



UKAAS-THE REFLECTOR

Fall- Winter 2022-23

Editorial: A Safe Pakistan for Women, When and How?

Lahore, February 12, 1983, a group of women gathered for a rally against the increasing injustices and violations of women and human rights under the military rule of Zia-ul-Haq. They were chanting slogans for the restoration of democracy and basic human rights in the face of dictatorship, regressive policies and all overt and covert efforts to push women behind four walls. It was a peaceful rally. Yet the police beat them up, shelled and pelted stones. The Late Habib Jalib, who was part of the protest received a head injury, and several women were badly injured. It was a day to remember and reinforce WAF and the resistance movement. Since then, February 12 has been celebrated as women's empowerment day. Some years later, former prime minister Yousuf Raza Gilani declared this day as Pakistan's National Women's Day.



It is 2023, and we have just celebrated February 12, marking 40 years of that unforgettable day. Given the significance of PNWD this year, we saw many messages from political leaders about how as a nation we should all salute the struggles of those courageous women and men who stood against a dictator, undeterred. The question is: can statements and speeches deliver what Pakistan's women need? It is important to refresh the memories of those who are in a perpetual state of denial about the state of this country's women. Those who speak the truth and state the facts about women are not maligning and bringing a bad name to the land of the pure. In doing so, they are expressing their patriotism, their concern and love for the motherland.

Here's a reality check. Pakistan ranks as the sixth most dangerous country in the world for women, with cases of sexual crimes and domestic violence recording a rapid rise. Pakistan is among five countries that have a gender gap greater than 5%. On a positive note, the Gender Gap Report 2002 also reveals that Pakistan had closed 56.4% of the gender gap in 2022 – the highest overall level of parity the country has posted since the report launched in 2006. Yet there is still a long way to go. Pakistan was ranked 145th in a survey of 146 countries. The country has some 107 million women who have only two-thirds of the rights of men. And the list goes on. From low literacy rates to high dropout rates. From high maternal mortality to a wide disparity in wages. High incidences of sexual harassment and an increasing number of rapes. There is no end to the inequalities and injustices that ordinary Pakistani women face in their day-to-day lives.

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Two horrific incidents and two news stories that made it to the media stand out.

The incidents were of rape: one in a public park in the heart of Pakistan's capital Islamabad, where a woman walking with a colleague was gang raped by two men. The rapists had the audacity to tell the woman she should not be out in public after dark.

The other incident was of a bus guard who allegedly raped an 18-year-old bus hostess at gunpoint within the limits of the Daniwal suburb in Punjab's Vehari district. The incident took place in a moving bus while it was travelling from Mailsi to Vehari with no passengers in the vehicle. All the passengers got off at Mailsi when the bus left Sadiqabad. The hostess was subjected to sexual violence while the vehicle was being taken to the bus stand. According to the police, the driver assisted the guard. He shut the bus doors and did not stop the vehicle.



The two news reports, that added fuel to fire, were: Gomal University, a co-education institute warned female students "to be careful and limit themselves to classrooms" or strict action will be taken against those violating the rules.

Neo News claimed that "90% of female students living in hostels/guest houses off campus in Lahore were drug addicts and even sex workers." The 'senior journalist' who dropped this 'bomb' on hundreds of students and parents/guardians, had no solid research-based investigation to support his highly inflammable claims. The report did not mention the research methodology, the size of the survey sample, the number of in-depth interviews, and how many male students were interviewed. and most importantly, how he derived the precise figure of 90% without a research study?

Each of these stories lay bare an unrelenting, continued push to rescind women's rights and confine them to the four walls. Pakistan's women don't need another sorry reminder of their already restricted mobility. Hundreds of women have already stopped going to parks after the F-9 park rape. The rapists' warning 'don't come out after dark', cannot be taken lightly. It is reflective of the regressive mindset that we as a society and particularly women face everyday.

