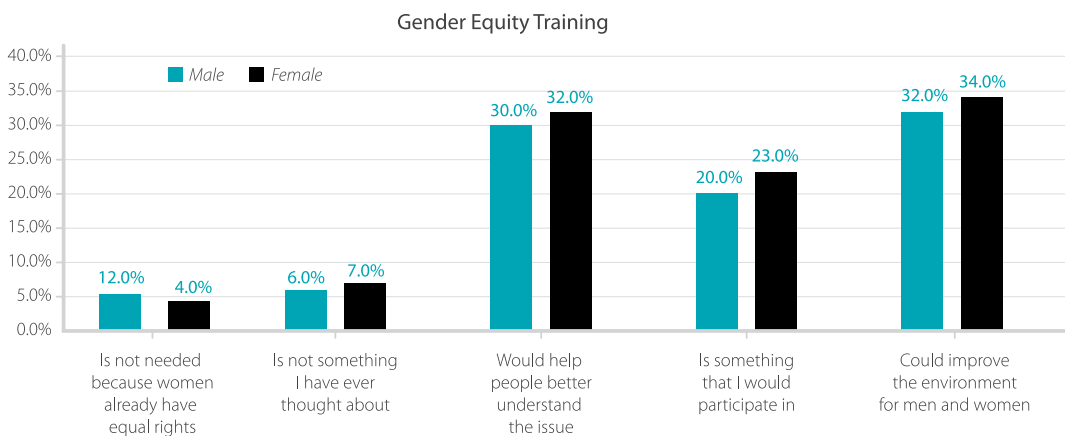
## Key Findings

option in the questionnaire; this could be because they were not in a position to offer a credible estimate (although there was also a 'don't know' option).

More than two thirds of the respondents (67.3 percent) said they had never been provided with safety training. There was a significant gender difference in answers to this question, with just a quarter of the female respondents (25 percent) and just under half the male respondents (45.7 percent) having had access to such training.

Most participants in the survey appeared to support the idea of training to promote gender equity in media organizations. Over two-thirds of the respondents (67.9 percent) said gender equity training 'could improve the working environment for both men and women' and only a slightly smaller number (63.8 percent) said it 'would help people better understand the issue'. Close to half (43.8 percent) said they would participate in such training. Only a small minority seemed to think it is 'not needed because women already have equal rights' (13.5 percent) or admitted that they had never thought about it (13.2 percent). While it is not surprising that women were significantly more enthusiastic about gender equity training, it is encouraging that substantial numbers of men (more than a third) seemed to think it would be useful and were avowedly willing to participate in such programmes. The biggest gender gap was in the perception that gender equity training was 'not needed', with 23 percent men and only 8 percent women selecting this option.

Graph 9: Opinions on gender equity training (gender breakdown)



## Professional associations and unions

More than a third (44.4 percent) of the survey participants said they were not members of workers' unions in the media organizations they were employed by, while just over a third (35.2 percent) said they were. Significantly, 20.3 percent indicated that their organizations did not have a union. Considerably more men (43 percent) than women (29.9 percent)



belonged to unions in their places of work. Membership of national unions or media/journalism associations outside the workplace seemed more widespread, with more than half the respondents (54.8 percent) saying they were members of such organizations. Interestingly, less women (50.4 percent) than men (61.6 percent) belonged to these external organizations. Of the respondents that were union members, 44.2 percent held office in national unions or media/journalism associations, half that number (30.4 percent) were office-bearers in workers' unions within media organizations. Of the respondents that are members of unions, 62.9 percent men and 57.3 percent women reported being in leadership positions in such organizations.

Table 12: Professional memberships (gender breakdown)

| Are you a member of a national union or a media/journalism association outside your media organization? | Female         | Male           | Other          | Percentage     |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| No  | 49.65%         | 38.37%         | 16.67%         | 45.19%         |
| Yes   | 50.35%         | 61.63%         | 83.33%         | 54.81%         |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>100.00%</b> | <b>100.00%</b> | <b>100.00%</b> | <b>100.00%</b> |

Reflecting this disparity, nearly half the survey participants (48.5 percent) seemed to think that women do not have enough representation/visibility in unions, with less than a quarter (24 percent) saying they do and just over a quarter (26 percent) admitting that they do not know. More men (29.5 percent) than women (20.8 percent) thought women are adequately represented/visible, but almost the same proportion of women and men thought they are not (48.5 percent and 47.7 percent respectively). More women (28.6 percent) than men (22 percent) said they did not know. Close to three quarters of the respondents (71.6 percent) supported the idea of quotas for women in unions and/or proportional representation in union leadership. Interestingly, more men than women seemed in favour of quotas/proportional representation: three quarters of the men (75.6 percent), compared to just over two thirds of the women (69 percent).

Table 13: Opinion on quotas for women in unions (gender breakdown)

| Do you support quotas for women in unions or proportional representation in union leadership? | Female         | Male           | Other          | Percentage     |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Yes   | 69.05%         | 75.58%         | 83.33%         | 71.59%         |
| No  | 17.09%         | 15.50%         | 16.67%         | 16.50%         |
| Don't know  | 13.86%         | 8.91%          | 0.00%          | 11.91%         |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>100.00%</b> | <b>100.00%</b> | <b>100.00%</b> | <b>100.00%</b> |

# Key Findings

## Sexual harassment at the workplace

Sexual harassment at the workplace (SHW) continues to be a significant concern in the region. As many as 40 percent of the women who participated in the survey said they had witnessed sexual harassment in the workplace, while 26 percent of the men said so. In a possible, and welcome, indication that sexual harassment in media workplaces may be on the decline, the number of people witnessing such harassment seems to be reducing.

While nearly half the respondents in the 56 and above age group (47.4 percent) said they had witnessed SHW, the corresponding numbers were 41.7 percent for the 46-55 age group, 37.5 percent for the 36-45 age group, 32.3 percent for the 26-35 age group and, finally, 30.7 percent for the 18-25 age group. In each age group more women than men reported witnessing such harassment. Of course, it is possible that more of the older respondents had witnessed SHW simply because they had been working in media organizations over longer periods.

Table 14: Witness of sexual harassment at the workplace

| Have you witnessed workplace sexual harassment? | Total      | Percentage     |
|---|------------|----------------|
| No  | 454        | 65.14%         |
| Yes   | 243        | 34.86%         |
| <b>Total</b>                                    | <b>697</b> | <b>100.00%</b> |

Of the 439 respondents who answered the subsequent questions on sexual harassment, close to a fifth (17.8 percent) said they had personally experienced sexual harassment in their workplaces.<sup>39</sup> Over a quarter (25.3 percent) reported that they had experienced harassment but it was not of a sexual nature, while more than half (57 percent) said they had not experienced any such harassment. Significantly, one person among the six respondents whose sexual identity was 'other' reported personal experience of workplace sexual harassment.

In the majority of cases the perpetrator was a superior or colleague at work (59 percent and 51 percent respectively). Nearly three quarters of those who had experienced SHW had told someone about it, most commonly a friend or a colleague (43.6 percent and 41 percent respectively). Significantly, 41 percent had told their superiors about it. Among the small proportion of those who had not told anyone about the harassment, the largest number said they had dealt with the problem themselves. The other reasons provided were that it was 'no big deal', or they were ashamed or embarrassed to talk about it, worried about possible negative repercussions, or scared that reporting the experience would affect their jobs (in that order).

39 Only those who had identified themselves earlier in the questionnaire as female or 'other' were asked to answer questions on sexual harassment apart from the first one in this section.

Table 15: Perpetrator of workplace sexual harassment (gender breakdown)

| Who was the perpetrator? | Female        | Other        | Total          |
|--------------------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|
| Colleague                | 36.79%        | 0.93%        | 37.04%         |
| Superior at work         | 42.45%        | 0.93%        | 42.59%         |
| Union person             | 1.89%         | 0%           | 1.85%          |
| An interview subject     | 8.49%         | 0%           | 8.33%          |
| A member of the public   | 10.38%        | 0%           | 10.19%         |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>98.15%</b> | <b>1.85%</b> | <b>100.00%</b> |

Only a quarter (25.4 percent) of the respondents said there was an official complaints cell or sexual harassment policy in their offices, while 42.5 percent said their workplaces did not have such mechanisms to deal with the problem.<sup>40</sup> However, it is significant that another 25.5 percent of the participants said they did not know whether or not such a cell or policy existed. Such lack of awareness about redressal mechanisms is telling.

Among the measures to effectively combat sexual harassment listed in the questionnaire, the most popular option seemed to be 'stronger laws', with 26 percent of the survey participants prioritising legislative action.<sup>41</sup> 'Awareness raising among women' came next (22 percent), followed by 'effective complaints mechanism' (20 percent) and 'awareness raising among men' (18 percent). 'Punitive measures' (15 percent) were evidently the least favoured option. Women ranked the measures somewhat differently from men, opting for 'effective complaints mechanism', 'punitive measures', 'awareness raising among women', 'awareness raising among men' and 'stronger laws' in descending order. Men, on the other hand, gave more importance to 'stronger laws', 'awareness raising among men', and 'awareness raising among women' (in that order) and less to 'punitive measures' and 'effective complaints mechanism'.

Table 16: Measures to combat sexual harassment (gender breakdown)

| What measures can effectively combat sexual harassment? (Top ranked answers) | Female      | Male        | Other       | Total       |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Stronger laws  | 59%         | 40%         | 1%          | 26%         |
| Awareness-raising among women  | 63%         | 36%         | 1%          | 22%         |
| Awareness-raising among men  | 62%         | 37%         | 1%          | 18%         |
| Effective complaints mechanism   | 68%         | 32%         | 0%          | 20%         |
| Punitive measures  | 66%         | 34%         | 0%          | 15%         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>100%</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>100%</b> |

40 All respondents, including men, could answer this question.

41 All respondents, including men, could answer this question.

# Key Findings

## Strategies for change

Less than a quarter of the survey participants said the organizations they worked in had a gender policy; while 41 percent said their organizations did not, over a third (35 percent) said they did not know.<sup>42</sup> As in the case of policies and mechanisms to tackle sexual harassment, a gender policy that employees are not aware of is unlikely to have an impact. Nevertheless, most respondents seemed to be in favour of the adoption of such a policy, with 59 percent of them (well over half – nearly two-thirds) evidently convinced that a gender policy would contribute to gender equity in their organizations.<sup>43</sup> The proportion of those who had 'no fixed view' on the topic (30 percent) more or less matched the number of respondents who did not know whether or not their organizations had such a policy.

Table 17: Potential impact of gender policy on gender equity (country breakdown)

| Do you think having a gender policy in your organization will contribute to gender equity? | Yes        | No        | No fixed view | Other     |
|--|------------|-----------|---------------|-----------|
| Cambodia   | 74.51%     | 5.88%     | 14.71%        | 4.90%     |
| India  | 67.37%     | 5.26%     | 27.37%        | 0.00%     |
| Malaysia   | 28.30%     | 11.32%    | 58.49%        | 1.89%     |
| Nepal  | 65.96%     | 10.64%    | 22.34%        | 1.06%     |
| Pakistan   | 58.82%     | 7.56%     | 31.93%        | 1.68%     |
| Sri Lanka  | 64.29%     | 10.71%    | 21.43%        | 3.57%     |
| Vanuatu  | 72.22%     | 11.11%    | 16.67%        | 0.00%     |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>59%</b> | <b>8%</b> | <b>30%</b>    | <b>2%</b> |

On the role of unions and journalism organizations in enhancing gender equity in media organizations, over a quarter (25.7 percent) seemed to think they 'should work with media employers on joint strategies on gender equity.' More than a fifth (22 percent) evidently thought such organizations needed to improve their work on gender equity. There were fewer takers for the adoption of 'a national gender equity policy' and/or lobbying 'government for stronger gender equity legislation' (13.5 percent). An even smaller minority (11.9 percent) said unions and journalism organizations 'already promote diversity and equity'.<sup>44</sup> A sizeable number (14.5 percent) had no fixed view on the subject.

