

**UKAAS – THE REFLECTOR**  
**AUTUMN-WINTER/AUGUST-DECEMBER**

**2020**

**OF STORIES TRUE  
AND FALSE**

**WHAT'S BEEN  
HAPPENING AT UKS**

**WHAT HAS UKS  
BEEN WORKING ON**

**THE GOOD, BAD  
AND UGLY**

## OF STORIES TRUE AND FALSE!

Watched a drama serial 'Aik Jhooti Love Story', and by the time it ended, my mind was already flooded with hundreds of stories and images from drama serials on our entertainment TV channels that I have watched, not out of personal choice, but more as a media monitor and analyst - and I can assuredly say that AJLS is refreshingly different.

The serial is based on pressing issues our women - young and old - and especially those from the middle to lower income strata, face on a daily basis.

Many thoughts cross my mind while watching these

One dominant thought has always been the manner in which women are portrayed in most of these plays. It seems the drama writers of today are reluctant to face and accept the reality that our Constitution gives women equal rights, that there should not be any discrimination on the basis of gender. There was a time when the argument used was that it is men who write most of the content for cinema as well as TV plays, hence many would lack gender sensitivity and understanding of issues through a lens of gender. Though this argument held true for cinema, television in Pakistan was lucky to have writers -men and women- who depicted the issues that were around us. From Khuda ki Basti based on Shaukat Siddiqui's masterpiece novel to Shahzori by Hasina Moeen - PTV gave us great entertainment that didn't appear fake or insensitive.

Then came the era of opening up of airwaves that gave us access to dozens of news and entertainment channels. The flip side was that we slowly plunged into a sea of content that has gradually gone from bad to worse. In these almost twenty years, many women (and some men) who used to write for the state channel and had then switched to the private channels, got disheartened with the kind of demands that were made by channels, purely for something called 'ratings'. The standard of content from the times of Haseena Moin, Noorul Huda Shah, Bano Qudsia, Asghar Nadeem Syed and some other writers, had started to fall. Gradually, we saw our entertainment channels falling for the 'sellable' that was offered by a lot of women who used to write for women's digests - basically pulp fiction.

An obvious outcome of this 'could-have-been-avoided' degradation was the way women were being portrayed in these plays. From strong, women-centric dramas and serials, we had moved to the formula scripts, with very obvious storylines. From women being typecast - sacrificing mothers and wives, obedient daughters and sisters, the focus of our drama serials is now on how to humiliate women. Otherwise how would one justify the portrayal of women from the catty, selfish, scheming ones to the coy, submissive, docile ones? And one thing that is so common in these women is that they all have no brains, cannot think or act on their own. The recent dramas have reduced women to only a show piece, taking away the powerful elements of their persona.





# EDITORIAL

There are a few very regular messages being sent out to the audience - that women are a weaker sex, they are not capable of being individuals, they are totally dependent on men for their survival, and finally that all women have to be married by a certain age, as that is the most important role expected. This is slow-poisoning the minds of our viewers, most of whom already are believers and followers of patriarchy. All this reinforcing of stereotypes is a deliberate attempt to push those women towards the walls who have dared to challenge the system and made it in the outside world. And here we are watching dramas that, 99.9 percent of the time, are only based on a triangle - mohabbat-shaadi-talaq (love-marriage-divorce). There is no celebration of women who are more than just caregivers, are excellent in their professions, are high achievers, hardworking, and ambitious. It's true that our society has pre-assigned roles for women, essentially as caregivers, and also true that many women are also conditioned to believe that that is their primary role. And that women are not to have ambitions and professions - period. But, the one very important role of media - be it news, current affairs or entertainment - is to educate the viewers and change the existing patriarchal mindsets. One way of doing so could be by changing the existing narrative. If these entertainment channels can try and get content that does not shy away from taking up challenges of showing that women are very capable beings, that they want a lot more from life than falling in love, getting married by a certain age and feeling useful even if not married. No one is against marriage, but why make it the only purpose in women's lives?