The Vehari rape case is not just another rape. It is a closing of the doors of job opportunities for women. Most people will only see these young girls as bus hostesses. What they don't know or don't want to know are the pressures and struggles these young women go through, from applying to the job to getting permission from their families to returning home safely after duty. Such incidents scare families. For them to let women of their families work at a job where they are dealing with passengers, who are mostly male, is in itself a huge decision.

Gomal University's decision to curtail the movement of female students' is most unfortunate as it reflects the mindset that is tolerant of unruly men who cannot control themselves around women. And unfortun-

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ately the safest way of providing security to these women students that the university administration could come up with was to keep them caged in the classes. Instead of reigning in the culprits. Yet another example of victim shaming.

The Neo News report is equally dangerous. Did the journalist not realise how many hurdles he created for the girls living in these hostels? Did he not think about the caused stress and fear among parents and guardians of the girls, many of whom would wonder if they should let their daughters continue their studies at all?

While these incidents hold up a mirror to the regressive outlook on women's right to safety and peaceful living, with equal rights of movement and mobility, they also reflect the growing tendency to rape, harass or abuse women in public spheres and spaces. The governments, provincial or federal, the policy planners, academia, civil society and the media continually fail to focus on the real problem. The focus must shift from restricting women's movements and their rights to education and employment towards teaching men and boys to behave. If there are rapists and harassers out in the open, you do not cage potential victims. You CAGE THE CULPRIT.

May society support Pakistani women in improving their lot, only then can we celebrate February 12 - our day - with pride, safety and a sense of equality!

Tasneem Ahmar
Executive Director



Uks' team has been busy providing support at these platforms

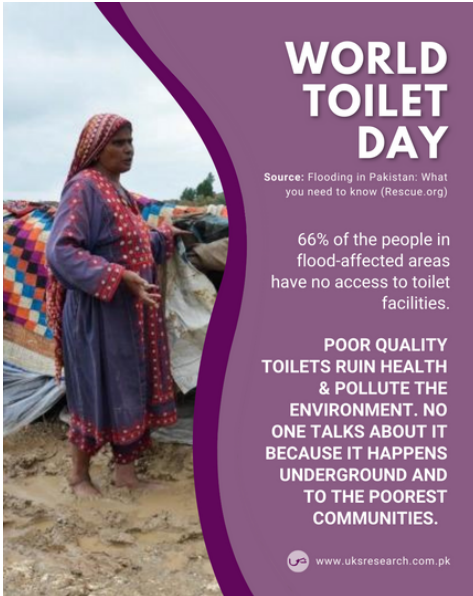
SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN ON FLOODS 2022

With the death toll topping 1,200, the dramatic monsoon flooding that covered a third of Pakistan, left more than half a million homeless.

Images of the suffering were shared around the world. They showed homes that were submerged, children who went hungry, and infrastructure that was damaged. On 23 August 2022, amidst the disaster, Uks started a social media campaign focused on providing information about the devastation and support to the flood-hit areas. Like all things Uks, the campaign had a special focus on the issues especially faced by displaced women and girls. The posts were reposted by Dawn Images and Express Tribune Instagram. Check out the campaign at:

[Dawn Images Instagram](#)

[Express Tribune Instagram](#)



WORLD TOILET DAY

Source: Flooding in Pakistan: What you need to know (Rescue.org)

66% of the people in flood-affected areas have no access to toilet facilities.

POOR QUALITY TOILETS RUIN HEALTH & POLLUTE THE ENVIRONMENT. NO ONE TALKS ABOUT IT BECAUSE IT HAPPENS UNDERGROUND AND TO THE POOREST COMMUNITIES.

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WHAT TO SEND WOMEN AND GIRLS IN DISASTER ZONES

1. Sanitary napkins
2. Pair of underwear
3. Milk Powder and Baby food
4. Shalwar Kameez With Dupattas/Chaadars
5. Women's shoes and slippers (preferably plastic)
6. Bath soap
7. Detergent powder
8. Toothpaste and toothbrush
9. Combs

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خوراک کا عالمی دن ہر سال 16 اکتوبر کو منایا جاتا ہے۔
حالیہ سیلاب سے آنے والی تباہی کو مد نظر رکھتے ہوئے
ہمیں خوراک کے لیے جا ضیاع سے بچنا ہے تاکہ ہر
شخص کے لئے خوراک کی مسلسل فراہمی کو یقینی
بنایا جاسکے۔



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LIVESTOCK DESTROYED	MAJOR CROPS DESTROYED	ACRES OF CROPS GONE
733K	65%	2M

Farmers have lost their livelihoods and their homes, because of the floods. The resulting food shortage is a major concern for Pakistani, as is the future of those who depend upon agriculture to make ends meet.



