



UKAAS-THE REFLECTOR

Spring- Summer 2023

Editorial

Dear all!

I hope this issue of Ukaas finds you all in good health and spirits. As we continue our journey of promoting gender equality and supporting women in Pakistan, I am delighted to share some highlights of our work over the past six months.

One significant event that marked our commitment to advocating for gender-informed policies was the OXFAM Symposium on February 10, 2023. We had the privilege of presenting our groundbreaking study, "Bridging the Information and Knowledge Gaps." This report shed light on the impact of COVID-19 on women and the pressing need for pro-women policies. By providing policymakers, media practitioners, and women's rights organisations with crucial insights, we aim to foster a more equitable society.

Continuing our dedication to women's health, we launched the popular "Aiye Karein Baatein, Talashain Hal" podcast in collaboration with Dr. Tahira Kazmi. Through engaging conversations, we addressing pressing health issues and enabling women to make informed decisions about their well-being.

Our commitment to strengthen the cause of journalism continued through the Uks-DW Constructive Journalism project where we trained reporters with the tools to apply constructive journalism in their work. Our "Aage Kya" podcast series, in collaboration with Deutsche Welle, has further amplified the discourse on constructive journalism in Pakistan.

Uks continued to publish the "Gender and Media Watch" and "Uks Sehat Check." Both provide valuable insights into women's issues and health on various media platforms. Check out both GMW and Sehat Check if you want to be more informed about inclusivity on the media landscape.



Editorial

By celebrating Pakistan Music Month, we honored influential women musicians who have made significant contributions to our nation's musical heritage. Through our social media campaign, we paid homage to these trailblazers and their inspiring journeys.



Lastly, our podcast series "Her Story, Our Inspiration" delved into the experiences of women in Pakistan's news media, shedding light on their unique perspectives and contributions.

I am incredibly proud of the strides Uks' small team has made in advancing gender equality and fostering positive change in society. Your unwavering support has been instrumental in driving our mission forward.



Thank you for being part of the Uks family, and I look forward to continuing our collective journey of empowerment and advocacy.

Tasneem Ahmar
Executive Director

OXFAM Symposium Highlights Urgent Need for Gender-Informed Policies in Pakistan

In a bid to bridge the information and knowledge gaps surrounding women's issues and the impact of COVID-19, a symposium was organised by OXFAM under its Women's Voice and Leadership - Pakistan project, at a hotel in Islamabad on February 10, 2023. Among the esteemed guests was Director Uks Tasneem, who presented the OXFAM-Uks groundbreaking study 'Bridging the Information and Knowledge Gaps'.

The report sheds light on critical aspects of the current situation of women in Pakistan and the effects of the pandemic. One of its key goals was to extend a veritable knowledge base for media practitioners, women's



rights organizations (WROs), parliamentarians, and government officials.

With a focus on media reportage, the study highlighted the concerning trends of increased gender-based violence (GBV), early child marriages, and forced marriages during the COVID-19 pandemic. By doing so, it provided a valuable resource for policymakers to understand the urgent need for pro-women policies and essential social and economic reforms.



Moreover, the report mapped out the socio-economic vulnerabilities of women in specific occupations, such as home-based workers, health workers, and domestic workers during the COVID-19 crisis. This comprehensive understanding can pave the way for gender-informed resource allocations, creating a more supportive environment for women across various sectors.

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The OXFAM symposium provided an excellent platform for members of the Human Rights and Democracy Network (HRDN), community practitioners, women and human rights experts, academics, and policymakers to come together. By fostering shared learning and knowledge exchange, the event aimed to address existing gaps in women-related laws and policies in a rapidly changing world.

With the insights gained from this symposium and the Uks report, there is renewed hope for meaningful change and the promotion of gender equality in Pakistan.

