

# UKAAS - The Reflector E-Newsletter Spring 2017- Volume I



**Uks Research Resource and Publication Centre**

*Empowering Women within and through the Media!*

## Women's Media Complaint Cell (WMCC)

The idea behind creating a complaint cell was to involve and engage the public in voicing their concerns and complaints on content they receive through the media on a daily basis. Uks provides an opportunity to the public to bridge the gap between producers of media content and consumers (the audience). The focus of our endeavour is essentially the portrayal of women in the media.

As an audience, we remain passive; we may abhor media content that is sexist, derogatory, unethical, insensitive, but we fail to take concrete steps to act on our complaints and our revulsion at the demeaning and false depiction of women and women's place in society. Many of us are unaware of the power of gender biased content in shaping and strengthening highly conservative, patriarchal, even misogynist thinking, thereby negatively influencing the lives and aspirations of millions of women through restrictive measures affecting their mobility, right to education, consent in marriage, financial independence etc. Gender biased content also encourages various forms of harassment and violence against women.

We at Uks have, for almost twenty years now, been struggling to gender-sensitize the media. It has been, and it is, an immense challenge. When we began, our focus was on the print media which dominated news and entertainment in this country, and led us, among other efforts, to publish a gender-sensitive Code of Ethics for the Print media. However, just as we believed that our efforts were bearing fruit, and positive changes were being implemented by the print media, the influx of private electronic broadcasting, with multiple television news channels, took gender insensitivity and 'yellow journalism', in particular, to new heights. The main target of

sensationalist media were women; leading us to intensify and broaden our efforts significantly. Although these channels are only available in urban centres, the huge numbers of urban dwellers in Pakistan means about forty percent of the total population, with an annual increase of almost three percent.

In order to address the insensitivity and/or indifference towards women, Uks started consultations with many of the 24/7 news channels. As we endeavoured to raise the news media's awareness of the importance of gender balance, sensitivity and ethics in news coverage, our regular media watch revealed two new challenges; the entertainment media and

Come join the Uks campaign.  
Become part of changing the stereotyped mindsets.  
Participate by registering your complaints with the  
Women's Media Complaint Cell (WMCC) through Uks.

### HOW TO FILE YOUR COMPLAINTS

1. Monitor newspapers, TV, Radio, Social Media or advertisements for any gender insensitive content
2. Write down the name of publication/ channel, date/time of publication/broadcast etc. of any media output that is unfairly portraying women
3. Summarize the content of program, what you think is objectionable, and how you think it violates the Gender Sensitive Code of Ethics\*
4. Report to WMCC by post, phone, email or through social media
5. Complaints would be reviewed by WMCC panel at Uks Research Centre
6. Complaints would be shared with Pakistan Broadcasting Association (PBA) Pakistan Advertisers Association (PAA), Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA), Pakistan Press Council (PPC), All Pakistan Newspaper Society (APNS), Council for Pakistan Newspaper Editors (CPNE) and relevant media organizations and the respective producers of the media output

**The complaints can be sent to Uks:**

- Post! Pakistan Women Media Complaints Cell, PO Box Number 220, Islamabad, Pakistan.
- Phone! +92 51 8430456, or +92 335 0571047
- Email! info@uksresearch.com
- Social media! UksResearchCentre on Facebook or @womenjournalist on Twitter using the hashtag #UksMediaCell

**\*NOTE:** WMCC would address only those complaints that cater to gender insensitive media content. You may review the **Uks's Gender Sensitive Media Code of Ethics** (<http://uksresearch.readyhosting.com/PublicationsPDFs/Code%20of%20Ethics%20Final.pdf>) to determine the exact violation by the media output. You can also download a copy of the Code of Ethics online through the Uks Research Centre's website. (<http://www.uksresearch.com/Publications.html>)

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NED National Endowment for Democracy  
Supporting freedom around the world

social media. This resulted in a more broad-based '[Gender-Sensitive Media: A Voluntary Code of Ethics](#)', developed through consultations, discussions, and consent of mainstream media.