42 Only full-time or part-time employees of media organizations were asked to respond to this question.

43 Only full-time or part-time employees of media organizations were asked to respond to survey questions.

44 Respondents had to choose one from the various options provided in the questionnaire.

Table 18: Role of professional associations and unions (gender breakdown)

| Unions and journalism organizations in my country (Top ranked answers) | Female         | Male           | Other          | Percentage     |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Already promote diversity and equity                                   | 7.85%          | 18.60%         | 16.67%         | 11.91%         |
| Could improve their work on gender equity                              | 23.33%         | 19.38%         | 33.33%         | 21.95%         |
| No fixed view  | 14.09%         | 15.12%         | 16.67%         | 14.49%         |
| Should adopt a national gender equity policy                           | 11.78%         | 16.67%         | 0.00%          | 13.49%         |
| Should lobby government for stronger gender equity legislation         | 14.55%         | 8.91%          | 16.67%         | 12.48%         |
| Should work with media employers on joint strategies on gender equity  | 28.41%         | 21.32%         | 16.67%         | 25.68%         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>100.00%</b> | <b>100.00%</b> | <b>100.00%</b> | <b>100.00%</b> |

With regard to strategies or provisions that could improve gender equality in media workplaces and content, the adoption of an 'equal opportunity or gender equity policy' emerged as the favourite, with more than a quarter of the survey participants (27 percent) endorsing it. Next in a descending order of priorities came the introduction/ adoption of 'dignity at work policy' (19 percent), 'sexual harassment policy' and 'flexible work options' (13 percent each) and 'ILO maternity/paternity leave conventions' (12 percent). There were few takers for 'health and safety audits' (8 percent) and 'pay audits' (7 percent), which may be relatively uncommon and unfamiliar strategies in much of the region.

## Portrayal of women in the media

A substantial proportion of respondents (43.2 percent) seemed to think that the presence of women in the news as sources of information or subject experts was between 10 and 30 percent, while a slightly smaller number (40 percent) estimated their presence at less than 10 percent. Far fewer (16.8 percent) thought it was 30 percent or more.

It is perhaps worth noting here that, according to the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) 2010, women constituted less than a quarter (24 percent) of the people heard or read about in print, radio and television news across the world. Globally only a fifth of the authoritative news sources quoted in the news were women (19 percent of spokespersons and 20 percent of experts), according to the 2010 report. In Asia only 20 percent of news subjects were female; the corresponding figure for the Pacific region was 25 percent.

Respondents' opinions about the depiction of women in news content corroborated the findings of the GMMP. While only four percent felt that women were depicted as 'heroes', 18 percent respondents felt that women were most frequently depicted as 'victims', 16 percent felt they were depicted as 'family figures' and 14 percent felt that women were depicted as 'sexual objects'. While there was no significant gender difference in the responses, the ranking of the most frequent depictions of women differed slightly. Female respondents felt that

## Key Findings

women were most frequently depicted as 'victims' and 'sexual objects', followed by 'family figures'. Males on the other hand, felt that women were most frequently depicted as 'family figures' and 'victims', followed by 'experts and leaders', and ranked 'sexual objects' as fourth.

Table 19: Women portrayal in the news (gender breakdown)

| In your opinion, women in news content are most often depicted as (Top ranked answers)? | Female     | Male       | Other     | Total       |
|---|------------|------------|-----------|-------------|
| Heroes  | 4%         | 4%         | 8%        | 4%          |
| Defying stereotypes   | 5%         | 4%         | 8%        | 4%          |
| Equal citizens  | 4%         | 8%         | 13%       | 6%          |
| Survivors   | 9%         | 9%         | 13%       | 9%          |
| Negatively stereotyped  | 10%        | 7%         | 8%        | 9%          |
| Weak and timid  | 9%         | 9%         | 8%        | 9%          |
| Experts / leaders   | 8%         | 13%        | 4%        | 10%         |
| Sexual objects  | 16%        | 12%        | 4%        | 14%         |
| Family figures  | 15%        | 17%        | 8%        | 16%         |
| Victims   | 19%        | 17%        | 25%       | 18%         |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>62%</b> | <b>37%</b> | <b>1%</b> | <b>100%</b> |

More or less equal numbers of survey participants – clustered around a quarter – endorsed the various possible measures to promote gender equity in news content provided in the questionnaire. While 'enforcement of guidelines on gender equity' was prioritised by 27 percent, 26 percent chose 'more women in decision-making roles in media', 25 percent 'more women journalists and editors' and 22 percent 'more gender-sensitive male journalists and editors'.

There were some gender-based differences in the responses. While the largest number of women (68 percent) picked 'more women in decision-making roles in media', 'enforcement of guidelines on gender equity' came next (65 percent), followed closely by 'more gender-sensitive male journalists and editors' (64 percent), with 'more women journalists and editors' (55 percent) bringing up the rear. The last choice by women was the top choice of men (43 percent). An equal proportion of men endorsed enforcement of guidelines and more gender-sensitive men, while the smallest number seemed in favour of more women in decision-making roles.

## Conclusion

The media in the region has grown rapidly in recent years. Women have increasingly made their mark in the media which has been playing a stellar role in fighting for democracy and freedom of expression in the face of extreme odds.

The survey found women journalists in the sample to be better educated and having higher professional qualifications than their male colleagues. Many are also able to determine the content of their work. Yet, they continue to be restricted by stereotypical beats, and face more job insecurity, lower wages and gender discrimination. Sexual harassment of women at the workplace is rampant despite laws and policies designed to combat this ubiquitous problem which affects women's productivity and sometimes their continuation in the job itself.

Trends from the survey in all countries show that although the situation is slowly improving, women, except for a few exceptions, do not find adequate representation in decision making bodies in the media industry. Even though there are opportunities, barriers exist to prevent women from making it routinely to the higher echelons of media organizations. Besides the practicality of night drops, separate washrooms and lounges to help create a conducive atmosphere for women in the male bastion of the newsroom, there are barriers to facilitating women's career advancement. Maternity leave, child care and re-entry of women after childbirth continue to impede women's right to combine a career with motherhood. The phenomena of 'glass ceilings' and 'sticky floors' seem to routinely hinder the professional growth of women who might professionally be on par with their male colleagues. The lack of women's presence in editorial offices and media boardrooms is not, then, simply a matter of mechanical representation, but one of creating conditions to institutionalise gender equity.

The increasing numbers as well as increasing influence of women in decision-making might go some way to addressing stereotypes and skewed portrayal of women in media content. The research findings are reflective of the need to achieve radical reforms in societal values and in the media industry, where women continue to remain marginal figures, despite their significant contributions.

Indeed, with 'increasing the number of women at every level' quoted by survey respondents as being one of the most effective strategies to bring about gender equity, it becomes imperative to encourage women's representation at all levels. Further policies must be institutionalised to enable them to thrive in each level, and open avenues for their upward mobility. For this, training and professional development is crucial, and the gender gap in training programmes must be addressed, as this research shows.



## Conclusion

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Historically, unions in the region have helped improve the working conditions of journalists and media workers, in extremely hostile economic and political contexts. Today however, the role of unions is being severely curtailed, due to the corporate compulsions of the media industry, as well as increasingly challenging political contexts. Women's role in unions and organizations continues to be sidelined, pointing to the need to increase visibility of women in decision-making roles in these bodies. Interestingly, membership of national unions and associations which emerged as less threatening to employers, might provide crucial space for collective action and mobilising for journalists' rights. The real challenge is to make these spaces women-friendly and conducive to a more active role for women.

It is heartening, however, that in the face of all the challenges, young people continue to be attracted to the profession due to a love of journalism and their desire to make a difference in the world. It is also encouraging that families are supportive of a profession that is not very well paid, and in some situations is downright dangerous. When journalism retains its social purpose despite pressures from repressive governments, extremist groups and corporate barons, there is hope that gender equity can remain firmly on the agenda.





# Recommendations

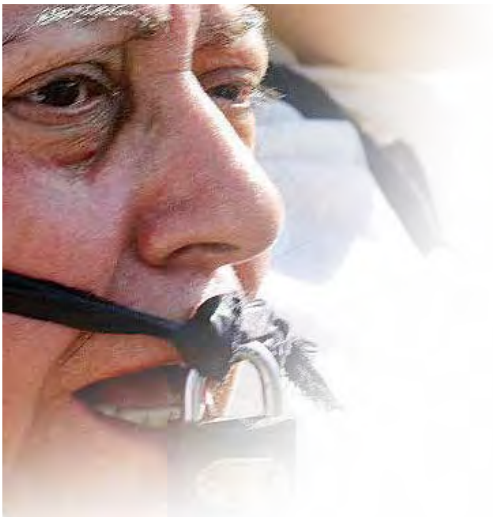
## Recommendations

### Gender equity in media organizations

1. The media can and should lead by example on gender equity. As such, media organizations in Asia and the Pacific should adopt a **gender or equal opportunity policy** and ensure this policy is communicated to all staff and implemented as a matter of routine. Any policy should include provision for diversity and inclusiveness of marginalised groups and make requirements for gender equity awareness training for decision-makers at middle and senior editorial levels as well as top management. In-house gender committees are strongly recommended in media companies with over 500 employees to deal with complaints and issues, and to advocate for a more equitable working environment.
2. Positive action is needed to overcome direct and indirect discrimination at work. Media should conduct self-initiated but independent **gender assessments** of their organizations, including pay audits to determine pay gaps and differences in employment conditions and contracts. Such audits should guarantee anonymity, be transparent and participatory and acted upon with appropriate strategies.
3. Media companies should strongly consider implementing **affirmative employment strategies** to target more women in areas of media where there is obvious and apparent male domination, particularly in decision-making roles at executive and senior and middle editorial levels. Affirmative action is also required, ad interim, in newsrooms and other sections of media houses, to ensure the mentoring of junior women professionals and supporting and encouraging women from disadvantaged classes, castes and ethnic groups as well as women in regional, remote and conflict ridden areas.
4. Media companies must appreciate the impact and benefits of **family-friendly work conditions** on general well-being and satisfaction for all employees in the workplace. Media companies should work toward a goal of family-friendly work strategies including transport after late shifts, childcare arrangements, implementation of maternity and paternity leave provisions and flexible work arrangements for employees.
5. Sexual harassment is a violation of human rights and an unfair labour practice that must be aggressively eliminated. As such, there must be a strict policy of **“zero tolerance” for sexual harassment at the workplace** and an effective complaint mechanism put in place in every company. This policy should be reinforced through appropriate training such as workshops which promote gender sensitivity among workers.



# Recommendations



6. There is a need to address the root causes underlying the gender insensitivity of the print and electronic media, such as ingrained perceptions and social and cultural values regarding women and girls; and to:

- facilitate the implementation of a **gender-sensitive code of ethics** by media houses and professionals;
- promote pre-service and in-service gender orientation for both men and women media practitioners;
- follow IFJ guidelines on reporting on violence against women.

7. Both male and female journalists need to be trained as **media gender perspective monitors**. Journalists, script-writers and presenters/anchors need to be provided with an alternative dictionary of gender-sensitive terminology, in order to counter sexist and derogatory language in common usage.