And this is why Aik Jhooti Love Story came up as an alternative - and a good one. Sadly, it was not considered fit enough by our channels and had to be done in collaboration with Zee TV.

**TASNEEM AHMAR**  
**DIRECTOR**





# WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING AT UKS

## #Real Not Reel Women – A 25-Day Campaign

“A real woman of Pakistan is an achiever. She is great in sports. She is in the armed forces. She is in the police. She is in the agriculture business. She is in the industry. She is everywhere. And this is what we want the media to focus on.”

(Tasneem Ahmar, Director, Uks)

Uks celebrated 73 years of Pakistan's independence by highlighting the country's 'real' women as opposed to the 'reel' women usually portrayed in news, entertainment and advertising media. We are all aware that the under-representation and relative silencing of women's voices, as well as the systemic sexualization and objectification of women in the media, try to bar women from participating equally in public discourse. These attitudes, in turn, contribute to a cultural devaluing of women that further entrenches gender inequalities and discrimination against girls and women. The ongoing and universal negative media portrayal and representation of women has been a contributor to gender-based violence and the marginalization of and discrimination against women. We do realise that while media does not create gender in-equality, it does promote it. What we read, listen to and view on our TV screens, are often too removed from reality. The projection or depiction of women as naïve, weak, indecisive, fashion-driven, ready to be objectified, brainless, catty, vindictive and more is what we see in the media. In fact, we could easily say that almost 90 percent of the content is stereotypical, regressive and far from reality. And this needs to be changed.

So, as a counter to this regressive and unreal projection and portrayal, Uks conducted a 25-day campaign spotlighting the 'real' women. Every day, from August 05 to August 20, 2020, Uks focused on stories, narratives and opinions ranging from rights to exploitation, from facts to myths and from struggles to achievements. The aim was simple: to remove the tunnel-vision approach towards women's development and create awareness among general public that women in Pakistan are neither the weaker nor the fairer sex. These are hardworking, resilient, courageous and absolutely wonderful women who are significantly diverse in their interests, appearance, ambition, ability, aspirations and dreams.



# WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING AT UKS

## Uks Weekly bulletin: Women in the Public Eye

### WOMEN IN THE PUBLIC EYE

21.01.20

A weekly bulletin on news and views through the gender lens



I BELIEVE THAT WOMEN CAN BE THE ARCHITECTS OF A BETTER WORLD

-MELINDA GATES  
PHILANTHROPIST

#### PAKISTAN'S MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE OBJECTS TO THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE GENERAL ELECTIONS

The ministry of law and justice expressed condescending remarks regarding women contesting in the general elections. They expressed their disapproval with the entire idea of including women and stated that women can not give enough time to their duties as a political figure and are not "independent" hence, they should not be allowed to contest in the general elections.

#### WOMEN'S POWER RUN



The Women's Power ZRun took place on 6 December, 2020.

53 Pakistani women took place in this marathon to pay tribute to Pakistani women by participating in this Women's Power Run.

the event was organized by Born2Run Pakistan which is a not-for-profit organisation

SOURCE: THE NATION AND TRIBUNE

Launched on **October 28, 2020**, this new initiative of Uks is a weekly publication which focuses primarily on gender-related news. Usually presented as a four-page bulletin, this covers all types of media (electronic, print and digital) to extract gender-related material of every genre (entertainment, news, opinions and current affairs). The bulletin is published every week on Wednesdays. Uks published 10 editions of the weekly bulletin till December 2020.

# WHAT HAS UKS BEEN WORKING ON

## Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP)



The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) is the world's longest-running and most extensive research on gender in the news media. After every five years, on a particular day, GMMP produces a descriptive analysis of the representation and portrayal of men and women in the news across the world. Pakistan became a member of this project in 2010 after Uks was designated as the national coordinator having rich experience in media monitoring in Pakistan. After the previous GMMPs of 2010, 2015, Uks conducted the 3rd GMMP in Pakistan on 29th September 2020.