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18,590

Schools have been destroyed or damaged by the floods in Pakistan

THAT MEANS 670,000 CHILDREN'S EDUCATION HAS BEEN AFFECTED

The 16 million displaced children are the latest to join the 22.8 million children who are out of school. Pakistanis cannot afford further loss of learning among children who already missed out on months of education during COVID-19.

Source: No back-to-school for thousands of children as nearly 19,000 schools damaged, destroyed by floods in Pakistan (Relief Web)

Uks' team has been busy providing support at these platforms

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

During Breast Cancer awareness week, Uks created a campaign about the disease that occurs largely in women. Between 3rd and 8th October 2022, Uks' social media platforms were devoted to advocating for and raising awareness about Breast Cancer and its prevention.



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HOPSCOTCH DISCUSSION: DO PAKISTANI TV DRAMAS GET IT RIGHT WHEN IT COMES TO MENTAL HEALTH?

Under its Hopscotch initiative Uks organized an online discussion 'Do Pakistani TV dramas get it right when it comes to Mental Health?' The platform became a catalyst for a vibrant discussion that examined how mental illness was generalized and stereotyped in TV dramas. Some participants pointed out that psychiatric disorders were often depicted using exaggerated, and comical characters. The eclectic group that joined the conversation included media personnel, activists, writers, directors, and journalists. There was a general consensus that there was a strong need for entertainment media personnel to educate themselves about mental health and to use TV and other media as tools to educate and sensitise the masses.

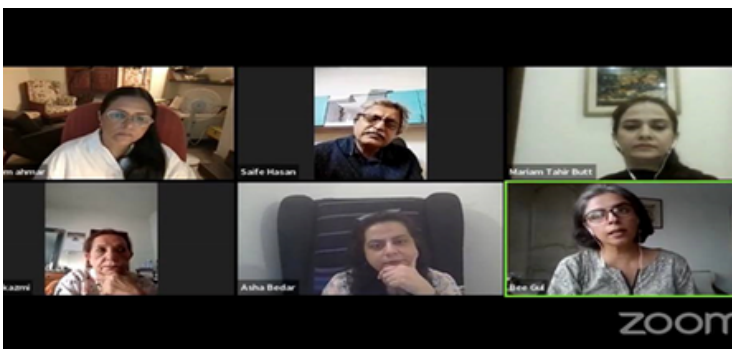
Some of the participants of the discussion were actor/director Saife Hasan, Mariam Tahir Butt, Nishat Kazmi, journalist Shazia Hasan, screenwriter Bee Gul, Clinical Psychologist Asha Bedar and Director, Uks Tasneem Ahmar.

The event was covered in the local and international press.

Dawn: Experts' advice stressed before depicting persons with mental illnesses on TV

The News: 'Society's ignorance concerning mental health results in shallow dramas'

Arab News: Pakistani writers, critics say TV dramas reflect poor research, insensitivity in depiction of mental health



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DIRECTOR UKS' FLOOD APPEAL ON GEO NEWS

Founding Director Uks, Tasneem Ahmar was invited by Geo News to talk about the needs of flood-affected women in Pakistan. In the interview she talked about how natural disasters affect women differently from men. She elaborated on the pressing need to understand women-specific needs especially those related to female hygiene and reproductive health. She stressed on the need to urgently address these issues, remove the taboos surrounding them and communicate openly about them.