8. Media have a responsibility to **inform and educate the public** in accordance with international conventions that gender equality is a fundamental human right and to:

- highlight real-life issues and human rights deprivations faced by girls, women and disadvantaged communities;
- demonstrate how women's contributions are essential to improving pay, work and conditions for society as a whole. This should include the contribution of women in the workplace and the changing role of women in decision-making and public life;
- report on the negative impact of discriminatory laws, policies and retrogressive ideological and social-cultural attitudes, customs and practices.

## Professional associations and unions

9. Unions must take active steps to **increase women's union representation**. A quota system or media-based proportional representation will give women genuine representation in their unions and genuine participation. This will in turn enable unions to grow and strengthen, better advocate by attracting more women members and to enable capacity building of women in the media.

10. Unions should **amend constitutions and statutes** to make structures more 'women-friendly' and commit to the promotion of gender equality in all union

approaches. This should include reserve or additional seats for women on executive and decision-making bodies; a quota system for women's participation in congresses, executive bodies, committees, negotiation teams, education and training. Ultimately this will raise awareness of gender equality and women's issues among both female and male membership, develop solidarity, empower women and change conservative and traditional attitudes.

11. All unions should implement **union gender equity and model sexual harassment policies** based on policies already in place and operating in the region, for example, the SAMSUN Charter on Gender Equity for Media and Journalism in South Asia that can also be proposed and adapted for media organizations.
12. Unions must create a **checklist for union action on gender equity** in workplace activity, action with employers and action with governments. This should include articles against sexual harassment in collective bargaining agreements and lobbying governments for improved sexual harassment legislation. Campaign aims should include regular salary reviews with employers, and promote the good practice in payment agreements, reduce gender gap etc.

## Government, media and civil society

13. **Gender equity training** is both needed and wanted by both men and women media workers in the Asia and the Pacific region. A key strategy is needed to improve the working environment for men and women that will help people to better understand the issue and work to combat bullying, harassment and discrimination at work. More awareness is needed on gender equity and the rights of people to an equitable working environment. This should have a focus on their corresponding wages, working conditions and entitlements.

# At the Forefront of Gender Equality in the Media: Case Studies

## Cambodia

### The rise of Cambodia's "cloghers"

Internet penetration is still relatively low in Cambodia, with only 2.7 million internet users as of 2013.<sup>45</sup> However, a report released by the Minister of Posts and Telecommunications in 2014 shows that Cambodia's internet usage grew at a rate of 42.7 percent last year alone with blogging or 'clogging' (Cambodian blogging), as it is known in Cambodia, on a steady rise. Such a hike in numbers can be attributed to increased use of smartphones and overall broadband services in Cambodia.<sup>46</sup>

With it, many journalists are turning to the internet to make their voices heard and overcome many of the stigmas associated with traditional journalism. 'Cloghers' – the 'hers' defining women – are the new breed of female Cambodian bloggers.

Kounila Keo is one of Cambodia's best-known cloghers. Since starting her 'Blue Lady Blog' in 2007,<sup>47</sup> she has presented a TedTalks on blogging in Cambodia and been part of the team that organised Blogfest.Asia – a festival for bloggers in South East Asia in 2012. A journalist by training, Kounila has worked for AFP, *Los Angeles Times*, *The Phnom Penh Post*, *Global Voices Online* and *The Independent UK*.

Blogging in Cambodia emerged in the early 2000s and, to date, has been relatively "free" for reporting politics and other sensitive issues. A limited number of websites and blogs, such as Ki Media, have been shut down or posts removed due to negative comments on the government, but in terms of overall censorship, bloggers have experienced freedom in their ability to produce content.<sup>48</sup>

Kounila says that "blogging has opened the eyes of both young female and male Cambodians to more possibilities and a huge sum of knowledge". She also says 'cloghers' are now a force to be reckoned within Cambodia's media scene and shaking up the traditional forms of journalism – as well as the cultural challenges.

For women in Cambodia there are quite a few impediments. She says journalism is not highly respected as a profession and, on top of that Cambodian society dictates that women should

45 Yi, Y., Cambodia reports 60 pct rise in internet users last year, China : Xinhua News, 14 March 2013. [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/sci/2013-03/14/c\\_132234173.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/sci/2013-03/14/c_132234173.htm) (Accessed 5 December 2014)

46 Everett, S., New Economic and Social Landscape in Cambodia Attracts More Users to the Internet, Cambodia: The Asia Foundation, 21 January 2015. <http://asiafoundation.org/in-asia/2015/01/21/new-economic-and-social-landscape-in-cambodia-attracts-more-users-to-the-internet/> (Accessed 23 January 2015)

47 Keo, K. 2007, Blue Lady Blog, Cambodia. <http://blueladyblog.com/> (Accessed 2 February 2015)

48 Freedom House 2014, Freedom on the Net 2013: Cambodia, Washington: Freedom House. [https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/resources/FOTN%202013\\_Cambodia.pdf](https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/resources/FOTN%202013_Cambodia.pdf) (Accessed 10 December 2014)

Cambodian journalist Keo Kounila, in her office in Phnom Penh



be softly spoken, walk lightly, be well-mannered and remain at home. For obvious reasons, these cultural norms are not exactly conducive to encouraging women to join the field of journalism.

“There might be a lot of challenges but one of them has to do with the perceptions that people hold”, Keo said. “First of all, journalism is considered a risky and low-paying job. While it is extremely important, it also involves some risks especially in a country like Cambodia where the rule of law hasn’t been followed and respected to a great extent. There’s history of journalists being gunned down for the things they wrote.”

She has also noted a concerning trend that young female journalists tend to leave the profession after a couple of years, opting for better pay and security in the non-profit sector. She firmly believes clogging is one way for women journalists to have their voices heard, plus it takes away some of the impediments that push them out of traditional journalism.

But, just like journalists, cloggers also receive negative feedback and threats. Most of the time, the attacks on Keo come from people who don’t see eye-to-eye with her on her opinions. Generally threats are made online on social media so she feels there is a relative level of safety. She has never been physically attacked or threatened in public, which she puts down to not putting her identity online too often.

As a platform, clogging and cloggers have the potential to make change, spark public discussion, empower and motivate the public and have their voices heard. Two-thirds of the Cambodian population today is aged under 25 and clogging is giving this young population power in terms of driving public discourse.

Keo says clogging gave her the opportunity to share information with people and educate them to make their decisions. And as more women continue to join the ‘clogging-sphere’ they are driving women’s issues into discussion and giving other topics a female perspective that has thus far been missing.

She is certainly testament to the fact that the virtual space of clogging is empowering women in Cambodia’s male-dominated media landscape.

“Now more and more women are more open to discussing many issues including politics, social affairs, beyond the daily topics we see in the traditional media”, she said.

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## Cambodia

### A media organization breaking free of the cultural constraints

In the Cambodian cultural context, a wife has to take care of her family, her husband, and do the housework. Even with progress in society, technology, and innovation, most people and families maintain this custom, especially in rural areas.

The Women's Media Centre (WMC) in Cambodia is one of the key institutions working to change the social attitudes that are restricting the involvement of women in the media and journalism.

The director of WMC, Chea Sundaneth, says that the need is greater than ever to get women to work in the media. But achieving this is a challenge, for a number of reasons in Cambodia because:

- A woman's family, including her husband, do not value jobs in the media because they think that the work is difficult as well as dangerous, and does not pay well.
- A woman working in the media does not have much time to spend with her family.

The WMC acknowledges the extreme difficulty it has to encourage females to even join the profession, let alone encourage them into decision-making roles.

Since 1995 the non-for-profit NGO has been committed to promote gender equity, women's empowerment and raising gender awareness in Cambodia, through a number of programmes including television and radio. The mission of the Centre is to use the media as a path to achieve women empowerment and gender equity through addressing social issues related to women.

However, they are facing a challenging environment.

"For the last decade, we have seen how modern women work independently compared to the past", says Sundaneth. "There have been very few women working here in the traditional roles of cameraman, reporters and producers. But I am happy to see women making real progress!"

Women reporters face greater challenges, some you wouldn't expect, even over matters as simple as getting around!

"Sometimes, a woman will ride a motorbike by herself for a long way to interview a source who lives far from town. And we don't know about her security, safety, and the risks she may face in the field", said reporter Sem Pisey.

The Women's Media Centre (WMC) is an important organisation working to support women in media and include women's issue in the media.

The WMC continues to work hard to overcome these obstacles and encourage women to participate in the media. As one of the leading independent media organizations in Cambodia, with its radio station and television programmes, the Centre promotes women's issues, voices and perspectives like no other media outlet in the country.

One of the feature programmes of the WMC is Women's Radio FM 102 which produces educational radio programmes designed for all sectors of Cambodian society, especially women in rural areas. Across the country the radio is broadcasting in Phnom Penh, four provinces, Kampong Thom, Svay Reing, Battambang and Kratie, as well as on a number of partner radios giving them a potential reach of 75 percent of the population.

Since its first air date in 1999, the station has continuously received positive feedback, rating in the top five radio stations in Cambodia and is more popular with female listeners than males.<sup>49</sup>

Sundaneth knows that although the WMC is making ground in terms of getting the voices of women heard, there are still a number of challenges. They work hard to ensure women are not disheartened.

Through their Women's Community Voices programme, they have rolled out a number of training programmes for the community radios in Kratie and Stung Treng province. The teams at these stations have been trained technically in radio technique and radio journalism and professionally in gender and the media. During their gender training, participants discuss policies to promote gender equity, women's empowerment in the media and propose gender intervention work plans. Empowering women to be part of the media landscape is one of the ways the WMC is ensuring change.

The WMC also has a different management model to the traditional Cambodian women. Over 60 percent of the people working there are women, and the by-laws on the centre state that the executive director and directors of the different media divisions all have to be women.

However they do not discriminate when hiring new staff. They stress the importance of equal opportunity and as such encourage male and female journalists to apply. There is also not a gender pay gap – unlike other Cambodian media outlets.

Noeun Sam is one of the male reporters at WMC and says he has never heard complaints of discrimination or bias based on gender, because everyone is treated fairly, both in salary and opportunities.



49 The Women's Media Centre of Cambodia 2015, FAQ'S, Cambodia: WMC. <http://www.wmc.org.kh/page/8> (Accessed 9 February 2015)

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His work approach on gender equity also extends to his home and family. “I am not censoring my wife or my daughter against working in the media. On the contrary, I usually tell them that they can learn a great deal by working in the media. It is not a bad job at all and it can help develop our society.”

While Cambodian women are still under pressure to play an important role as a good mother and wife, and to take proper care of their families, the WMC has become an important media institution in challenging and developing traditional perceptions.

Chea Sundaneth said: “We are trying to promote recruitment of more and more women to help advance gender equality and women’s rights in society. This will help give balance to news coverage because we have both men and women participating. It proves to men that a woman can do more than they ever expected.”

## India

### A woman in the line of fire

Tongam Rina, Associate Editor of the *Arunachal Times*, was accustomed to riling up the powers-that-be with her column “*Ringside View*”. She did not pull her punches while taking on the mining mafia, corrupt government officials, high-handed politicians and armed insurgent groups active in Arunachal Pradesh, a state in India’s north-east.

Death threats, intimidation and pressures were a daily feature of life in this frontier state. The presence of several hundred armed insurgent groups, together with heightened lawlessness, including murderous attacks on the press, prompted the government to grant journalists licenses to hire armed bodyguards.