Unfortunately, even though thousands of copies of both codes have been disseminated to the media at every level, from mainstream to regional, and from heads of organisations to reporters and producers, a very small number of media persons appear to give importance to or perhaps comprehend the negative impact on all women of what they write and produce.

In addition to our various projects over the years, and as part of our on-going campaign, Uks in collaboration with the [National Commission on the Status of Women](#) launched in 2013 a Women's Media Complaint Cell as a three-month pilot programme. The results were encouraging, with members of the public gaining a channel to voice their complaints against the media. We at Uks wished to continue this promising project and, from 2015 onwards, were enabled through support by the National Endowment for Democracy to relaunch and maintain the Cell and thus provide a platform to the public for relevant feedback.

Through our various efforts and the support of stakeholders, our team at Uks sincerely hopes that the portrayal and representation of women in news, current affairs, entertainment, advertising, and opinion pages will improve positively.

### Women's Media Cell Activities

The first-of-its-kind complaint mechanism for feedback on media content in the region has an advisory board comprising gender experts, representatives from the media, and members of civil society. In order to generate public response through the WMCC towards stereotypical, insensitive, sexist, misogynist content in the media, Uks also conducts various exercises such as:

- ✓ Media Monitoring and analyses
- ✓ A digital story titled "[Pakistan Entertainment Media: Kal Aur Aaj](#)" has been produced discussing the shift in the content through time from sensitive, decent and positive content towards insensitive, derogatory, stereotypical and gender-biased content. The digital story has been screened at the audience clubs and shared extensively online.
- ✓ Audience clubs that promote and publicize the WMCC and educate the audience on how to file complaints with the Cell and unacceptable content. Audience clubs have been held in two randomly selected districts in each province, and Gilgit-Baltistan.



Karachi Audience Club Meeting



Quetta Audience Club Meeting

- ✓ Sensitization of faculty of media studies and mass communication departments at universities on how to include formal/informal gender sensitisation courses for students in



their curricula. The first of these consultations was held in Islamabad with faculty from the mass communications departments from six universities (SZABIST, NUST, FJWU, Bahria, IIHI, AIOU) in attendance while the second is scheduled in Karachi, later this month.



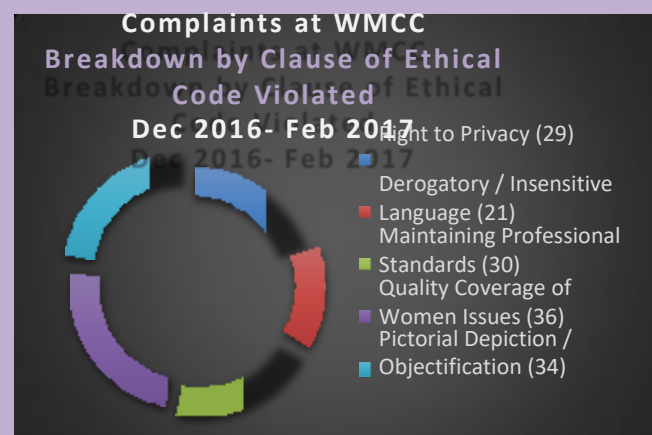
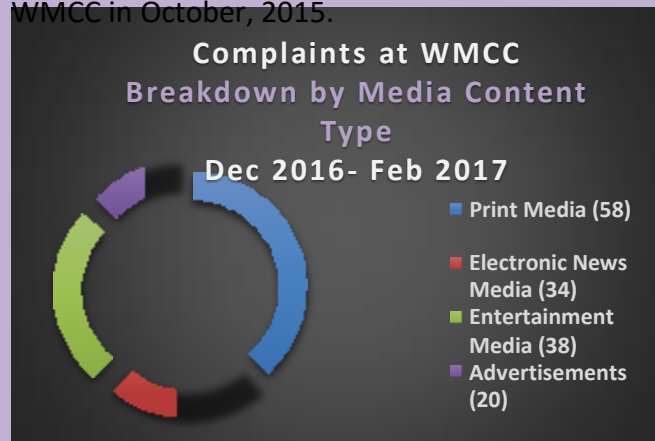
- ✓ Employing SMS Marketing tools, Uks Research Centre arranged to send messages to 200,000 mobile phone users across the country in January this year in order to promote the Women's Media Complaint Cell through five major telecom companies.