Link: https://twitter.com/oxfaminpakistan/status/1623957793761017858?s=48&t=g|XBU_0CMWAMuXmXb5_H_w

AIYE KAREIN BAATEIN, TALASHAIN HAL: EMPOWERING PAKISTANI WOMEN'S HEALTH THROUGH INSIGHTFUL PODCAST CONVERSATIONS

In February 2023 Uks initiated the "Aiye Karein Baatein, Talashain Hal" weekly podcast hosted by Dr. Tahira Kazmi and Uks Director, Tasneem Ahmar. The podcast is dedicated to discussing the pressing issues faced by Pakistani women concerning health. Through engaging conversations, the hosts aim to debunk myths, explore various health conditions, and seek solutions for the betterment of women and girls in the country.



Each episode of "Aiye Karein Baatein, Talashain Hal" delves into a specific health-related topic, presenting a comprehensive discussion on the challenges and barriers faced by women in Pakistan. Dr. Tahira Kazmi, an experienced healthcare professional, brings her expertise to the table, providing valuable insights and medical perspectives.

Meanwhile, Tasneem Ahmar, brings her wealth of knowledge in women's rights advocacy and gender-related issues. The hosts foster an environment of empathy, understanding, and collaboration to address these crucial matters effectively.

The primary objective of the podcast is to raise awareness among listeners about the unique health challenges faced by Pakistani women. By empowering women through knowledge, the podcast aims to enable them to make informed decisions about their well-being:

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Debunking Myths: The hosts are dedicated to breaking down prevalent myths and misconceptions surrounding women's health. Through evidence-based discussions, they provide accurate information to dispel misunderstandings and promote fact-based awareness.

Exploring Solutions: "Aiye Karein Baatein, Talashain Hal" seeks to explore practical solutions and approaches to address health issues faced by women in Pakistan. By engaging in open conversations, the hosts aim to contribute to positive change within the health sector and society as a whole.

Promoting Gender-Responsive Health: With a special focus on gender responsiveness, the podcast advocates for healthcare systems that cater to the unique needs and challenges faced by women and girls.

Impact and Engagement: Since its launch, "Aiye Karein Baatein, Talashain Hal" has received positive feedback from listeners across the country. The engaging discussions and insightful content have garnered a growing audience interested in women's health and well-being. Listeners actively participate by sharing their experiences, asking questions, and suggesting future episode topics.

The podcast has also initiated collaborations with healthcare professionals, women's rights organisations, and social influencers to amplify its impact and reach a wider audience. By nurturing a supportive community, "Aiye Karein Baatein, Talashain Hal" continues to create meaningful dialogues and foster positive change for women's health in Pakistan.

Listen to the podcast:

Clip 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytEzfZrLxus&list=PLhyE7XfCGmxnq3YjXnQn2977xOxZmrYNA&index=2>

Clip 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytEzfZrLxus&list=PLhyE7XfCGmxnq3YjXnQn2977xOxZmrYNA&index=2>

UKS-DW CONSTRUCTIVE JOURNALISM TRAINING FOR A SOLUTION-ORIENTED MEDIA LANDSCAPE IN PAKISTAN

February 8, 2023 was the final day of the Uks-DW Constructive Journalism training. Trainee journalists were awarded certificates in recognition of their successful completion of the intensive programme in Islamabad.

The training marked the culmination of the "Exploring 'News Message System' through the lens of Constructive Journalism in 2023 - A Scale-up Project," which spanned over five months. The project advocated for constructive journalism among journalists and media gatekeepers in Pakistan.

The project had various components, including online surveys and media monitoring. Uks, as part of its primary work, conducted media monitoring to establish a baseline for research on reporting about floods. The findings from this monitoring and on-ground research were used to develop guidelines for constructive journalism tailored to the Pakistani media landscape.

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Additionally, Uks worked directly with decision-makers from eight major media houses, to identify institutional obstacles hindering constructive journalism.

Uks also engaged with beat-reporters in three batches for training. The training aimed to equip reporters with the necessary tools and techniques to embrace constructive journalism in their work.