Rina, however, continued to write about controversial issues, including one potentially explosive environmental story on the proposed 150 dam projects. Her forthright opposition to the project angered powerful opponents in the pro-dam lobby, which tried all means to silence her – from bribes and threats to intimidation and ransacking of her office. But none succeeded and Rina continued her mission of truth-telling on this and other contentious issues. As president of the Arunachal Pradesh Union of Working Journalists (APUWJ), she also took up issues on behalf of the union.

But on July 15, 2012, Rina, then aged 32, almost paid for her courage and determination with her life. Unidentified armed men ambushed her outside her office in the capital Itanagar and sprayed bullets into her stomach. Some of the gunshots grazed her spine and left her critically injured.



Tongam Rina, associate editor of the *Arunachal Times*, in Arunachal Pradesh in India's north-east survived a shooting attack in 2012. The attack was motivated by her environmental reporting on a controversial dam project.

Rina's shooting became a landmark case to test the prevailing impunity of those who attack journalists. Inaction from the police was highlighted, since prompt action on their part could have prevented the murderous attack. Indeed, she had reported the threats to her person and ransacking of her office in April that year, but her complaint was not acted upon.

It later turned out that two of the men who shot her point blank were connected to the vandalising of her office three months earlier. State authorities were lax in carrying out their constitutional mandate to protect journalists who uphold the freedom of the press in the face of great risks.



Staunch support from the media house she worked with ensured that the issue was kept alive. Protesting against the shooting of its associate editor, the *Arunachal Times*, in an unprecedented move, suspended publication on June 17, 2012.

Subsequently, the paper and its website carried a daily reminder of the number of days since Rina was shot, to highlight the fact that her assailants were yet to be brought to justice. It was this sustained pressure that ensured that the case did not join the ranks of the hundreds of unsolved attacks on journalists in the north east.

The police investigation dragged on and it was only in February 2013, after the APUWJ and the Arunachal Press Club demanded a 'white paper' on the status of the inquiry, that the police increased the reward for information from Rs 200,000 (USD 3,224.77) to Rs 1 million (USD 16,123.85).

Speaking at a meeting on journalists' safety in Shillong, Meghalaya, in July 2013, the president of the Arunachal Press Club, Taba Ajum, said: "Physical security is one of the most critical issues for journalists in the North East, where we have to constantly look over our shoulders and operate in an atmosphere of threat. In fact, after Tongam Rina was shot, the state government has even issued gun licences to journalists to protect themselves."

In June 2013, the police identified the weapons used in the shooting and also charge-sheeted three of the accused. The main accused, Yumlang Achung, who wanted to harm Tongam Rina for not highlighting him and his organization's activities in her newspaper, surrendered to the police in September 2013.

When interviewed for the IFJ research Rina, who is still recovering from her injuries after extensive treatment overseas, said: "Journalists in the north-eastern region of India are the most courageous. With few exceptions, most are there because of the love of the job, considering the fact that they are among the most low-paid media workers in the country

## Case Studies

and also work under tremendous pressure. In Arunachal, even though facilities are abysmal and working conditions are atrocious, many young people are still choosing to join the profession, which is a good sign."

The fact that, despite low salaries, insecurity and poor working conditions, young north-easterners are continuing to be drawn to an obviously hazardous profession is due in no small part to feisty role models like Tongam Rina.

In recognition of her contribution to upholding press freedom, Rina was listed as one of '100 information heroes' honoured by Reporters Without Borders (Reporters Sans Frontières-RSF) on 3 May 2014. She is the first Indian journalist to find a place on this list.

## India

### Delhi Union of Journalists leads on women in decision-making roles

In the past two decades, more and more women have entered journalism in India. While this is not reflected in unionisation in most states in the country, in the case of the Delhi Union of Journalists (DUJ), born on May 1, 1949, a somewhat different picture emerges.

Over the years, a conscious effort has been made to change the representation of women journalists in both the executive committee and office bearers of the DUJ and also the DUJ National Council. Its latest list of office bearers includes a female president, Sujata Madhok.

But Madhok is not a first for the DUJ. In the late 1970s, the DUJ elected a female general secretary, Madhumita Majumdar of the Indian Express, and it was under her leadership that the DUJ organised its first national media convention. The DUJ has subsequently had a woman vice-president, elected from the Urdu and other Indian languages category.

When the journalists' movement was united in Delhi in the 1950s, the first treasurer elected to any journalist body was Kamala Mankekar and in subsequent years the DUJ had one of its best treasurers, now a senior manager in the PTI, Padma Alva, who made the organization virtually self-reliant.

"While the DUJ president this time is a woman, women constitute a good chunk of the executive committee as well", said general secretary SK Pande. "Moreover, half of those elected from Delhi for the IJU National Council are women. Significantly, with this the DUJ has become the first mediapersons' organization in South Asia to elect 50 percent of women to a national level organization."

Incidentally the new President has been associated with the DUJ in various capacities and is now the chair of the Gender Equity Council which is co-chaired by another woman, Anjali

Sujata Madhok, DUJ President



Deshpande, as well as the male general secretary, SK Pande. Among the secretaries elected for the second time to one of the three secretarial posts is a woman, TK Rajalakshmi. In the 11-member national council, 5 elected are women. Six members elected to the executive committee are women.

As more women entered journalism from the 1980s onwards, partly inspired by the women's movement that emerged in India in those years, the DUJ first formed a women's sub-committee which was eventually replaced by a gender equity council comprising an equal number of men and women in 2010. Since then, the DUJ has raised questions about women's issues in the media, including depiction and representation. The consciousness in the organization emerged from dealing with conditions of service, some sexual harassment cases and cases of denial of maternity leave, with the organization even managing to enforce it in a few cases in the 1980s.

Since 2007, the DUJ has celebrated International Women's Day each year to raise key issues pertaining to women in the media. Occasionally seminars have been held on gender issues in media. However, the union believes the degree of unionization of women in the profession as a whole needs to be increased.

The DUJ itself has still a long way to go. Contractualisation has taken a heavy toll on its membership. Clubs and forums for women are becoming more popular among newcomers as they provide an escape from the humdrum of 24x7 journalism.

"There is a pitfall, a tendency to sometimes make it a men vs women issue, while many problems that confront the newspaper industry have to be fought hand in hand", said SK Pande. "For instance, the system of exploitative contracts is a problem that confronts both male and female journalists. It is an all India trade union issue to be fought both at the national and state level. It has to be linked with the general struggle against the contract system of employment which, as even the Press Council has opined, constitutes a danger to the freedom of the press. Questions such as 'Whose freedom, whose media?' need to be asked in the present globalised, internationalized, Murdochised information order, just as much as questions about women's role and status within this Murdochised media."

It's true that some women journalists have chosen to join networks such as the Network of Women in Media, which draws its membership from all over India, has an informative website and chapters in several places. In Delhi, women journalists set up the Indian Women's Press Corps two decades ago as a club and recreation space which also facilitates the work of reporters by holding regular press conferences. Many women consider it more rewarding and also safer to be active in such spaces rather than in trade unions where their jobs may be at risk.

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## India

### Foregrounding women's perspectives

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The Women's Feature Service (WFS) is a unique enterprise dedicated to reporting and writing on development-related issues from a women's perspective.

It commissions, produces and sells features and opinion articles to the mainstream press, largely in India. WFS focuses on many of the development concerns that the commercial media in search of sensational news tend to ignore and downplay, such as maternal mortality or rural healthcare.

By offering attractive writing and well-packaged stories, backed by solid analysis, WFS tries to find or create space in the media for such neglected areas and problems.

The stories are written by a network of freelancers. While many of them are based on information sourced from a variety of organizations, including NGOs and women's groups, they are written by competent journalists who try to provide an objective assessment of the subject.

WFS markets its stories and photographs by flagging them on its website and by directly contacting media clients. The WFS website also posts some NGO news.

What started out in 1978 as a UNESCO-sponsored project of the Inter Press Service (IPS) was conceived as a news agency for the Third World. The thought was that if IPS focussed on events and issues concerning developing countries, WFS was meant to provide women from the 'Third World' a voice within that space.

It began with a handful of small regional offices in strategic countries in Asia, Africa, North America and Latin America, from where coordinators commissioned and edited features written by freelance women journalists. The articles were sent to the central office for final edits and distribution. Spanish language features originating in Latin America and French features produced in Francophone Africa were translated into English.

In 1991, WFS decided to go independent, snipping off the umbilical cord connecting it to IPS in order to strike out on its own, with support from organizations such as UNIFEM (the predecessor of UN Women).

The service relocated from the IPS headquarters in Rome to New Delhi, where it is registered as a non-profit society. Once split from the IPS wire service, it had to create its own marketing network for selling features to newspapers and magazines. Technological developments came to its aid, enabling it to switch to new options for communication such as fax and the Internet.

An Indian woman TV journalist reports from a protest demanding the passing of the Women's Reservation Bill in New Delhi.

In India the all-woman WFS team was at that time a rarity in the media. It managed to create a small market, mainly among Indian language newspapers based and circulated in different parts of the country. Similarly, WFS offices in other countries built up local markets and raised local resources for some of the activities they conducted.

International WFS teams covered a series of United Nations conferences, particularly in the run-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, producing daily tabloid-size newspapers that covered conference news and enabled delegates to keep track of simultaneous events in different spaces. WFS also branched out into video and radio production.

Its strength has been its ability to produce unique stories from developing countries, told from a women's perspective. This is evident in the choice of subjects that reflect the concerns of ordinary people, the gender-sensitive approach, the focus on women as actors, the deliberate attempt to quote female sources, the spotlight on women's and people's movements wherever they exist, and the attempt to get grassroots reports from the field rather than depend on secondary sources.

Topics range from surrogacy and sex selective abortion to women's role in electoral politics, women's rights within marriage and families, the incidence of violence against women, women living in conflict zones, women as producers of food and creators of crafts, as scientists and entrepreneurs, as human rights defenders and champions of the environment, and the list goes on.

But the main weakness of the WFS is its continuing inability to create a sustainable revenue model, its high costs and its dependence on the donor community.

When funds began to dry up in the late 1990s, WFS lost its 'international' flavour, was forced to close its regional offices and reinvent itself as a largely Indian network. The Philippines network, which was set up in 1985 as a non-profit corporation, also went independent and produces and sells its own features and has to its credit a website and a host of publications.

The very fact that the WFS has been able to survive in India and continues to make a unique contribution to Indian media, producing and marketing well-researched, high quality features that offer a progressive perspective on a spectrum of issues, is highly creditable. Additionally, it fosters a network of women freelancers, holds capacity-building workshops, trains young talent and encourages them to work in areas vital to the progress of both women and society as a whole.



# Case Studies

## Malaysia

### Empowering women through union representation by Hajjah Norila Daud

Never had I dreamt to be a union leader, what's more a president of a national union. Whatever the reasons may be, believe it or not, I became the first woman president of the National Union of Journalists Malaysia (NUJM) from 1998 to 2010.

Regardless of being a woman in a male orientated work-force, during my time as leader the challenges were met. What I had was a big passion to help fellow journalists and union members to have a more conducive working environment, secure good fringe benefits and a guaranteed and safe career future.

No doubt, I was tested and held under scrutiny by my fellow members. But our achievements came through our union's continuous struggle for equal opportunity, the struggle in negotiating between the union branches and management of various media companies before collective agreements (CA) were signed, and the improvement for women's requirement within these collective agreements. There were also many seminars and forums we conducted to bring about equal representations of male and female for discussion and union-related matters.

As far back as 2002, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) held a gender equality and trade union leadership seminar in Kuala Lumpur. From there the legwork had already started in trying to empower women journalists not only in the union but in the workplace as well. Through trainings provided by the IFJ, today more and more women are now represented in their unions.