The message sent through SMS was:

*English: Be a part of Uks Campaign against Negative Portrayal of Women in media. Roman Urdu: Khamosh mut rahen, media me khawateen ki munfi akkasi par awaz uthayen.*

### WMCC Performance

The brand SMS messages led to a boost in complaints received at the Cell and captured the interest of the audience in the complaint platform. We have received a total of 171 complaints (150 valid) via Whatsapp since December 2016, an impressive figure for a 3-month period as compared to the total of 264 (197 valid) complaints for a one-year period since the launch of WMCC in October, 2015.



Uks looks forward to taking this initiative to its full potential in promoting more gender-sensitive content and greater public accountability within the media. Uks will engage with journalists and media organizations to adopt and follow a gender sensitive code of ethics for the media. Consultations with university teachers and students of media and mass communication have been very encouraging with most participants agreeing to sensitising students by engendering their syllabi, using gender-sensitive code of ethics and to train them to monitor the media through the lens of gender. The audience clubs, mentioned above, will act as focus groups to monitor and analyze media content and submit complaints to the Women's Media Complaint Cell. The complaints will be shared with the relevant media organizations and regulatory bodies (Print, TV, and Radio: PEMRA, PBA, PCP, APNS, and CPNE).

## Pakistan-USA Journalist Exchange Programmes

Uks is currently part of two journalists exchange programmes in Pakistan - one supported by US Department of State that sends Pakistani journalists to US and another brings US media practitioners to Pakistan, supported by International Centre for Journalists.

The Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Oklahoma has partnered with the US Department of State and Uks Research Centre in Pakistan to host a **three-year journalist news media exposure, training and exchange programme**. The programme consists of six exchanges with Pakistani journalists to the US and one exchange with US-based journalists to Pakistan – March 2015 to March 2017. The programme involves



journalists from both countries in opportunities to work together and build long-term professional relationships. It provides participants the opportunity for exposure to a variety of media organizations in both countries and to learn about media reporting in each other's country. Selected participants spend three weeks in a variety of US newsrooms in various parts of the country and take advantage of various opportunities to experience the diversity of life in the US. The four

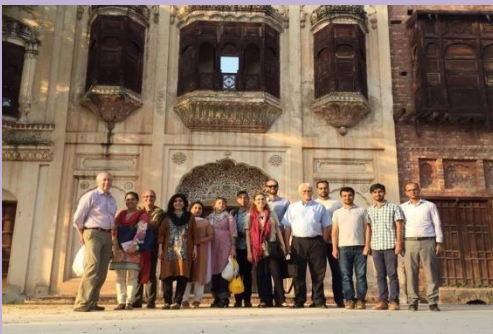
batches of journalists from Pakistan have successfully completed the 20-day extensive training/exposure tour (photos from the September, 2016 tour). The fifth delegation of journalists from both print and electronic media are scheduled for a visit to the US from 18 March 2017 - 8 April 2017.

ICFJ and Uks initiated a landmark **journalists' exchange programme** in August 2016, in which 4 batches of 10 US journalists would be visiting Pakistan to get an up-close exposure and insight into the political and media world and working in Pakistan. The first delegation completed their tour in September 2016. Uks arranged meetings

and tours of various political and government



offices as well as private and state-owned media houses in Islamabad and Karachi. Visits to tourist spots and local cuisines with this learning tour gave just the right mix and flavour of Pakistan! The visit



of the second batch of journalists was scheduled for February 2017 but has been postponed owing to security conditions in the country.