A one-day training for GMMP was first conducted by Uks on 25th September, 2020 which aimed at familiarizing media monitors with new tools of monitoring news media and training these news monitors to adapt to these new tools. These enhanced tools consisted of new monitoring sheets comprising questions that a monitor should keep in mind, for an in-depth critical analysis as they go on to monitor different news media in order to know what they are supposed to look for and what they have to submit as part of the monitoring; which will eventually enrich the GMMP report



# WHAT HAS UKS BEEN WORKING ON

## Citizen Engagement for Responsive & Accountable Governance (CERAG)

From January 01, 2017 to June 30, 2020, the Omar Asghar Khan Development Foundation initiated and implemented a 42-month long project titled 'Citizen Engagement for Responsive & Accountable Governance' (CERAG), led by the Omar Asghar Khan Foundation and funded by the European Union. As is the case with most community-based projects, there are a number of achievements, and behind every achievement is a story. To highlight these stories, share information, create awareness and get feedback on the achievements of the CERAG project, Uks produced 15 radio programmes and 10 public service messages (PSMs) and broadcasted them from FM stations. Many FM radio stations in Pakistan have emerged as a viable medium for the semi-urban and rural communities to bring their concerns to a wider audience and to eventually garner the state's attention, giving these usually voiceless communities their due share in the democratic process.

### i) Sanjhi Koshish, Sanjhi Taraqi

A series of 15 radio programmes and 10 public service messages (PSMs) were produced for CERAG. The programmes focused on highlighting technical assistance provided by the project to 12 districts in KP and brought to light different stories from the project's beneficiaries.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8I8QhoB8Ei4>

### ii) Taraqi ki Kahani, Hamari Zabani

A webinar was held with a panel of renowned journalists, activists and writers and focused on highlighting the enormous potential that exists in the media to promote social issues and causes for wider public awareness.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-qTklmVN\\_uM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-qTklmVN_uM)



**SANJHI KOSHISH, SANJHI TARAQI**

**PRODUCER: QUDSIA MEHMOOD**  
**EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: TASNEEM AHMAR**

A series of 15 radio programmes, drawing lessons from a four-year project: Citizen Engagement for Responsive & Accountable Governance led by Omar Asghar Khan Foundation and funded by the European Union.

In 12 districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the project improved access of nearly 500,000 households to clean drinking water, better schools and health facilities, roads and other services.

# WHAT HAS UKS BEEN WORKING ON

## WACC Project: Strengthening and Amplifying the Voices of Women in and through the Media

For the WACC project, Uks held a series of 3 different activities:

### 1. Digital Story Competition on Resilience in the Times of COVID-19

Across Pakistan, there are tales of women braving the odds to overcome the everyday crises ushered in by the COVID-19 pandemic. From safeguarding the confines of their homes to ensuring care and healthcare for all, from ensuring households keep running to keeping factories and workshops running to meet pandemic demands, from tech-based interventions to watching over mosques and markets, Pakistani women have been resolute and steadfast in their responses to the pandemic.

To help tell these extraordinary stories of extraordinary women, Uks held a digital story competition inviting people to interview 5-7 such women, particularly those involved in the informal sector and participate in the competition to win cash prizes. Participants could choose whichever themes they liked from a given list of 7 themes for their stories, which included: Mobility, Sports, Environment, Political Participation, Economic Participation, Agents of Change and Violence Against Women and Girls.

### 2. Comparative Analysis of High Profile and Daily Reported Rape and Gang Rape Cases in the Media.

Uks monitored 6 media outlets and produced two media monitoring reports based on the collected data and analysis. Publications of the following two English dailies and two Urdu dailies, along with 9 pm bulletins of two national news television channels, were monitored.

- a. Daily Dawn
- b. The News
- c. Daily Pakistan (Lahore Edition)
- d. Daily Khabrain
- e. Geo News

f. Aab Tak News

- Media was monitored from 9th September 2020 - 15th September 2020 (One Week) for language analysis of reporting on the Motorway Gang-Rape Case.
- Media was monitored from 1st November 2020 - 7th November 2020 (One Week) in order to quantify the media reporting of general rape cases.