Back then, and now, it was important for us to see that the IFJ trainers were mostly women and this added to the interest of women journalists to participate in workshops and seminars. Many of us remembered that back in the 1970s there were practically no women officials in unions, be it at branch level or at the HQ. But during the 1980s I first stepped in as the union treasurer and by 1990 more women journalists were getting involved. I stayed on as general treasurer from 1988 to 1998 before becoming president.

NUJM's leadership very much played the role of advisor and mediator in any deadlock situation in the media. During my time, I had a woman vice-president with five women executive council members from five branches. All were the chairperson and secretaries of their respective branch.

One of the most difficult struggles during that time was for the NUJM to bring back the then-Sin Chew Jit Poh branch (*Chinese Daily*) to become a full member of the union in 2002. The formation of the NUJ Sun branch was amongst our efforts in bringing all journalists

Two female journalists join a media conference with Malaysian Prime Minister Najib.



in the print media to be protected under one umbrella. The success of NUJM in this case was to bring the company Sun Media Corporation to pay compensation to all the Sun media workers who had been dismissed without justice.

Being the only body protecting journalists' rights in the country, NUJM has been consistent in its call for greater press freedom and in urging the government to be more transparent in disseminating information to the public and the press.

In 2008, a woman journalist was detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA) but she was immediately released when NUJM acted speedily by calling the journalists in Malaysia, ASEAN and also globally to support our struggle to let her free.

NUJM's long established relationship with its counterparts including the IFJ, the Confederation of ASEAN Journalists (CAJ), the Asian Journalists Association (AJA) and also with various local NGOs have made it a respectable, reputable and renowned union in our region.

But importantly, not only did we fight for press freedom; our struggle was also to encourage women to take an active role in negotiating and in leadership processes within the branches and in their workplaces as well.

Even though women would sometimes find themselves intimidated by their male counterparts, they could look at NUJM and our women leaders as beacons for their own strength and struggle to demand their rights and play a leading role.

*Hajjah Norila was the President of the National Union of Journalists of Malaysia from 1998 to 2010.*

# Case Studies

## Nepal

### Peace in Rolpa brings a brighter dawn for women

Devi Gurung was just 14 years old when she got married. Rolpa is a district known for being among the lowest placed on the Human Development Index and when her family decided she should get married in the seventh grade, this was not considered unusual.

Like marriage, pregnancy was also not of her choice. Things got more complex when, at the age of 16, she gave birth to a baby girl. That was during the time when the Maoist insurgency was at its peak and Rolpa was the epicentre of the conflict.

But Gurun's life improved when she encountered Radio Jaljala, the first FM radio station of the district which was established in 2008. After getting an opportunity for training, she pursued a career in media.

While she started work as a volunteer, today 27-year-old Gurung is an associate editor in Radio Jaljala, stationed at Liwang, the district headquarters of Rolpa. While her husband is in Malaysia as a migrant worker, she attempts to maintain a balance between her family and her career.

Garun resumed her education after the birth of her baby and is currently pursuing a degree in Liwang, majoring in Nepali and sociology. Even though her daughter is only in the sixth grade now, Gurung dreams of helping her becoming an educated and empowered woman.

The participation of Maoists in the peace process in 2006 brought a brighter dawn for women journalists in Rolpa. It also made the establishment of radio and print media possible.

Although a few local, weekly newspapers existed during the insurgency, they tended to focus on promoting the activities of the Maoists. According to Manisha Shreshta, the news editor of Radio Jaljala, the peace process opened the door for credible journalism in the area for the first time.

The latest statistics of the Rolpa chapter of the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) show a total of 28 women journalists from the district have joined the FNJ and other journalists' unions.

"The number is really encouraging", says Ishwari GM, Secretary of the district's FNJ chapter. "While there were almost no women journalists during the civil war, now women feel safe to travel around the district for reporting. Some of the women also hold leading positions in the journalists' union."

However, job opportunities for women journalists from Rolpa in mainstream media houses at the national level are still very few. "Only one woman journalist from here has got a job in mainstream media", says Gurung.



Anupama Khanal, News Chief, Choice FM- Gorkha.



Radio Jaljala's Shreshta is the only woman journalist of the district to have got an opening in the national media: she is currently the Rolpa correspondent for ABC Television, one of the country's leading Nepali language channels. However, another journalist, Kavita Upadhyay, has moved to Rolpa from her home district of Dang in pursuit of a journalism career.

According to Gurung, newspapers and local FMs provide a fair amount of space for issues concerning women. The leading national weekly newspaper of the district, *Sunstar*, where she holds the additional position of associate editor, provides a full page for women's issues, where topics relating to gender-based violence, child marriage, girls' education, reproductive health issues, and so on, are explored.

Men staffers at FM stations ensure that their women colleagues do not have to work late hours since the way home is unsafe at night. Radio Rolpa, Radio Jaljala and Radio Holy Reaction are the three FM stations in the district. Asha Magar and Uma KC are among the active journalists of Radio Rolpa.

The women journalists of Rolpa have a complaint about the organisers of media/journalism training programmes, asking why they are held only in the capital city, Kathmandu. According to them, they get few opportunities for skill development, with trainers from Kathmandu reaching them only once in a long while.

"Although we undergo district-based training on a rotation basis, we hardly have access to training by the bigger organizations from Kathmandu", says Shreshta, who has a small baby. According to her, since most women working in the media have small children, training opportunities that would allow them to bring children along would help them develop their skills and outreach.

With regard to the implementation of the law relating to minimum daily wages for journalists and the access of women journalists to such wages, they point out that, unlike the financially weak print media, the radio sector provides minimum wages, enabling its workers to become self-sufficient.

Although Gurung believes they deserve twice the salary they currently receive, she is also conscious of the precarious finances of media houses across the country and believes she cannot depend solely on her earning as a journalist in the future.

"Radio is doing well at the moment but, going by the situation of several media houses even in Kathmandu, it would be wrong to conclude that it will thrive here in the longer term", she said.

Nevertheless, journalism has so far provided her with unprecedented opportunities to script her own career path.

# Case Studies

## Nepal

### *Asmita*, a women's magazine struggles and thrives

*Asmita*, the first publication representing the voices of women in Nepal, was registered in 1988, two years before democracy was restored in the country.

Founding members of the *Asmita* team included media enthusiasts Anju Chhetry and Susan Maskey, along with several men supporters. The magazine's name was recommended by the legendary Nepali literary figure, Parijat. The word *Asmita* means pride.

In the late 1980s, literacy rates in Nepal were very low: 39 percent among men and only 13 percent among women. The situation has since improved and today male literacy now above 70 percent, while female literacy sits above 50 percent.

From then to now, *Asmita*, a magazine for and by women, has never moved away from its primary motivation: advocating gender equality, including the representation of women in both governmental and non-governmental bodies, and campaigning against gender-based violence.

Manju Thapa, the current editor of the magazine, joined the team in 1993, five years after it was established. Reviewing her journey as a woman journalist over the years, Thapa believes there is remarkable openness and acceptance toward women working in this sector.

"*Asmita* introduced a feminist approach at a time when educated Nepali women were used to the contents of traditional Indian women's magazines in Hindi, like *Sarita*, *Manorama* and *Griha Shobha*, which portrayed women in a conventional manner", Thapa says.

The idea that politics, economics, laws and many other aspects of life and society were equally relevant to women was revealed and validated by the magazine for the first time in Nepal. The magazine has received a number of awards for its work in highlighting and generating public debate on gender issues, such as the Pandora Award from the International Organization of Women in Publishing in 1994 and the Nepali National Social Service Award in 1997.

*Asmita* conducted a survey on women's presence in the media in the early 1990s, presenting the findings in the 19th edition of the magazine. According to Thapa, since no women journalists were known to be working in other parts of the country, the survey was restricted to the capital city, Kathmandu, but still accepted as 'national'.

A Nepalese journalist holds a placard as she joins colleagues gathering for a rally in Kathmandu.



The survey data showed that in the early 1990s, only 12 percent of the total number of journalists in Nepal were women. Most of them were in the new, private print media, and the public service broadcasters, Radio Nepal and Nepal Television.

According to Thapa, reporting was a challenge for women at that time, since most sources tended to trust and share information only with men journalists. In the late 1990s, *Asmita* dedicated an edition to promoting the concept that women are competent to work in areas such as the bureaucracy and politics.

After the major political change brought about by the people's democratic movement in 2006, ending the decade-long civil war and bringing in the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, more women have entered the field of journalism. According to Thapa, this is a positive trend in terms of quantity but the quality of their participation in the media needs improvement.

After 20 years of existence, in the absence of adequate financial support, the publication of *Asmita* was suspended in 2008. But the magazine was re-launched in 2014, as a bi-monthly.

Although the magazine does not have a large staff, many veteran women journalists contribute articles. Over the years *Asmita* has worked with Sancharika Samuha, Working Women Journalists (WWJ) and other organizations that deal with women's issues in Nepal, on various projects, including media research, training for women journalists and even agenda-setting at the policy level and in the Constituent Assembly.

While it is not part of the "mainstream," *Asmita* is a source of strength for women journalists working in the mainstream media because of the way it raises issues and covers them from different perspectives. Born again after a six-year gap, it represents the pride, strength and resolve of women, determined to succeed despite the odds.

# Case Studies

## Pakistan

### Reporting from the frontlines

Swat, in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province is a more conservative, tradition-bound part of Pakistan than the country's larger cities. Here, a female reporter like Shazia Irum Gul is a rare sight.

However, Gul, who is an executive producer with Internews, thinks being a woman gives her an advantage over male reporters in certain ways. By virtue of her gender she is able to enter homes, communicate with women and draw out their perspectives on events and issues, which are usually not reflected in news stories.

Women's voices are rarely heard in conservative regions like Swat because male reporters only have access to men; the women are hidden away, not permitted to interact with strangers. According to Gul, her endeavour always is to highlight the human angle in a news story and, in particular, to highlight the experiences, concerns and opinions of the women of the area.

Since Swat has been a hotbed of conflict for a long time, especially when the Taliban were in control of the region, Gul has personally experienced problems connected to reporting from a conflict-ridden area. In her experience, male colleagues were not supportive of female reporters working in the field. For example, only male journalists were invited to a press conference held after the military regained control of Swat, and Gul had to run from pillar to post before she was 'allowed' to attend it.

Pakistan  
journalist  
at work.



Two journalists at work at the Karachi office of the *Express Tribune*, an English daily newspaper.



During question time, only male journalists' questions were answered and they evidently did not view that as unfair. Instead of respecting her as a colleague they taunted her, implying that she was there just for a taste of adventure and was sure to run away at the sound of even a firecracker. Later, she even received threats that she would have to pay a high price if she continued with her work.

When she visited the press club in Mohmand Agency in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) after applying for membership, she was told not to come again because the lives of other members of the club had been threatened on account of her presence.

According to Gul, despite such experiences, she was not discouraged or afraid. Referring to her report on the floods in Swat in 2010, she said that while many male colleagues refused to go to the flood affected areas, she did and was able to file a report from the ground.

The fact that reporters get no backing from media houses or the government in terms of security while working in dangerous territory is another problem highlighted by Gul. This is a serious issue since journalists working in frontier areas like Swat are often on the hit list of militants.

According to her, reporters working in conflict zones need to be sensitive and ensure that their reports would not expose any individuals involved in the stories to danger. For example, when she wrote about a German organization working on the rehabilitation of children who had been recruited by militants, she refrained from mentioning details from her interviews with the children recruits in an effort to protect them from harm.