[Watch the report here](#)

DIALOGUE FOR CHANGE: TOWARDS A GENDERED RECOVERY AFTER FLOODS

On 27 September 2022, Uks organized its 8th Dialogue for Change online, The DfC was titled 'Towards a gendered recovery after floods'. An enlightening and eye opening discussion began as a result of the trigger question which was 'Women are the hardest hit during a disaster. Why are responses so gender-blind?'

Talking about the urgent need to report on women's special needs during a disaster, Director Uks, Tasneem Ahmar said, "They need toiletries such as sanitary napkins. If not that, then maybe cotton wool or thin pieces of cotton or linen cloth in relief packages. Being displaced, they also require privacy in the shape of toilets, etc. They also need to be protected against physical abuse and sexual harassment, but the media often turns its back on such issues as it thinks it might look bad to discuss such things". Kaleem Durrani of the Regional Director of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan talked about the spike in underage marriages in the camps with parents getting their young daughters married off because they can't feed them. Dr Wajiha Javed of Getz Pharma talked about the need for family planning products during disasters. "There is a baby boom after disasters and calamities. And it is not a private issue to be dealt with by couples, it is a national issue." Other speakers on the occasion included Anis Haroon, of the National Commission for Human Rights and the Women's Action Forum, Raheela Saad of the National Disaster Management Authority and Ex-UNICEF Naseem Ur Rehman.

DfC are a regular feature on Uks' event list. Through DfC's Uks seeks to start conversations about gender issues. Check out the DfC mandate:

1. We unpack uncomfortable issues that are either not discussed in the media or are presented through a narrow and tunnel-vision approach.
2. We have discussions that serve as catalysts for turning beliefs into proactive action.

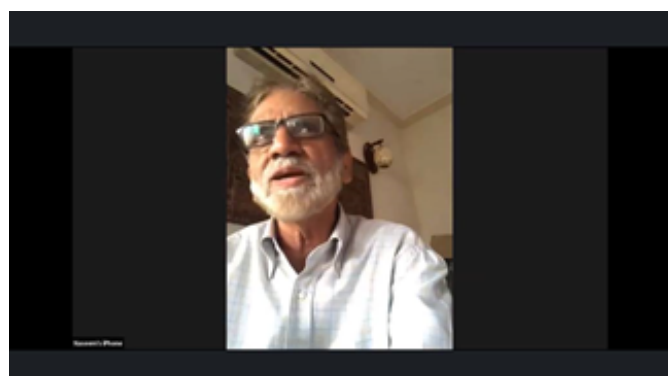
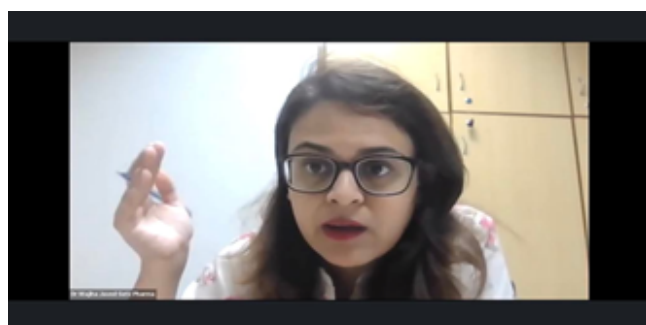
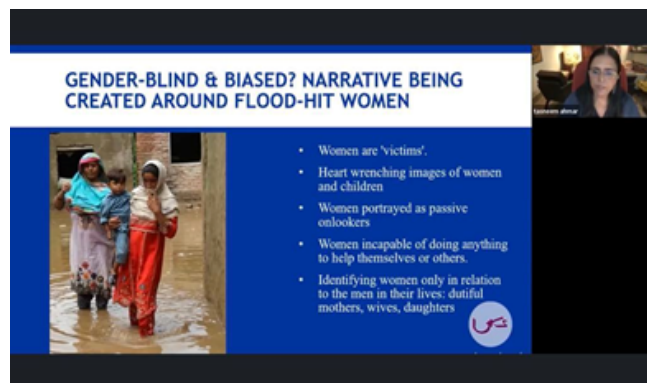
Uks' team has been busy providing support at these platforms