It was observed that the electronic media gives prime time slots to only those particular rape cases which become a public sensation. General rape or gang-rape cases which cannot grab the attention of high profile executives and judges are usually not paid much attention to by the media.



# WHAT HAS UKS BEEN WORKING ON

## 3. Journalists' Webinar: "Will the Media Start Reporting Rape?" - WACC Activity

To mark the International Human Rights Day, Uks and WACC Global jointly organised a webinar on the topic 'Will the Media Start Reporting Rape?' with renowned journalists, media practitioners and human rights activists as panelists. The purpose of the webinar was to generate a debate among the participants on the mismatch of media's reporting on rape cases with the actual rape incidents happening in the country.

Anchoring the webinar, Tasneem Ahmar, Executive Director, Uks, drew a quick comparison between the rape statistics by sharing Uks's work on reporting of rape incidents with the audience and highlighted the fact that the language used regarding these incidents was worth a second glance.

Editor, Daily Dawn, Zaffar Abbas, acknowledged that although improvement has been seen, there is still room for improvement regarding reporting of rape cases. He also admitted that it is hard to report all the cases with current rate of rape incidents, and recommended that there should be specific and sole monitoring for the purpose of collecting data and publication of statistics.

Zarrar Khuhro, a TV show host, questioned the content of reported rape incidents as he stated that it was more important to note what is actually being said than whether or not it's being reported because it is probably being reported just for the sake of it.

Huma Amir Shah, a famous morning show host on Geo News, touched upon the dilemma of insensitive and unethical projection of rape cases on social media. Referring to the Kashmore Child Rape case, she shed light on another aspect that the media uses words with the wrong connotation like "ziyaddi" saying that the equivalent for the word rape doesn't exist in Urdu.

Political talk show host, Asma Shirazi agreed that certain cases gain more attention and others don't and similarly other beats always gain special attention even though rape is an equally important discussion and yet there are only certain slots that cover rape. But she believed that something worth mentioning is the progress the media has made regarding protecting the privacy of a victim.

Chairperson of HRCP, Zohra Yusuf said that rape of a minor is assertion of power. Cases of rape of a woman and girls are addressed more than that of boys in madrassas. She also said that although the reports get a huge spotlight, however very little follow-up is done afterwards in the media reporting.

Drama writer, Bee Gul expressed sorrow over the fact that people seem to entertain themselves with rape cases. She also expressed that portrayal of rape is very hard keeping in mind that it could trigger people. She said that it is important to change the mindsets of people who suppress rape cases but ensuring safe portrayal is important.

Riaz Sohail, a journalist associated with BBC Urdu, elaborated a few ethical codes regarding the reporting of rape with respect to protecting the survivors' identity. A well-versed female reporter, Fauzia Shahid, expressed her dismay and frustration over the mentality of Urdu newspapers as they still appear to be very conservative, while journalist, Zafar Baloch, stated that reporting does take place in Baluchistan and the media did try its best to get to the victims of harassment and rape victims but the victims failed to open up about these issues in this particular area.

Bureau Chief, Aaj News, Peshawar, Farzana Ali, said that the survivor always finds it hard to open up about this discussion as there are certain aspects that affect their confidence, including their own family.

Executive Director, Uks, Tasneem Ahmar concluded the discussion by saying that the word rape should be normalised both in English and Urdu media.

# WHAT HAS UKS BEEN WORKING ON

## Dialogue for change (DFC)

Uks holds this on-going activity to take up burning issues and create awareness around them by generating a debate. Usually based around highlighting gender issues, these dialogues bring together relevant professionals from the topic under discussion and invites them to share their views and opinions on the issue. The following DFCs were held by Uks during this reporting period:

### **Amplifying Women's Voices and Creating Gender Balance in the Media**

With women's perspectives under-represented in media, how can journalists increase the gender mix and diversity of their news sources and the experts they quote? Uks has been working for a long time on promoting a gender balance in media coverage and content, monitoring news and entertainment for tone, visuals, representation in displays, placements (whether business, sports, entertainment, etc.) in their portrayals of women. Under its regular feature, Dialogue for Change, Uks brought another important and thought-provoking discussion on 'Why the Voices of Women Matter?' This discussion was particularly helpful in making both men and women understand the importance of giving balanced representation to all voices and perspectives for truly diverse and meaningful content. Moderated by Uks, the panelists included women journalists from both print and electronic media.

