



UKAAS-THE REFLECTOR

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Editorial: Uks: Shaping Media Narratives for a Gender- Just Society

At Uks, our mission remains steadfast—challenging gender insensitivity across media landscapes, from news and entertainment to advertising. In this issue you can read about our SafeWords project, which tackled online misogyny through research, advocacy, and the #PehlaySochoPhirBolo campaign, creating a much-needed conversation around sexist language in Urdu and Punjabi.

Beyond the digital space, we continued amplifying voices against gender-based violence. Our presence at Rolling Resistance: Theatre on Wheels and collaborative projects like Kal, Aaj, aur Kal highlight the importance of storytelling in shifting societal perceptions. These efforts reflect our belief that media must be a tool for empowerment, not oppression.

We remain vigilant in holding brands accountable. In The Good, Bad and Ugly section of this issue, we celebrate progressive advertisements while calling out regressive portrayals—like those seen in Dalda, Muzz, and Olivola commercial—we push for responsible advertising that fosters equality rather than reinforcing stereotypes.

Change begins with awareness, and at Uks, we remain committed to driving that change—one campaign, one conversation, and one challenge at a time.

Tasneem Ahmar
Executive Director

What has Uks been up to?

Uks Stands in Solidarity with Women Journalists Against Misogynistic Remarks (9th September 2024)

Uks showed solidarity for women journalists by creating a post condemning KP Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur's demeaning and misogynist comments about them. It was a black for reporters as they were being insulted with derogatory remarks to impress their audience. No sitting politician should make the habit of insulting women so brazenly in public like this.

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/reel/C_tRF-nMJ6-/igsh=MWUxamd0MGE5OGxrOA==

X: <https://x.com/centeruks/status/1833218856073998739?s=46>

“Communication Rights: Building Blocks for Social Justice” Forum; 22-25 October 2024, Kathmandu, Nepal

Given the importance of the Global Digital Compact (GDC), which addresses critical communication rights issues such as connectivity, digital public infrastructure, and information integrity, WACC invited 25 of its grassroots partners from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East to a week-long conference in Nepal. The goal was to analyze the GDC and develop recommendations to enhance its relevance as UN member states and other stakeholders begin its implementation. Tasneem Ahmar, director of Uks, was among the experts invited to this conference.

It is worth mentioning that Uks also serves as Pakistan's coordinator for the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) and has conducted three consecutive national media monitoring exercises over the last 15 years. The Nepal event, where these recommendations were developed, took place from October 22 to 25 in Kathmandu and was held in partnership with AMARC-Asia Pacific. The recommendations formulated by WACC partners on the GDC are currently being documented.

The forum was structured around different thematic sessions. Director Uks participated in a "Conversation" titled "Communication, Gender, and Digital Justice." This was not a panel but rather an interactive dialogue where participants engaged with each other and the audience. The session was moderated by Sarah Macharia, WACC Programme Manager and GMMP Global Coordinator.

Each participant was asked to bring an object symbolizing the struggle for gender justice in their respective countries. Tasneem Ahmar brought a dupatta (cotton scarf) designed and printed by Women's Action Forum (WAF). The dupatta is a symbol of resistance and courage, emblematic of WAF, which was founded in Karachi in September 1981 by 15 women and has since remained at the forefront of movements against oppression. WAF is widely recognized as a network that channels women's voices and perspectives into forward-thinking economic and policy initiatives for societal change.

What has Uks been up to?

Tasneem Ahmar also spoke about the persistent and growing gender insensitivity in entertainment and news media regarding women. She emphasized, “At Uks, we are working to create an alternative space, bringing together like-minded women and men to develop counter-narratives. There is an urgent need for such discourse to unpack myths, realities, and stereotypes about gender-sensitive content. We must all understand the impact of insensitive content—whether through dialogues, depictions of violence, or other portrayals—on audiences.”

Additionally, Ms. Ahmar spoke in detail about the sexual harassment of women on social media and highlighted Uks’ continued efforts in tackling this issue.



What has Uks been up to?

Uks Celebrates a Year of Efforts for Women's Safety on Social Media (31st November 2024)

Uks had been working for a year on how Pakistani social media can be made a safer place for its women. In that year, Uks conducted a year-long daily campaign, ten podcasts, focus-group discussions across the country, and social media listening. And through this webinar, Uks showed the media industry and the civil society the fruits of their labour.

In this webinar, Uks proudly showed the compendium of Urdu and Punjabi abusive words, its podcasts and the 365-day campaign. It even asked questions from the people who attended the conference online and took suggestions on how the project could create greater impact. Below are the news stories that reported on our event.