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By increasing the number of constructive news stories within the 'news message system' of Pakistan, the project aimed to contribute to a more informed and solution-oriented media landscape in the country.

EMPOWERING WOMEN'S HEALTH: UKS & DR. TAHIRA KAZMI'S IMPACTFUL ADVOCACY AT LLF

On 26 February 2023 Uks Executive Director Tasneem Ahmar and Dr. Tahira Kazmi made a significant impact at the Lahore Literary Festival by openly discussing women's sexual and reproductive health. Their insightful conversations aimed to address medical issues effectively and promote positive change. Dr. Tahira Kazmi's collaboration with Uks on the podcast "Aiye Karein Baatein, Talashain Hal" continues to create meaningful dialogues, empowering women's health in Pakistan. Together, they are working towards a healthier and more informed society for women.



Click here to watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pgL0hcqTMuE>

News coverage: <https://e.thenews.com.pk/detail?id=179435>

FOSTERING CONSTRUCTIVE JOURNALISM IN PAKISTANI MEDIA: UKS ENGAGES WITH MEDIA HEADS IN COLLABORATIVE MEETINGS

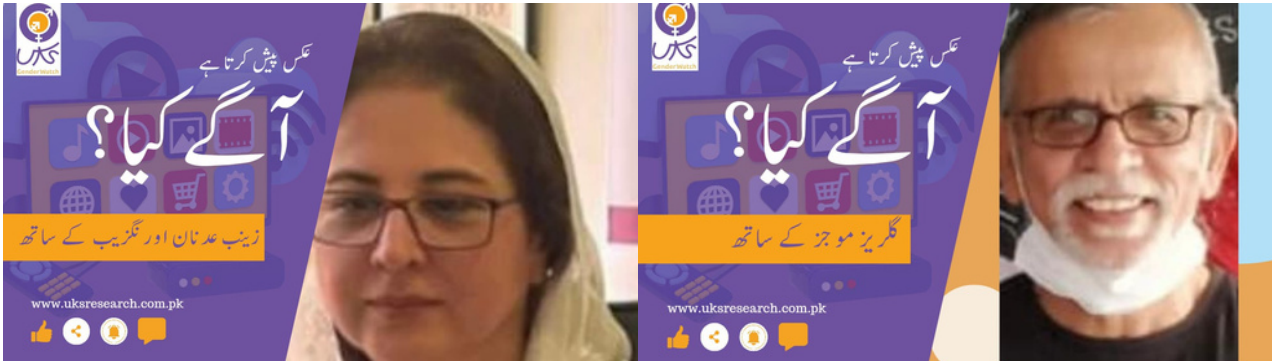
Uks conducted two meetings with Pakistan's media heads on February 23, 2023, and March 27, 2023, respectively, in collaboration with DW Akademie Asia. During these meetings, they presented their research findings on Constructive Journalism and discussed strategies to incorporate it into Pakistani print and electronic media. The meetings aimed to promote positive change in media practices and foster a more solution-oriented news landscape in the country. Media heads expressed their commitment to exploring the adoption of constructive journalism principles in their organizations, emphasising its potential to empower communities and address societal challenges.



AAGAY KYA SERIES: “BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE: HOW CONSTRUCTIVE JOURNALISM CAN SHAPE PAKISTANI MEDIA”

Uks initiated a podcast series on constructive journalism in Pakistani media called Aagya Kya, brought to audiences by Uks Digital Studio and Deutsche Welle. In this series, we explore the concept of constructive journalism in the context of Pakistan with 12 veteran media personalities and activists from diverse fields. This podcast series was produced as part of a scale-up project called "Exploring News Message System in Pakistan". The 5-month project advocated for the adoption of the principles of constructive journalism among journalists and media gatekeepers of Pakistan.