UKS  
PRESENTS

## Dialogue for Change

AMPLIFYING WOMEN'S VOICES AND CREATING GENDER  
BALANCE IN THE MEDIA

SHAISTA YASMEEN  
MODERATOR

LUBNA JERAR NAQVI  
FREELANCE JOURNALIST  
KARACHI

NADIA SABOOHI  
GED NEWS  
PESHAWAR

GAITI ARA ANIS  
PRODUCER VOA  
ISLAMABAD

QUDSIA MEHMOOD  
FREELANCE RADIO PRODUCER  
ISLAMABAD

27th

4-5  
PM

The recording of this DFC will be available  
on all Uks social media handles

### **Women's Inheritance Rights**

Around 80% of women in Pakistan are not given their share of inheritance in their parents' property. This goes up to almost 100% in provinces like Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. For this importance discussion under Dialogue for Change, Provincial Ombudsperson, Rakhshanda Naz and Advocate PHC, Mehwish Muhib Kakakhel, talked about the inheritance rights of women. Shaista Yasmeen, Projects Manager-Uks, introduced a report produced by the Uks program team on a working woman fighting for her inheritance rights.



# WHAT HAS UKS BEEN WORKING ON

## 16 Days of Activism

Radio Program – COVID-19: How it Impacts Women and Doctors

Uks aired a radio program to mark the '16 Days of Activism' which highlighted two important effects of the COVID-19 pandemic – domestic violence and the impact on front line workers. The show featured two interviews, one in which a survivor of domestic violence talked about her ordeal, and the other of a doctor who shared his experience of fighting this pandemic.

## Uks' representation on various platforms

As a respected voice in the area of gender and media, Uks gets called upon regularly to participate in special features, programs, and discussions held by other organizations. Uks was honored to participate in the following during this reporting period:

### Feature in Daily Voice of Pakistan

Shaista Yasmeen, Projects Manager-Uks, featured in a special report on Violence Against Women in the Daily Voice of Pakistan where she talked about the alarming rise in domestic violence cases following the COVID-19 lockdown and how steps can be taken to recognize it and seek help.

Click the link below to see the article in Daily Voice of Pakistan

<https://www.facebook.com/uksresearch/photos/a.4227676023970524/4768636843207770>

### Article on Anti-Rape Ordinance in Dawn Urdu

Shaista Yasmeen, Projects Manager-Uks, also featured in a special report published in Dawn Urdu on the new anti-rape ordinance in the country where she was representing the civil society. She talked about the importance of legislation which reflects the government's commitment to resolving the rising crime rate by taking prompt action. However, she also emphasized that just legislation is not enough, until and unless it is properly implemented and followed. Read the article at the link:

<https://www.dawnnews.tv/news/1150481>

Following are some links where Uks was represented by the Executive Director, Tasneem Ahmar, on different platforms:

### 360 VOA

<https://www.instagram.com/tv/CGSLtkZHKZ8/?igshid=173qzw9jx5bxa>

### IBA Webinar

<https://www.facebook.com/118974358174065/posts/4435828493155275/?sfnsn=scwspmo>

# WHAT HAS UKS BEEN WORKING ON

## COVID-19 RESPONSE

With the COVID-19 pandemic taking over the year 2020, it was only natural that Uks would also be working on highlighting various aspects associated with the pandemic or as an outcome of it.

### 1. Press Release urging the national media to top politicizing the pandemic

Early in the year, in March 2020, Uks took out a press release where it made three appeals to media practitioners, advertisers and the public.