3. We discuss the impact mainstream and social media are having on us and society
4. We question everything including regressive gender stereotypes propagated by the media.
5. We discuss solutions

The event was covered in the national press:

The News: 'NGOs should counsel flood victims on family planning'

Dawn: Gender-blind responses during disasters discussed



INDEPENDENCE DAY REPORT

On the occasion of Pakistan's 75th Independence Day, Uks brought out an in-depth quantitative report of the special supplements published by all prominent players in the national print media to celebrate the day. The report raised many questions about how the media covered the mega celebration of 75 years of Independence but the most important one was whether or not the media's coverage of the nation's Diamond Jubilee was gender balanced. You can read the findings in the link below.

Link: <https://uksresearch.com.pk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Where-Women-Stand-75-Years-On-.pdf>

GENDER AND MEDIA WATCH

Are women and women's issues covered adequately in the media? Is the media fair and balanced when it comes to women? On October 2022, Uks launched the Gender Media Watch. This publication gives a monthly round-up of news stories about women and women's representation in Pakistan's news industry. GMW also has a data section on women's stories and their representation.

Gender and media watch- October 2022

<https://uksresearch.com.pk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Gender-Media-Watch-October-2022.pdf>

Gender and media watch- November 2022

<https://uksresearch.com.pk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Gender-Media-Watch-November-2022-1.pdf>

Gender and media watch- December 2022

https://uksresearch.com.pk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Gender-and-Media-Watch-Dec_compressed.pdf

SEHAT CHECK: JOINT INITIATIVE OF UKS AND GETZ PHARMA

In November 2022, Uks and Getz Pharma joined hands to bring out the first Sehat Check. This monthly publication throws a spotlight on women's health stories in the media. It is a go-to for a snapshot on what's happening in women's health in Pakistan. Check out Sehat Check in these links:

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November 2022: <https://bit.ly/3GbRvNz>

December 2022: <https://bit.ly/3GbRvNz>

January 2023: <http://shorturl.at/cjrBS>

HOPSCOTCH: PORTRAYAL OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN PAKISTANI TV DRAMAS

As part of our Hopscotch series, Uks hosted an online discussion on the 'Portrayal of Domestic Violence in Pakistani TV Dramas' on 8 December 2022. The discussion raised pertinent questions about the depiction of domestic violence on TV, such as whether the portrayal of domestic violence in TV dramas normalises violent crimes, especially against women. And how does the portrayal of onscreen domestic violence affect the audience's beliefs about it?

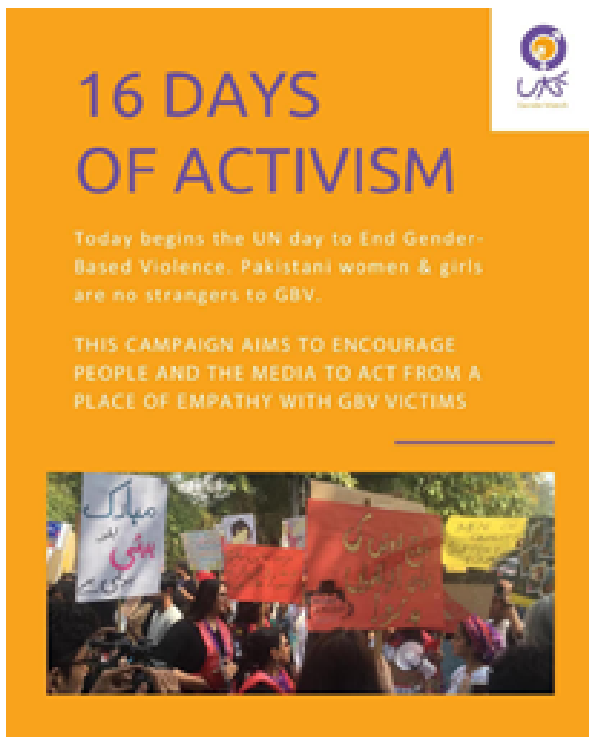
Hopscotch is an Uks Initiative that examines how entertainment content impact its audience and regularly hosts discussions.