Another reporter<sup>50</sup> working in a remote and conflict-prone area said it is really important for reporters to go into the field, meet people and do research in order to highlight issues of social value. In a country like Pakistan, reporters whose work takes them to conflict

50 Name withheld as per interviewees request.

## Case Studies Case Study

areas need to be aware of the particular circumstances of each place and think of ways to minimise danger, she said. For example, “travelling by car in isolated areas would make your movements obvious – so it’s best to travel by bus. Also, it’s important to try and complete your assignment during the day as the darkness of night poses its own dangers”. She also stressed the fact that a supportive management that provides mechanisms that can minimise the dangers faced by reporters is also essential.

Zainab Khan is an 18-year-old student who began reporting for the daily newspaper, *Haqaiq*, two years ago. At present she is anchoring a Pushto language programme, *Qadam Pa Qadam*, on PBC Radio, Peshawar. She reports mainly from Mohmand Agency, Charsadda and Peshawar in the FATA.

According to Khan, she initially faced many problems. The village khan and sardar (chiefs) ordered her to stop working as a reporter because a woman from their area should not be working at all. However, she persevered and kept trying to make them understand that she was simply trying to raise awareness of issues that affected people in the area, especially women. In an effort to gain their confidence, she let them listen to her programmes before they were aired. She finally managed to win them over and finds it easier to function now.

Some of Khan’s reports have actually changed things on the ground. For example, her story about a woman who died because there was no gynaecologist in the area to treat her led to the appointment of a doctor by the government.

She continues to report on a range of issues, including education and health. She admits she still faces many challenges, with even her family not very supportive of her career. However, she wants to continue in the field because she believes there is a great need for female reporters in the FATA to highlight the experiences and concerns of the local women.

## Pakistan

### Women presiding over some unions

*The News* Employees Union (in-house Union of *The News*’ employees) was established in 1995 and has a total of 183 members, of whom just 13 are women. The union has a 12-member governing body and a seven-member managing committee. In 2014, for the first time in its 23-year history, it got a female president and two other women are in decision-making positions: a vice president and a managing committee member.

According to Sheher Bano, editor supplements, *The News*, Karachi, and president of *The News* Employees Union, women journalists face many problems in the workplace. They need to be aware of their rights and also have the confidence to stand up for themselves.

Journalist Sheher Bano at the IFJ Gender Safety workshop in Karachi in April 2014.

“After my election as union president, I have made it mandatory for all union office bearers to contact women, start enlisting them and highlighting their concerns”, she said. “I have also set up a women’s committee which will look into issues such as equal pay, work appraisals, promotions, medical insurance, maternity leave, separate washrooms, transport, working hours, safety on the job, workplace harassment, and gender discrimination in assignments (beats).



She said the committee will try to bring more women into decision-making positions, increase women’s participation in union activities, identify their problems and possible resolutions, revise the existing policies of the organization to make them more women-friendly, work on creating a gender policy, raise awareness about sexual harassment at the workplace and take up cases of harassment, if any. The committee will also contact the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), Unions of Journalists (UJs) and Press Clubs to convince them to encourage more women to join unions.

Although the union does not yet have any specific strategies to increase the number of women in decision-making roles in the union, Bano said, as an initial move, they are ensuring that women are well-represented in negotiating processes with managements. But first, she said “it is necessary to increase awareness among women employees and convince them that their representation in the trade union will bring about a change”.

Sarah Batool, a member of *The News* Employees Union, thinks the appointment of a woman union president is refreshing and a confidence-builder. “It gives new people like me confidence that women can move forward in this field and achieve important positions on merit.”

Another member Madiha Asif said: “We have seen a big shift in the way the union is dealing with women-related issues because of the presence of three women in decision-making positions in the body. But a lot of work still needs to be done.” According to her, the media has of late become a serious target for many different political and religious elements, leading to injury and even death of media personnel. Under such extraordinary circumstances and with such grave issues to deal with, women’s issues tend to get ignored, she said.

In Batool’s opinion, “there is not enough female presence and participation in decision-making roles and structures or policies that promote gender equality in the workplace are also missing. There have been no initiatives to promote gender equity and sensitivity in the media and something needs to be done about this.”

## Case Studies

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*The News'* Employees Union does not have any mechanism to deal with the issue of sexual harassment. However, according to Sheher Bano, the union has drawn up a wish-list to improve the experience of women working in the media:

- Women should be employed on an equal basis in all fields of media.
- Women's issues with mobility and their dual roles as home-makers and professionals should not be allowed to hinder their growth.
- News coverage about women should not be biased and unjust as it is now.
- A pleasant and harassment-free working environment should be provided to women. Awareness should be raised about sexual harassment and training provided on how to avoid and deal with such problems.
- The present discrimination in the allocation of medical coverage to female employees, possibly because women are not seen as primary income-earners, should be removed.
- Success stories of female media workers who are good home-makers as well as good professionals should be covered in the media.
- Gender sensitivity should be promoted among males so that they understand the roles and responsibilities of women.
- Maternity leave should be increased to one year. Paternity leave should also be introduced so as to increase understanding and cooperation among couples.
- Proper seating arrangements for females, separate washrooms with waste bins, a retiring room, a prayer room, personal lockers and a daycare centre with transport facilities should be provided.
- Flexible timings should be provided for women.
- There should be a move to appoint more female bosses with decision-making powers.
- Appraisals, increments and promotions of both men and women should be based on professional experience, expertise and performance.



STOP THE HARASSMENT  
OF JOURNALISTS



# Pakistan

## When rape is rape

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When the Uks Research Centre<sup>51</sup> was founded in 1997, the main focus was to monitor and analyse the print media since Pakistan had a vibrant press but television and radio were under the control of the state.

Although the press was vibrant, much of it was also devoid of any kind of gender-sensitivity. A painful reminder was the coverage of the gruesome murder in 1998 of a young, single woman living independently in Islamabad. After her headless body was found, almost all the newspapers published story after story about how 'immoral' she was, having had multiple affairs, living alone, consuming alcohol etc. One newspaper even reported that a used condom was found next to her dead body. A week later her head was found in a nearby place. The next day all the newspapers, except one, published photographs of her head perched atop a stretcher. One paper went in for a two-column, colour photograph.

Press coverage of this murder became an unforgettable case study. While Uks focused on gauging the impact of newspaper language and reporting on women's development and status, it also started to take its analysis to the media, sometimes through a series of gender-sensitisation workshops, at other times through consultations, visits to editors, discussions with reporting and editing staff. The idea was to share with them the gender insensitivity that existed in the Pakistani print media, the use of derogatory and offensive language while reporting news relating to women, as well as the quantity and quality of the coverage accorded to women and matters related directly to women. During the course of such discussions the need for a Code of Conduct or Ethics became increasingly clear.

In 2002, Uks launched "Changing Images", the first ever report in Pakistan based on the outcomes of extensive media monitoring, content analysis, media training workshops and a South Asian Gender and Media conference.

Among the recommendations in that report was one calling for a code of ethics with a strong gender component and steps to ensure its implementation by representatives of the print media, especially senior editorial staff. The report also highlighted the gap between theory (eg: acceptance of a gender-sensitive code of ethics) and the practice of ethical and responsible journalism. It was clear that bridging the gap would be a complex and time-consuming task. Uks continued its work, trying to convince editors and news editors of the need to develop style sheets incorporating gender-sensitive language and establishing criteria for photographs and other visuals, as well as captions, if any.

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51 Uks Research Centre is a research, resource and publication centre dedicated to the cause of gender equality and women's development. Uks (an Urdu word meaning 'reflection') aims to promote a neutral, balanced and unbiased approach to women and women's issues within and through the media.

## Case Studies

Finally, in 2005, Uks presented the first-ever Gender-Sensitive Code-of-Ethics for the Print Media in Pakistan, and perhaps in South Asia. This initiative aimed to provide the media with a critical tool to ensure gender-responsive reporting and investigation. Since then, in addition to being widely disseminated (over 3000 copies) within Pakistan, the Code has been shared with media and civil society organizations across the globe.

A slight change in media practice was perceptible in the period that followed. For example, the Code highlights the need to avoid phrases like *"Kunwari maa ney apna gunahon ka bojh koray key dher per phanik diya"* ("An unwed mother dumps the bundle of her sins at a garbage site"). Some newspapers began to find different ways to describe the situation, for example: *"Nozaida bachay ki lash koray kay dher per mili"* ("body of a new born found at a garbage dump"). This was a small sign that the code was making a dent.

But just when it appeared that the print media was beginning to be sensitised, the sudden growth of 24x7 television news channels, with their "breaking news syndrome", changed the scenario. Many television channels, barring one or two, began to sensationalise crime stories, covering cases in an extremely judgmental and victim-blaming manner, often using derogatory language and, worse still, showing the faces of the woman, or even the girl child, involved, giving details of where she lived.

In 2013, in a bid to change the situation, Uks revised and redesigned the Gender-Sensitive Code of Ethics to make it relevant to both the print and the electronic media.<sup>52</sup> The code, meant to be voluntarily adopted by the media, clearly defines the standards, attitudes and behaviour expected from presenters, anchors, researchers, producers, scriptwriters, camera persons, policy-making editorial staff and the senior management of media houses.

Sadly though, despite the fact that it was drafted with the complete participation and involvement of all the relevant stakeholders and has been disseminated among journalists since its launch, the media have been intermittently breaching many of the codified professional standards. Media monitoring by Uks reveals regular violations, including the use of personal details and visuals of victims/survivors, the use of insensitive language, etc. This is disappointing, especially since both media decision-makers and working journalists had pledged their commitment to promoting gender sensitivity in the media during the process of formulating the Code.

So rape continues to be called anything but rape – especially by the Urdu and regional language media. From 'losing and destroying of honour', to 'acts of sin', our media is not ready or willing to call it rape. The code is there, the media needs to adopt it, but then, gender is not the most important issue for media.

52 Uks 2013, *Gender-Sensitive Media: A Voluntary Code of Ethics*, Islamabad: Uks. <http://uksresearch.readyhosting.com/PublicationsPDFs/Code%20Of%20Ethics%20Final.pdf> (Accessed 20 November 2014)

Pakistan journalist at work.



## Sri Lanka

### Through a female lens

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For senior photojournalist and trainer, Dushiyanthini Kanagasabapathipillai, the proverbial glass ceiling was visible from the day she commenced her journalistic career on May 1, 1993. Twenty years on, much to her regret, the only improvement she finds in the Tamil language newsrooms is the availability of technology. “There is no qualitative evolution, in skills or in concepts”, she says.

Kanagasabapathipillai entered journalism to do “alternative work” and to cover “sensitive issues that Tamil women were discouraged from touching, even when women were directly and deeply affected”. She began her career as a trainee journalist at the Colombo-based Tamil daily, *Virakesari* and since then, her professional journey has often brought her into conflict with the male hierarchy and women who reinforce gender stereotypes.

“I was hired after a series of interviews by all-male interview panels. I was asked about my marital status and whether I would quit upon marriage. They asked me whether my family approved of my career choice”, she recalls.

She belonged to a batch of ten, including three men. She was the only woman who wanted to do field reporting but was promptly assigned to translate Reuters copy to Tamil.

“Other women were happy to be desk bound but I was not. So I resisted and wanted to be sent on assignment. Being an open newsroom, there were other problems such as constant bullying of women by men. I was a prime target because I had short hair and constantly wore jeans. It was pointless to complain because this was considered the ‘normal’ newsroom atmosphere.”

## Case Studies

When she insisted on being sent out on assignment, her immediate supervisors cautioned that “it was unsafe for Tamil women to do field assignments”. Thanks to her English language skills, she was sent on other assignments such as to cover the visit of Princess Anne, which also earned her male colleagues’ wrath.