UKs Projects



Our guest speakers spoke about the need to embrace constructive journalism guidelines, ways to increase the number of constructive journalism news stories in the 'news message system' and the barriers to the adoption of the techniques of constructive journalism. We believe that each episode of this series will serve as a valuable resource for journalists and media practitioners looking to improve the quality of their reporting and contribute to a more positive and constructive public discourse. Join the podcast to explore the world of constructive journalism and its impact on the news message system of Pakistan. Don't forget to subscribe to our channel and follow Uks Research on social media for more thought-provoking content.

Video 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UNdsUN4F0ml&list=PLhyE7XfCGmxkw9jiq3d4Sua2rAhfWzwig&index=1>

[v=UNdsUN4F0ml&list=PLhyE7XfCGmxkw9jiq3d4Sua2rAhfWzwig&index=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UNdsUN4F0ml&list=PLhyE7XfCGmxkw9jiq3d4Sua2rAhfWzwig&index=1)

Video 2: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_YhKVEuFv40&list=PLhyE7XfCGmxkw9jiq3d4Sua2rAhfWzwig&index=2

[v=_YhKVEuFv40&list=PLhyE7XfCGmxkw9jiq3d4Sua2rAhfWzwig&index=2](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_YhKVEuFv40&list=PLhyE7XfCGmxkw9jiq3d4Sua2rAhfWzwig&index=2)

Video 3: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3YE01leJjmo&list=PLhyE7XfCGmxkw9jiq3d4Sua2rAhfWzwig&index=3>

[v=3YE01leJjmo&list=PLhyE7XfCGmxkw9jiq3d4Sua2rAhfWzwig&index=3](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3YE01leJjmo&list=PLhyE7XfCGmxkw9jiq3d4Sua2rAhfWzwig&index=3)

Video 4: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9wqnlhYKNs0&list=PLhyE7XfCGmxkw9jiq3d4Sua2rAhfWzwig&index=4>

[v=9wqnlhYKNs0&list=PLhyE7XfCGmxkw9jiq3d4Sua2rAhfWzwig&index=4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9wqnlhYKNs0&list=PLhyE7XfCGmxkw9jiq3d4Sua2rAhfWzwig&index=4)

COUNTERING HATE SPEECH AND DISINFORMATION ON DIGITAL PLATFORMS: A CONFERENCE BY THE BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION

On March 17, 2023 the Uks team was invited to participate in a conference hosted by the British High Commission at Serena Hotel. Notable attendees included TV anchor Maria Memon, Bolo Bhi's director Usama Khilji, and DRF's Shmyla Khan. The session focused on the impact of hate speech and disinformation on women in digital platforms. Injie Anis and Shaista Yasmin from Uks were present at the event.

HRCP REPORT LAUNCH: ASSESSING THE STATE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN PAKISTAN 2022

On April 26, 2023 Uks was invited to a press conference organized by the HRCP at an Islamabad Hotel to launch their latest report on human rights abuses in Pakistan. The event welcomed journalists, activists, and lawyers, who engaged in discussions with the HRCP members about the report's findings and its implications for Pakistan's future. Uks' Injie Anis was in attendance.



EXPLORING PAKISTANI TV DRAMAS: UKS AT SZABIST'S MEDIA FESTIVAL 2023



On May 31, 2023 Uks team members Injie Anis and Zafran Awan visited SZABIST's Media Festival. After a campus tour, they interviewed students about their views on toxic Pakistani TV dramas, specifically "Tere Bin." The interviews explored reasons for watching or avoiding such dramas.

GENDER & MEDIA WATCH: UNVEILING WOMEN'S STORIES FROM PRINT, ELECTRONIC, AND DIGITAL MEDIA

Uks' "Gender and Media Watch" (GMW) is a monthly publication that serves as a comprehensive compilation of news stories related to women from various traditional media platforms, including print, electronic, and digital media. This insightful publication provides a snapshot of the current state of women's issues in Pakistan and offers a valuable data section for a deeper understanding of the gender-related developments. With GMW, Uks continues its mission to promote gender equality and create awareness about women's experiences in the media landscape.