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16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM CAMPAIGN

Between 25 November -10 December 2022, Uks' social media platform was dedicated to the 16 Days of Activism campaign. The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence is an annual international campaign which is coordinated by the Center for Women's Global Leadership. It is used as an organizing strategy by individuals and organizations like Uks to call for the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls.



UKS DIARY LAUNCH 2023

December 2022 was a busy time for the Uks team. We were celebrating the organization's 25th Anniversary and the Annual Diary Launch. The Anniversary cum diary launch took place in Karachi on 10 December 2022 and again in Islamabad on 17 December 2022. The theme of the diary was 'Women in Pakistan: 75 Years and Beyond!'

At the Karachi event, publisher Ameena Saiyid, clinical psychologist Dr. Asha Bedar, activist Zohra Yusuf and Director Uks Tasneem Ahmar spoke about their personal experiences and about the evolution of women's rights in Pakistan.

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At the Islamabad event renowned poet Kishwar Naheed and journalist Hamid Mir talked about the issues facing working women, specifically those working in the media. Uks Director Tasneem Ahmar also spoke about the shaming of women victims in the media that led her to set up the media monitoring organization.

Rights activist Tahira Abdullah and Nabila Aslam also spoke on the occasion. Talking about Uks' annual diary, Tahira said "This year's diary is a chronology of women of Pakistan. It should not be taken as calendar but should be kept as reference".

News reports of the events:

Dawn: 'Room still exists for women in male-dominated society'

The News: Uks' desk diary 2023 commemorates women's struggle for Pakistan

Express Tribune: Diarising women's progress

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Karachi 10th December 2022



Islamabad 17th December 2022

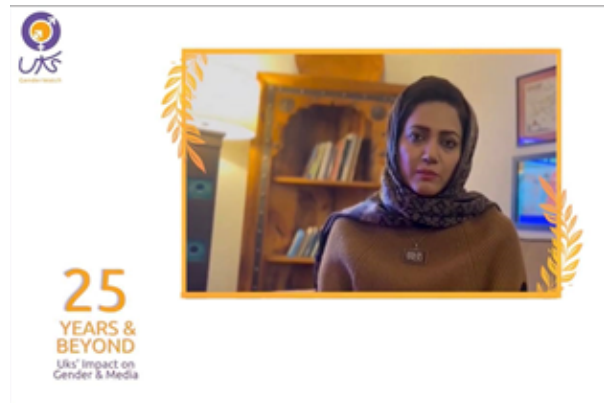


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UKS RESEARCH CENTRE 25TH ANNIVERSARY CHAMPIONING CHANGE: 25 YEARS OF ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY IN MEDIA

Happy birthday to us! To commemorate 25 years of rights-based activism and media monitoring, Uks celebrated its anniversary on social media with messages from prominent personalities from various walks of life. Journalists Asma Shirazi Gaitty Ara Anis, Imrana Komal, and Zafar Baloch talked about Uks' work and activism, as did writer Bee Gul, and researcher & activist Tahira Abdullah.

[Click on this link to check all the messages out](#)



DIALOGUE FOR CHANGE: SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN PUBLIC SPACE

The unfortunate incident of gatecrashing and sexual harassment of women at the Karachi Eat Food Festival became the impetus for this Dialogue for Change. The online discussion was hosted on 14 January 2023 and touched on the banning of stags from shopping malls and the daily ordeal of women who are ogled and groped on public transport. This triggered a spate of

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personal stories from the participants, both very young and very old, about the harassment that they had experienced. They also discussed their family's and larger community's reactions to it. Some important questions such as why women have to be constantly vigilant in public spaces were raised. Practical ways to tackle sexual harassment were also discussed.

Dawn: Women of all ages share personal ordeal of sexual harassment



EXPLORING 'NEWS MESSAGE SYSTEM' THROUGH THE LENS OF CONSTRUCTIVE JOURNALISM IN 2023 – A SCALE-UP PROJECT'

The Uks team began 2023 with the launch of the "Exploring 'News Message System' through the lens of Constructive Journalism" on 1 January. This is a collaborative project between Uks and DW and is designed to advocate for the guidelines of constructive journalism among journalists and gatekeepers of Pakistan's media.