On her own, she began compiling articles “of a serious nature”. They appeared in the editorial pages, often sans her by-line. She said: “In that male-dominated newsroom, women were considered subservient to men. The editorial practices were discriminatory.” When she wrote on women in politics and leadership roles, her articles were rejected and she was warned against her alleged efforts to change Tamil culture.

As for her women colleagues, Kanagasabapathipillai says: “Tamil newsrooms have more women. So it is not about representation in terms of numbers. Their impact on content is missing. Women hardly challenge male colleagues or undertake serious work. They also prefer desk jobs but complain about lack of opportunities. For many of them, it is a job – until the next job or until marriage or migration. There is no real interest in pursuing a career in journalism.”

Traditionally, women are put in charge of women’s pages and/or culture/arts, she said. “It is as if we know nothing else and have no other contribution to make. But women accept this without any protest!”

She also claims that there is no “equal pay for equal work” in Tamil newsrooms. Moreover, there are strong prejudices against women and as a result, they are not entrusted with certain types of responsibilities. The stereotypical content offered to women readers/audiences is therefore, generated by women for women, so she thinks they too are not free of this responsibility. “Just like the pages they put together, their discussions are often about recipes, fashion and stuff like, using cucumber packs to look good for a husband.”

Many Tamil women journalists did not report on the impacts of war. Many felt it was an unnecessary risk-taking. “When they did report, they took sides, lacked the professionalism to put things into perspective and to rise above their ethnic angle”, she said. “I often felt that there should have been strong training offered to journalists on conflict reporting, especially for women. That perspective has largely gone missing as a result.”

The risk-taking Kanagasabapathipillai subsequently joined the BBC which gave her greater access to the war zones as well as a new perspective. She moved into complete “male territory” and soon proved resourceful in terms of contacts and access.

Today, the self-starter and self-learner is working as an independent journalist. After two decades of risky journalism, many Tamil women journalists consider her as a role model, a woman whose career is hard-built, without any support from systems and newsroom mentors.

SAWM Sri Lanka Annual General Meeting. From left: Sanjana Hattotuwa, editor and founder of GroundViews and senior researcher with the Center for Policy Alternatives, Colombo, and freelance blogger, journalist and photographer Dushiyanthini Kanagasabapathipillai, who is also an executive committee member of SAFMA Sri Lanka and SWAM Sri Lanka.



“If there is true admiration, then they must develop strong careers and relentlessly pursue their dreams”, she said.

In 2012, when Kanagasabapathipillai researched on female ex-combatants and their social reintegration, none of the Tamil newspapers were willing to publish her findings. Instead, she was told the reintegration process was correct and that ex-combatants were well-treated.

“During research, I was closely monitored but I was not going to give it up. As someone consistently covering the conflict, I saw post-war stress experienced by women. But our media hardly provided space for that perspective. The war is over. The story is incomplete. There is a missing half”, she insists. “Women often create their own limitations, in addition to socio-cultural limitations. Women themselves reinforce stereotypes. Now that there are fresh openings, they still refuse to explore.”

It is difficult for Tamil women journalists to be organised largely because there is no cultural and institutional support. “An effort was made over a decade ago as women had very unique issues to address. Somehow, we could not make it work”, she admits.

The only media organization for Tamil journalists at present does not have a constitution, and until recently, did not have a single female in the executive committee. As the current Secretary of South Asian Women in Media (SAWM), Kanagasabapathipillai feels that for the first time, there is a network for women journalists in the island, able to work in all three languages and ready to take on different issues.

“There are about 200 members and regional co-ordinators. We have pioneered safety and gender training for women. Above all, it is a platform for building skills and concepts”, she said.

Meanwhile, Kanagasabapathipillai has moved beyond the printed word to take on other serious tasks – as a blogger and photojournalist, expanding her career, outreach and impact.

There are more women with camera slung across their shoulders today but there are no moving images emerging from those cameras. “Photojournalism is very much a male preserve. I am always in the midst of men, doing what many consider a man’s job.”

“I look through my lens but I clearly see differently. There is essentially a perspective that is female. Sadly, there are no women photojournalists in the north. In Sri Lanka, women journalists still prefer to walk behind their male colleagues and that’s self-defeating.”

## Case Studies

### Sri Lanka

#### The leader in active mentoring

The concept of building the capacities of individual journalists as well as the entire team of journalists was a key focus of *The Sunday Leader*, founded by the late Lasantha Wickrematunge, one of Sri Lanka's best known journalists murdered in January 2009 en route to work.

The unique editorial team during the founding editor's time comprised many women journalists, thanks to a conscious decision by Wickrematunge himself to create space for women in journalism and enable them to decide their "beats" according to aptitude.

*The Sunday Leader* instituted woman-friendly working conditions, and many women journalists recall their time during Wickrematunge's editorship as "empowering". The editorial culture also had in-house practices that focused on nurturing young talent. It was part of this capacity-building process – a salient feature of the institutional culture – that a few women journalists took the initiative to make other female colleagues feel integrated and comfortable.

"Active mentoring" was a homespun concept introduced by a couple of senior women editors who wished to pass on their knowledge and expertise to younger journalists, women in particular, and to take practical steps to ensure that young women walking into *The Sunday Leader* editorial department had the necessary space, encouragement and opportunity to build their skills.

While never codified or openly referred to as 'active mentoring', the two women journalists who were responsible for introducing this 'quiet but meaningful practice' to their editorial practice claim that, as women, they had faced various restrictions in their day, and wished to spare the junior women in their midst, similar negative experiences.

"It was a simple attempt to empower other women journalists through small yet meaningful acts that would help their careers to progress, such as little tips and, often, some encouragement to face various challenges – there are plenty when you are a journalist in Sri Lanka, and for women the challenges can be double", notes Sonali Samarasinghe, who feels a 'strong streak of feminism' can add value to the editorial department.

Many young women needed someone experienced to guide them when confronted with certain professional situations. The seniors extended support to other women staff members to help them handle work pressures and, especially, to improve inter-personal relationships and learn to count on the strength of an "editorial sisterhood".

"There was an element of trust-building, and even an attempt to defeat certain gender stereotypes, such as women being jealous of each other or unwilling to support each other.

Sri Lankan journalist, lawyer and gender activist Dilrukshi Handunnetti in her office.



We wanted them to believe in their own strength as well as the strength of the collective”, said another woman who contributed to the fostering of a new media culture that positively encouraged women practitioners.

Introduced in 2005, the “active mentoring” project was first a practical method to prevent the formation of small cliques within the editorial department, with women journalists competing against each other. There was, at times, a level of mistrust and a deep-rooted assumption that women would not assist each other.

Women were encouraged to view their career goals with more professionalism, to work more as a team to achieve journalistic objectives than as individuals and to discuss career-related concerns as a group. This included working conditions and safety concerns, topics women felt less inclined to discuss with their male counterparts.

There were other add-ons too that made *The Sunday Leader* special in the eyes of its women employees. Its founder editor had banned smoking or drinking (generally male activities in Sri Lanka) inside the editorial premises, largely as a move to create a ‘women-friendly’ atmosphere in the workplace. Women workers were provided with transport after 6pm – not only as a requirement of labour law, but even freelancers, who were not technically covered by law, were provided drops. Although *The Sunday Leader* had a limited number of vehicles, priority was given to women’s transport needs.

Wickrematunge, a believer in “female energy”, insisted that the editorial space be made pleasant and safe for women to work late, when necessary. “For this to happen, the newsroom had to reflect that culture”, he noted in one of his last interviews, speaking on women’s role as newsroom managers. His belief that women made loyal and committed professionals was his justification for appointing women to head four out of seven desks.

## es Case Studies

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Part of the “active mentoring” exercise involved creative and non-confrontational methods to sensitise male colleagues about specific issues that women workers experience in their working life.

Among the best editorial practices at *The Sunday Leader* was the deliberate use of gender-neutral language. Certain guidelines for professional news reporting (that required the inclusion of gender perspectives) were regularly followed.

Efforts were made to include women’s voices, both as experts and sources, to provide women space for content of special interest to them, to ensure sensitivity when reporting on victims of sexual crimes, conflict and disasters, etc.

So ultimately, “active mentoring” became a practice in an already fairly inclusive editorial department; to enable women to have a professional dialogue amongst themselves, to choose beats according to aptitude and to become more assertive in their professional outlook.

Although much has changed at *The Sunday Leader* since the murder of Wickrematunge, with the change in ownership and even editorial thrust, another former editor, Shakuntala Perera, too, insists that there is a policy of supporting women journalists. This policy is an acknowledgement of the proverbial glass ceiling that necessitates support systems if women journalists are to get beyond the many restrictions in order to achieve their professional ambitions.



## Sri Lanka

### A strong backdrop for women's career advancement

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*Ceylon Today* is an English daily newspaper published by Ceylon Newspapers (Pvt) Ltd, and is the first and only newspaper in Sri Lanka to simultaneously commence daily and Sunday editions. Right from its launch in 2011, the newspaper was designed to be different.

Three years later, some of the measures undertaken to institutionalise gender equity and newsroom diversity have taken root, says its former editor Hana Ibrahim, who admits to "modest success" in mainstreaming gender, in both editorial practices and newspaper content.

Since its inception, there has been considerable representation of women at the editorial decision-making level. While the Ceylon Newspapers management did not include a woman, a fair number of women were selected for leadership roles in the editorial functions as "desk editors".

"Their perspectives are different and the inclusion of such diverse perspectives was considered advantageous in many ways. This has content value and provides a competitive edge in the media business", insists Ibrahim, a firm believer in newsroom diversity.

"Inclusion of women desk heads and reporters/feature writers/sub editors was a conscious decision taken to ensure newsroom diversity and equity. The editorial departments of English publications are more inclusive than others, but the proverbial glass ceiling does exist. This is why those who have reached the top must create space through the introduction of mechanisms that facilitate women to enter the industry and develop strong careers", notes Ibrahim.

Among the handful of women in Sri Lanka to have reached the top position as editor, Ibrahim insists that while it was a conscious move to create an inclusive editorial, with women being encouraged to join the editorial staff and to take up technical jobs which are generally a male preserve, the senior positions were offered to women based on merit. "These were capable, professional women who deserved the positions", Ibrahim adds.

This also meant that, except for the newspaper's sports desk, all other desks had many women staffers. "To have so many young women attached to the business desk and the online team is refreshing", Ibrahim says.

*Ceylon Today* also wished to ensure women's contribution to the development of a strong news desk, the core of any newspaper. It was therefore decided to appoint at least one woman as a news editor but the newspaper eventually had two instead of one news editor, both women!

## Case Studies

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“They are also excellent news hounds”, says Ibrahim, who was instrumental in introducing key measures to create an editorial that supports women professionals. The inclusion of women at all levels and ensuring their representation at the top editorial decision-making level also added meaning to *Ceylon Today’s* “equal opportunity employer” tag. As Ibrahim put it, “It needed to be a policy that is practiced. We achieved that to an extent.”

Beyond creating a strong backdrop for women’s career advancement, several steps were taken to make the editorial women-friendly. This is an area Ibrahim thinks is still work in progress.

“From equal pay for equal work to separate toilets and getting priority in night transport, etc. – many practical measures were taken to make the working conditions supportive of female staff. However, this is an area that needs constant improvement and there is much more to be done”, she says.

Perhaps the strongest impression *Ceylon Today* initially made and then maintained was its approach to inclusive content. Dedicated space was created for women and a number of other areas, considered significant for the promotion of a plural media, were introduced. “We mainstreamed rights and feminism, areas that were largely ignored by most media houses. We created space for women by having dedicated space.”