Links to access and download Uks' Gender Media Watch:

May 2023: <https://uksresearch.com.pk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/GMW-wS-May-2023.pdf>

June 2023: <https://uksresearch.com.pk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/GMW-June-2023-wS.pdf>

July 2023: <https://uksresearch.com.pk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/GMW-wS-July.pdf>

UKS SEHAT CHECK: A MONTHLY SNAPSHOT OF WOMEN'S HEALTH IN PRINT MEDIA

In collaboration with Getz Pharma, Uks published Sehat Check, a comprehensive monthly publication focused on women's health news in print media. This unique snapshot gathers vital information from various sources, offering valuable insights into the current state of women's health in Pakistan. By compiling news stories and articles from print media, Uks Sehat Check aims to raise awareness, highlight important issues, and promote better healthcare practices for women across the country.

Links to access and download Sehat Check:

May 2023: <https://uksresearch.com.pk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Sehat-Check-May-2023-1.pdf>

June 2023: <https://uksresearch.com.pk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Sehat-Check-June-2023.pdf>

July 2023: <https://uksresearch.com.pk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Sehat-Check-July-2023.pdf>

HONORING TRAILBLAZERS: UKS CELEBRATES PAKISTAN MUSIC MONTH

Throughout the month of June 2023, Uks celebrated Pakistan Music Month with a special social media campaign dedicated to recognising the influential women who have left a lasting mark on the country's music scene. The campaign featured posts showcasing clips of talented Pakistani women musicians and singers, accompanied by insightful information about their remarkable lives and contributions. Through this initiative, Uks aimed to pay homage to these trailblazers, shedding light on their inspiring journeys and the significant impact they have had on the nation's musical landscape.



HER STORY, OUR INSPIRATION: UKS EXPLORES WOMEN IN PAKISTAN'S NEWS MEDIA

Uks Digital Studio presents a captivating podcast series, "Her Story, Our Inspiration". Throughout June and July 2023, the series delved into the experiences of women working across diverse positions and beats in the news industry. These compelling interviews shed light on the challenges, perspectives, and unique contributions of women in shaping the gender dynamics within Pakistan's media landscape. You can access the podcast through the link given below and celebrate their inspiring stories and gain a deeper understanding of the intersection of gender and news media in the country.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gAGa49iKz4E&list=PLhyE7XfCGmxkkkNO17waVDiF-zuJ6BjyW>

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

There is something magical about a good romantic comedy; it not only makes you laugh and feel good about yourself but also makes you believe that a couple can deeply and affectionately love each other. This is precisely what happens when one watches Hum TV's "Fairytale." The story of Farjaad and Umeed has taken young Pakistan by storm and is currently the most talked-about drama in the country online. However, for Uks, this drama has shattered some preconceived notions that deserve attention.