The project has both research and training-based components. Uks will be working with 8 of Pakistan's main print and electronic media houses to identify the institutional hurdles in the way of constructive journalism. The research component of the project will be followed by training of journalists who will then go on to produce 20 constructive news stories.

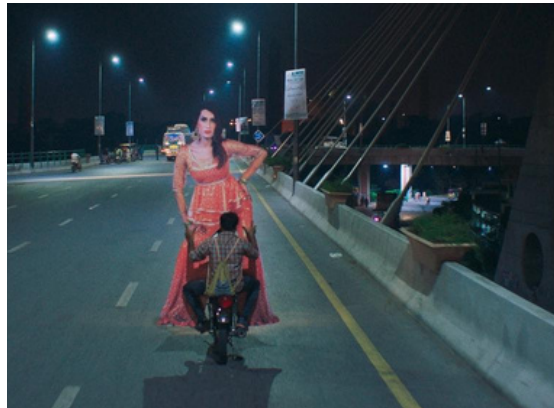
Uks Digital Studio will also produce a series of 12 solution-oriented podcasts as part of the project and a webinar with stakeholders will be held to share project findings and to conclude it.

Mediamatters for Women

Our pick of the positives, the downright dangerous and the cautionary tales that turned up in the media in the last 6 months

The Good

Inspite of the bans and controversy, Pakistani film "Joyland" was shortlisted for the Oscar's International Film category (although it was not nominated in the final round). A searing tale that involves the relationship between an ordinary man a transgender woman, this movie was unlike anything Pakistan has seen in its history. Not only did the world appreciate this masterpiece, but many Pakistanis rallied against its banning to see it in the big screen.



And in the drama sphere two serials that have captured everyone's attention are "Kuch Ankahi" and "Sar e Rah". KA attracted a legion of fans in its sensible depiction of themes such as women's legal and religious right to property, pressurising girls for marriage, and body shaming. It was also refreshing to see Almas, the mother-in-law who is compassionate and defends young women from judgmental remarks.

And what we love about Sar-e-Rah is how it is all about gender and gender roles. Stepping into uncharted territory with bold takes on women taking on solely male professions and parenting transgender children, Sar-e-Rah is the change audiences have been asking for.



Mediamatters for Women

The Bad

For this year there is only one thing that we wish was gone from Pakistani pop culture: slapping. This year alone, far too many women onscreen were hit on the face by their male partners. Yet each slap scene is sillier than the last. Either the heroine faints into a man's arms or her hair flies into different directions every time someone aims at her cheeks. Such scenes promote violence against women as well as make way for even more depictions that make even the actors look foolish. If a hug and kiss can be regulated by the government, then so can a slap!



Mediamatters for Women

The Ugly

While celebrities should not be expected to solve the world's problems because of their proximity to a public platform, they can at least give voice to important issues in the country. Sadly, very few celebrities raised their voices about the floods that ravaged one-third of Pakistan. Some like Hadiqa Kiyani, Mira Sethi, and Usman Mukhtar have talked about the floods on their platforms. But the majority were mum about it. Even worse, at the height of the calamity, our entertainment industry took off to the United States to film their award show. Pakistanis rightly called them out for their silence and hypocrisy. Only for the celebrities to argue with them. It is high time that these people take a long, hard look at themselves



Speaking of award shows, Lux Style Awards committed the ultimate faux pas by nominating Ali Zafar and Feroze Khan, two renowned artists who are credibly accused of sexual harassment and domestic violence respectively. In nominating these men, the LSAs not only scandalised the entire country, but lost its credibility in one night. Previous winners like Maheen Khan and Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy returned their awards as protest. If the Pakistani entertainment industry wants to be taken seriously and be loved by fellow Pakistanis, it must be able to introspect and understand that certain actions have consequences. And nominating harassers and abusers is a glaring sign of a system siding with them.



A research Resource and
Publication Centre on
Women & Media

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