*Ceylon Today* also made efforts to maintain high standards in journalism ethics, in both reportage and opinion writing. “In order to promote industry best practices, we voluntarily followed existing codes of conduct, and drafted an in-house code as well as a gender policy.”

*Ceylon Today* also promoted the use of gender-neutral language. An in-house glossary was prepared and there was constant editorial dialogue on the use of ethical language and the use of photographs, especially when reporting on women, children, victims of sexual assault/rape, etc. Efforts were also made to ensure that gender stereotypes and other negative references were avoided.

“We wanted our editorial practices and the content we generated to reflect respect for diversity, including race, religion, culture, gender and sexual orientation”, Ibrahim says.

An important development within the editorial was the level of influence women wielded on the development of content: news, features or opinion. Conscious efforts were made to avoid gender stereotypes in the newspaper’s content. The staff was encouraged to include women in stories as experts and sources, while the newspaper also encouraged women to become opinion writers.

Keen to build a strong team of women journalists, Ibrahim recalls that women were encouraged to be associated with media rights organizations and/or professional bodies. According to her, “they were encouraged to pursue knowledge and to undergo training. That’s value addition to any editorial. Women who wished to work with media rights organizations and other professional bodies were enabled to do so, even though such

Sri Lanka journalists hold a candlelight vigil calling for an end to impunity for crimes against fellow journalists in Colombo, November 25, 2014.



associations are on the decline due to the strong influence the government wields over media houses at present.”

Ibrahim regrets her inability so far to introduce an Ombudsperson in an editorial space that was initially designed to be both inclusive and ethical. Nevertheless, creating a sound workplace environment in terms of facilities for women did bear fruit.

Ibrahim notes that adherence to industry best practices such as the promotion of gender equity and ethical reporting also meant being open to public criticism. There had been complaints about reportage and occasionally about the portrayal of women and the sensitive subject of religious identities. “At such times, apologies have been offered voluntarily. We took responsibility, voluntarily apologised and followed a process of self-correction”, she says.

*Ceylon Today* also has had other firsts, such as monthly guest lectures, many of them dealing with aspects of ethical reporting, including gender and diversity. “We also introduced something that most Sri Lankan newsrooms did not have and still do not: mentoring sessions. We never referred to them as such but invited guest speakers from around the world to come and speak to the editorial. The staff always appreciated such interactions that helped broaden vistas,” says Ibrahim

“We tried to create a women-friendly newsroom that reported on women with care and responsibility. For this, we had women involved in editorial decision-making, in the development of content for women readers and in practically supporting younger women journalists. Still, much work needs to be done to convert an editorial into a truly inclusive one that celebrates equality and diversity,” notes Ibrahim.

# Case Studies

## Vanuatu

### Women, media and economic literacy in the Pacific

Women working in the media often don't get the opportunity to develop skills that can enable them to specialise in any area of reporting, or indeed to use those skills once they have been developed.

The Asia Pacific Journalism Centre's fellowship programme is helping to change that, together with the Media Association blong Vanuatu (MAbV) which supports journalists before, during and after their involvement.

In 2014, the APJC conducted a five-week leadership workshop in Australia for 12 Pacific journalists under the Australia Awards fellowships scheme. It aimed to promote women as news media leaders, with special attention to reporting business and economic news in a way that would appropriately address the role and place of women in local economies, and also appeal to women as audiences.

It is intended that the programme makes a concrete contribution to achieving some of the objectives of the 1995 Beijing Declaration – addressing inequality in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and in access to resources – through the promotion of these issues by women for women. It also addresses a broad spectrum of issues concerning women in the Pacific Islands, including human rights issues such as maternal health, equal opportunity and access to resources (physical and intellectual), and gender-based violence.

MAV was invited to seek nominations from a range of media outlets as well as from freelance journalists working in the country. A particular concern was to find a suitable candidate who could represent and provide the perspective of people from outside the capital, Port Vila.

Due to the high costs involved, there are few opportunities for journalists in Vanuatu to obtain overseas experience. For those from the more remote islands, there are even fewer opportunities. MAV wanted to focus on ensuring opportunities for promising younger journalists, particularly graduates from the first local journalism school – the recently-established School of Media and Journalism at the VIT (Vanuatu Institute of Technology). The first cohort of graduates completed their studies in 2010.

Fern Napwatt, an outstanding graduate in the early stages of a promising media career was eventually selected. She comes from the island of Tanna, one of the most populous islands in Vanuatu – an island also famous among tourists for its active volcano and the John Frum "cargo cult". The island has also more or less retained its strong cultural traditions and is not as modernised as other urban centres on the islands of Efate and Espirito Santo.

Napwatt completed the *Women, Media and Economic Literacy in the Pacific* programme in May 2014 and returned to Vanuatu inspired, informed and ready to put what she learned into practice especially with other young journalists in the country. She and MAV are also working together to give her energy and enthusiasm an outlet not just in her own work but as part of the association's ongoing work.

In her workplace, the *Independent*, the feedback has been equally positive. Napwatt's editor and deputy editor have been working with her to establish a dedicated space in the national weekly newspaper to write about women in general, and women's involvement in business and economic life in particular. They see that women have an increasing role in Vanuatu's formal economy, and they also make up the majority of micro-business entrepreneurs, producing handicrafts and foods for local and international markets. While there is increasing recognition of the importance of women in the economic life of Vanuatu, until now little space has been given to it in the media.

Editor Tony Wilson believes the newspaper, as well as the broader media sector, will benefit from Napwatt's passion and enthusiasm, which can only lead to better reporting of key issues in business relating to women. There are many untold stories out there and the quest for them will bring a new edge and depth to national reporting in these areas, he says.

According to MAV President Evelyne Toa, "the media in Vanuatu need people with leadership skills, especially women and younger media practitioners. Fern has returned to us with a strong commitment to become a leader in media. By actively participating in MAV's activities as a member, she will help promote the core values and ethical principles that distinguish professional journalists."

MAV is keen to promote greater specialisation by journalists and the fellowship provides one way for a journalist to both do this while also encouraging others, especially women, to take an interest in a particular field.

"Fern now recognises that to be truly effective, Vanuatu's media need to support and encourage specialisation in business and economics, health, education, and the environment, and to ensure that women's voices and perspectives are part of that."



# Case Studies

## Vanuatu

### Media tackles gender-based violence

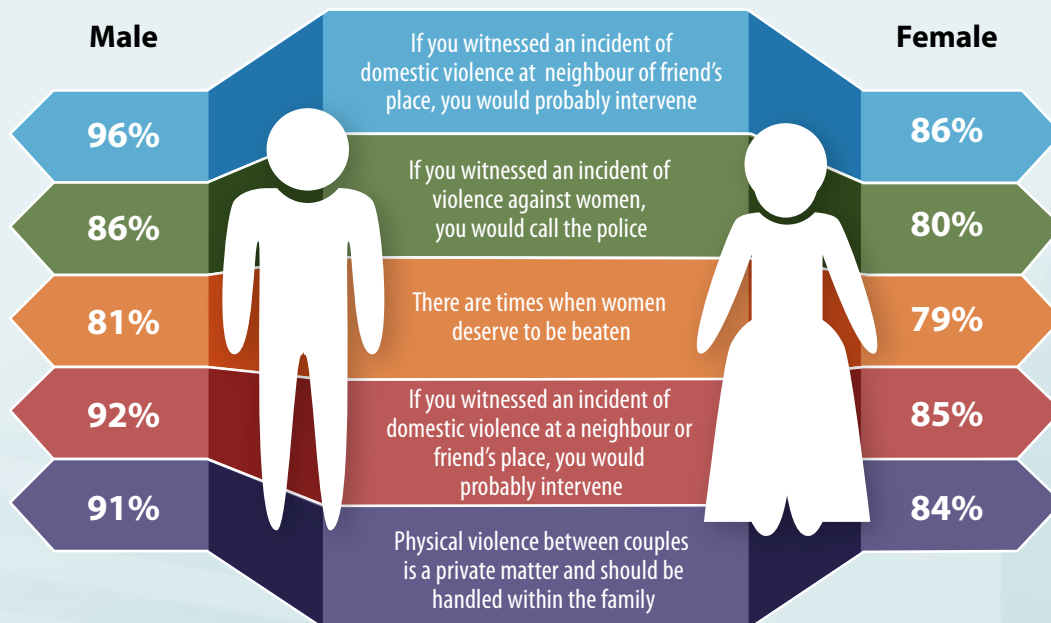
Discrimination and violence against women have been identified as the most prominent human rights abuse in Vanuatu.<sup>53</sup>

But talking about violence against women is not easy in a culture where, according to research, opinions appear to support inequality and legitimise the use of violence in the home. Only recently, with the passage of the Family Protection Act in 2008, have cases of intra-family violence been formally designated and prosecuted as crimes.

#### Graph 10: Opinions on domestic violence

##### Attitudes towards domestic violence

The share of respondents who agreed with this statement



Source: InterMedia, "Citizen Access to Information in Vanuatu: Domestic Violence", Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS), May 2013

As in many other Pacific Island countries, general awareness of human rights is not high in Vanuatu. The practice of talking about human rights and violence against women is new and still seen by some as confrontational. It also has some traditions which can make it hard for people to speak up about complex and difficult issues.

53 Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (2014), Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013: Vanuatu, Washington: United States Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2013/eap/220243.htm> (Accessed 7 December 2014)

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Media coverage of violence against women and girls is a sensitive issue and reporting on such violence can be difficult. More often than not, reports focus on dry statistics and policy pronouncements by governments and NGOs.

Headlines using statistics and general statements can appear to have little or no meaning or relevance to “ordinary” people, such as “Vanuatu has one of the highest rates of domestic violence in the world” or “Reported gender-based violence in Vanuatu is increasing”.

When many people do not understand what “domestic violence” or “gender-based violence” is, it is difficult for them to engage because the language used isn’t what most people understand or relate to. On the other hand, discussing violence at this level can avoid some of the stigma and shame.

The media have a very significant role to play in influencing perceptions of violence against women through reporting on the issue at a local and more personal level, to bring the stories behind the statistics to life and to “tell it like it is”.

There has been a steady increase in reporting on individual cases of violence against women, particularly as they are played out in the judicial system.

This reporting is often based on official records coming out of the courts. But occasionally women have allowed their personal stories to be told in the media, and these accounts are the ones which attract the greatest response from readers, as well as the strongest reactions against what is a significant problem in Vanuatu.

*The Independent*, a weekly newspaper published in Vanuatu’s capital, Port Vila, has recently committed to a series of campaigns highlighting issues affecting women in Vanuatu, and raising public awareness and discussion of them.

Since 2012, *The Independent* has had a dedicated court reporter, which is unusual for Vanuatu where the only specialisation within reporting is generally confined to sport.

The court reporter and the editor of the paper noticed the high proportion of cases of violence against women, including domestic violence, being heard in court. In response they have developed a campaign to help raise public awareness of the problem through a space dedicated to reporting on such cases and following up on stories where relevant and appropriate. Reaction to the campaign has been strong – both in favour of and against the campaign.

MAV has now also committed to developing a gender policy which will focus on providing guidance to media about reporting on gender-based issues to ensure balanced, equitable and responsible reporting.

***This is a summary of the outcomes of a MAV-UN Women collaboration to tackle gender-based violence and media. An event was held to mark International Women Human Rights Defenders Day in November 2013. Participants included MAV, other NGOs, the Vanuatu Government, UN organizations, aid donors and students from the School of Media and Journalism of the VIT.***

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