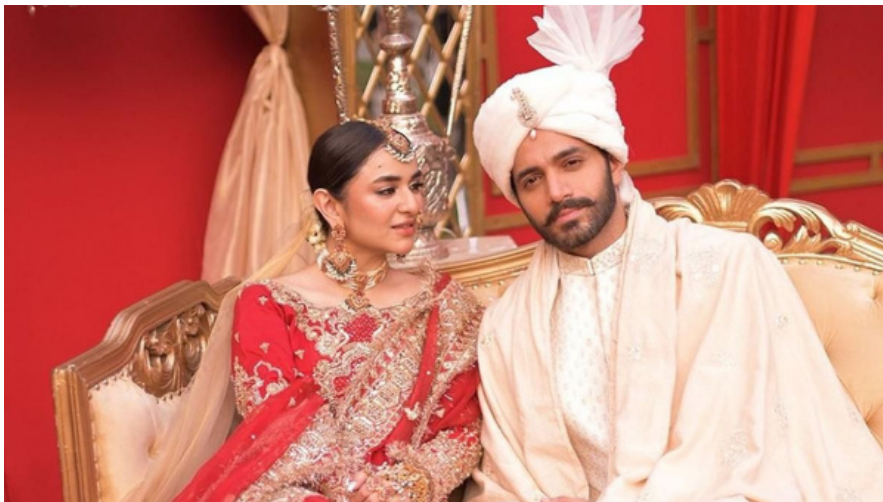
Firstly, Pakistanis cherish a compelling love story where the male protagonist is not an abusive misogynist, and the female lead is far from a damsel in distress. While love stories in Pakistan have always been popular onscreen, they often tend to be offensive, mean, cruel, and stereotypical. The male protagonist in "Fairytale" may be complex, but he possesses a tender-hearted, respectful, and mature demeanor. On the other hand, the heroine is portrayed as erratic, funny, vulnerable, and positive. She loves for the sake of love without demeaning herself, and her popularity alone is proof that Pakistanis can appreciate a variety of female characters onscreen. Here's to more stories that promote healthy and loving relationships like Umeed and Farjaad's!

Moreover, this drama's depiction of family relations is worthy of praise. The siblings genuinely love and support each other, which is a rare occurrence in stories where siblings are often portrayed as lustful demons or honour-driven monsters. Additionally, while there is a complication between the father and the heroine, it is not portrayed in a perverse or cruel manner. The father remains a reasonable man who comes to see reason without subjecting the heroine to intense pain. Truly, Hum TV has exceeded expectations with this show!

Mediamatters for Women

The Bad

On the opposite end of this spectrum is Geo's "Tere Bin," a show that has undeniably earned the dubious distinction of being the worst show of this year. While "Fairytale" has garnered a substantial following among Pakistanis who appreciate its positive portrayal of relationships, it's disheartening to note that "Tere Bin" has also found an audience among those who seem to favor a more toxic narrative.



What's comical about this show is that the creators sacrificed its initial popularity in pursuit of higher ratings, which is quite perplexing. "Tere Bin" essentially revolved around the enemies-to-lovers trope, a story where a man and a woman deny their feelings for each other until they inevitably succumb to love, a classical and often enjoyable scenario. The Pakistani audience was initially captivated by this setup. Even though the male protagonist exhibited some misogynistic tendencies, there was an effort to maintain a delicate balance to keep his character human, especially in his interactions with the female protagonist. This was the initial reason for the show's popularity.

However, the turning point came when the scenes shown in the serial's promo strongly suggested that the male protagonist had assaulted the heroine, causing the nation's affection for the show to sour. The creators chose to present this scene indirectly, but no one was fooled by their approach. While there still exists a legion of fans who adore this show, a significant majority condemned the creators for using such a plot device. It's a ploy that unfortunately has become a standard feature in many Pakistani shows. To make matters worse, even the lead actors supported and participated in this scene. This only underscores that the portrayal of misogyny in Pakistani dramas is a deliberate and cynical choice, with little regard for the harm it can cause to a population already facing immense challenges in this country.

Mediamatters for Women

The Ugly

Honestly....when are we banning Feroze Khan? Because canceling him is not good enough!

The actor has recently been keeping a low profile following revelations about the abuse and trauma he inflicted on his wife, as well as his ongoing harassment during the divorce proceedings. What's concerning is that he continues to receive award nominations and work opportunities. While he may no longer be associated with Geo, there have been rumors about him signing on with Green Entertainment for a new show. What's equally troubling is his fanbase's toxic behavior; in their unwavering support for their idol, they either turn a blind eye or vehemently attack anyone who dares to criticize him.



Shouldn't we expect our artists to be better individuals? Must their fame and talent overshadow the heinous acts they've committed? Can the industry show some courage in holding him accountable? Allowing him to persist in his work sets a dangerous precedent and encourages others to follow suit. It's high time we put the final nail in the coffin of his diminishing reputation!



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