Uks asked media practitioners to kindly avoid taking up issues with a premeditated agenda of political score setting; try not to invite guests who you know will engage in political arguments. And to kindly remember that “Your five seconds of preaching on ‘unity’ is not going to have an impact after an hour-long programme full of political bashing, accusations and counter-accusation.”

It asked the advertisers and their clients to show some national and social responsibility. “Please see, if you can completely stay away from supporting content that incites the public, hinges on hate speech and creates national and regional divisions in this gravest of grave times? Losing a little money is better than losing human lives.”

And it asked the public to reject politicised and mundane debates. “Demand reports from professionals in the field of infectious disease – or anyone with any level of understanding about the pandemic is easy to understand and is as up to date as possible. Although the numbers are of interest to you, it’s also important for you to see the story behind the numbers, of success stories, of best practices.”

Lastly, they asked the entire media, but specifically the 24/7 TV channels, their owners, managing directors, bureau chiefs, and above all the anchors and analysts to also show some responsibility, and refrain from politicising Covid-19.

### 2. Just Neutral, Biased or Blind? Pakistani Media in the Time of COVID-19: A Gendered Focus

This report is the product of a nine-month-long research endeavor that was based on extensive media monitoring and content analysis of selected Pakistani mainstream news media on their coverage of COVID-19 through an intersectional gender lens.

The report, *to be published soon*, has been powered by the Centre for Women’s Global Leadership at the Rutgers University and the Journalism Initiative on Gender-Based Violence.



PAKISTANI MEDIA IN THE TIME OF COVID-19:  
A GENDERED FOCUS



# THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

Uks is constantly monitoring the media and analyzing the content for gender balance, bias and blindness and this section attempts to rank 3 different products which show the good, the bad and the ugly happening in the media.

## THE GOOD

### Tapal Danedar Tea:

Tapal Danedar becomes a game changer with this television commercial starring Syra Yousaf and Ahmed Ali Akbar. In a switch from the norm of Pakistani channels, this ad features a young woman calling home to tell her husband that she's working and will be home late. Immediately afterwards, we see tea being made and then the tired woman comes in quietly so as not to disturb her sleeping husband and drops down on the sofa.



But the husband comes up behind her with a tray with two steaming mugs of tea. In response to her surprised query on whether he was waiting up for her, he simply states that she always waits up for him too. This gender roles reversal by Tapal Danedar wins Uks's approval and it is hoped that more such content will be created where making tea and waiting up, or on the other side, working late in an office, are not roles defined by gender, but by ability and common courtesy. Click the link below to see the ad:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=USimeziv9WU&ab\\_channel=RizCreations](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=USimeziv9WU&ab_channel=RizCreations)



# THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

## THE BAD

### DUNK

Ary Digital's new drama serial Dunk has had people in an uproar. There is a huge controversy surrounding this drama serial with deals with the issue of sexual harassment in educational institutions. Supposed to be based on a true story, Dunk has nevertheless created much agitation, from threats against its actors on social media, to countless interviews by the serial's team clarifying their roles and stating their positions. Many have alleged that this serial negates the #MeToo movement, by showing a young girl falsely accusing her professor of harassment. Others have claimed that there are many sides to a story, and Dunk focuses on the wrongly accused victim's side, and also shows how such an allegation affects not just him, but his entire family's lives, livelihoods and social standing. The drama also highlights the role of the media in publicizing such cases and how the consequences have the power to destroy lives. While the serial is ongoing and it remains to be seen exactly how such intricate issues will be addressed, the furor it has created, particularly on social media, and the sheer volume of the vitriol against its cast and producer shows how intolerant a society we're becoming and that is real cause for concern.





# THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

## THE UGLY

The section highlights a live debate in a talk show on a nationwide popular TV channel by two female political figures and how it escalates into a fish-market fight. It is deplorable how, more and more, we are witnesses to such behavior on public forums from people who hold high offices. It also shows how the media has adopted a tendency of egging-on such behavior in order to increase viewership and ratings.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8\\_g31ou7kQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8_g31ou7kQ)