## Uks' Annual Diary 2017 – Publication Launch

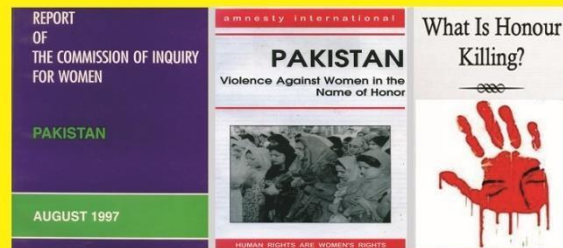
Uks has annually celebrated the successes and achievements of Pakistani women by launching the Annual Desk Diary. What started out, in 1998, initially as a diary covering women's achievements in general, evolved into a thematic collection, each diary picturing the stories and experiences of women who have excelled and contributed in that arena. The Uks diary is a one-of-its-kind yearly publication which contains a compilation of the meticulous research conducted by our team at Uks, derived from monitoring print and digital media over a seventy-year span, beginning 1947 to date. Through the years we have covered numerous themes such as gender-based violence, entrepreneurship, arts and literature, politics, education, health, law and human rights to name a few.

This year's diary, **"The Women of Pakistan Say there is no 'Honour' in Killing"**, analyses Pakistan's media and reporting trends on 'honour' killing.

### Women of Pakistan say There is no "honour" in killing...



**DIARY – 2017**



Uks - A Research, Resource & Publication Centre on Women and Media

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## Uks Radio Project

Uks Radio Project, complementing Uks's advocacy efforts, has been actively involved in production of radio programmes, radio series and more recently, digital stories.

A [radio programme on the coverage of 'h o n o u r' crimes](#) by the media in Pakistan was launched with the Annual Desk Diary Publication on the same theme in January 2017. It provided a critical analysis on the trends in the Pakistani media as well as suggestions to counter such gender unjust and unethical practices.

The team also launched a series of [16 radio programmes](#) in solidarity with the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-



based Violence Campaign, Nov-Dec 2016. In-line with its theme "From Peace in the home to peace in the world: Make education safe for all!" the radio series focused on a wide array of socio-economic barriers in girls' access to their fundamental human right – education.

A [digital story](#) has also been launched that not only analyses the gender insensitive media content, news and entertainment, but also encourages media audiences to voice their concerns through WMCC! The digital stories include video comments from executives from media, civil society and government organisations.

## The Positive Changes that Uks has monitored

At Uks, we believe that our decades' old struggle to capture the attention and collaboration of the media to incorporate a gender sensitive and gender balanced vision in media coverage has produced positive results in the news and entertainment media, at least to some extent. After the initiatives taken by Uks over the years, others are now coming forward to counter the negative and stereotypical portrayal of women in the entertainment media, especially with respect to television dramas. We are confident that change is in the air; but we need continuous follow up and support.

Advertising has been another major factor in the stereotypical portrayal of women. However, this year the



[advertisement released by Gul Ahmed](#), one of Pakistan's largest textile business houses (among other products) has broken with tradition and is a case in point. It definitely breaks stereotypes!

Again, in the [BBC radio programme](#) "Khawateen ka Tashukhus aur Media mein un ki Kirdar Nigari" (Women's Identity and their Portrayal in the Media), a series produced by the BBC on the portrayal

of women in the media, Ms Tasneem Ahmar, Director of Uks Research Centre and Sultana Siddiqui, ED of Hum TV Network were invited as guests. The show was hosted by Wusat Ullah Khan. The topic centred on the portrayal of women in the news and entertainment media. The main theme of the discussion focused on audience feedback that could prove to be the foundation of positive change in the media. Feedback could take several forms, for example, complaints citing general and specific instances through letters to the editor, or to the channel concerned. The onus was on the audience to be proactive and report their reactions to the media. A similar discussion was monitored in a segment on the [BBC Urdu Programme 'Sairbeen'](#) (segment at 6:40 of the link shared). In the segment, the role of women as depicted in most cases in the entertainment media, especially in television dramas, was discussed. The guest speaker, Sania Saeed, a well-known actor of television and theatre, said that the entertainment media is an add-on to the stereotypes, and *"interestingly, these dramas are written by women and their biggest consumers are women"*. Participants concluded that stereotypes were internalized through such plays. The guest speaker also pointed to the presence of empowered Pakistani women and challenged the media to represent their reality through characterizations in TV plays. It was recommended that the central issues surrounding stereotypical presentations that negated the abilities and power of women, need to be understood by all stakeholders. Sensitization training should be arranged for producers, writers, actors and especially those running these channels that often compromise sensitive and valid representations of women for easy money.

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