News Link: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2506622/online-abuse-driving-women-away-from-toxic-social-media>

News Link: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1868970/webinar-highlights-groundbreaking-research-on-online-misogyny>

Uks's Attends 'Rolling Resistance: Theatre on Wheels' Show by UN Women and NCSW (10th December 2024)

Uks's Injie Anis was invited to attend a theatre show hosted by the UN Women and NCSW at the Pak-China Friendship Centre. Titled "Rolling Resistance: Theatre on Wheels", it is a groundbreaking initiative that had been performing all over Pakistan. The play tells the issues and trials women from different generations face due to their gender, delivering its poignant message of #KoiJawaazNahi (#NoExcuse) to a national audience, sparking dialogue and inspiring collective action against gender-based violence (GBV).



What has Uks been up to?



Uks and WACC's #ThinkBeforeYouSpeak Campaign (now complete)

Uks #ThinkBeforeYouSpeak campaign, in collaboration with WACC (World Association for Christian Communication), aims to combat and raising awareness about cyber misogyny. Pakistanis from diverse backgrounds shed light on the pervasive issue of online harassment faced by women in Pakistan. Through social media platforms, this campaign seeks to ignite conversations, challenge societal norms, and encourage responsible digital discourse to foster a safer and more inclusive online environment for everyone. This has been our most successful movement thus far, and we greatly appreciate and give thanks to the participants who shared their views about the pervasive online misogyny in Pakistan.

WITH GREATER MOBILE INTERNET PENETRATION COMES A GREATER RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO THINK ABOUT WHAT MATTERS. BUT THE PAKISTANI STATE PRIORITIZES SHUTTING DOWN THE INTERNET OR BLOCKING PLATFORM X RATHER THAN PROTECTING WOMEN FROM CYBER HARASSMENT AND MISOGYNY.

#THINKBEFOREYOUSPEAK

Areeba Fatima
Investigative Reporter & Fact Checker



CYBER HARASSMENT IS MORE DEPRIVED, PRONOUNCED, AND WITHOUT ANY INHIBITIONS. WOMEN BATTLE MONSTERS ONLINE WHO NEVER FACE ANY REPERCUSSIONS & THAT'S WHAT EMBOLDING THEM.

#THINKBEFOREYOUSPEAK

Faiza Khan
Creative Head & Project Manager



Many women activists from Pakistan are subject to trolling. As they express their opinions by majority men, in response to that, many men weaponize religion—distorting the narratives, which also reflects how challenging power dynamics reflects the misogyny. This is what is called misogynist terrorism, as Pakistan ranks worst in Gender Parity Index, where women not only in reality are subject to various forms of intersectional oppression, but also online. For instance, as an activist and someone who is studying 'Women, Gender Sexuality Studies,' I often encounter misogynist labeling from men who are educated middle class, and then from men from my community (in Balochistan), who are adamant to their tribal patriarchal culture. Many progressive women, or trans people who are part of feminist movement, are subject to propogandas, distorting the narratives.

I HOPE WE UNDERSTAND THAT INFLAMMATORY ONLINE MISOGYNIST BEHAVIORS ALSO LEAD TO THE MINORITIZATION, DEHUMANIZATION, OPPRESSION OF NOT JUST WOMEN, BUT CREATED HIERARCHY OF POWER.

#THINKBEFOREYOUSPEAK

Kinza Fatima
Writer, Social Activist, Graduate Student at University of Cincinnati



What has Uks been up to?

Today's media, specially the electronic media, is equally reliant on social media; and in fact we receive a plethora of 'breaking news' from social media platforms.

A SINGLE FAKE AND UNFOUNDED SOCIAL MEDIA STORY CAN DESTROY AN INDIVIDUAL OR AN ENTIRE FAMILY-- A LOSS THAT CAN OCCUR FAST, COULD NEVER BE COMPENSATED.



#THINKBEFORE
YOUSPEAK

Zarghon Shah
Correspondent/Anchor Geo News TV



Every single woman is a potential victim of online misogyny. The practice is so prevalent in real life, where the perpetrators fear no repercussion, that harassing women online goes without saying.

INFACT, THE LEVEL OF ANONYMITY THAT BEING ONLINE AFFORDS THESE PEOPLE AIDS THEM IN THEIR DEPRAVITY



#THINKBEFOREYOUSPEAK

Hawwa Bilal



یہاں پر لوگ عورتوں کی کامیابی برداشت نہیں کر سکتے۔ بالکل اگر عورت سیاست یا کسی معاملے پر کچھ بولے تو اگے سے کہتے ہیں "تم صرف ایک عورت ہو، تمہیں سیاست کے بارے میں کیا پتا؟" ریپ کے کیسز میں بھی عورتوں کو ہی جج کیا جاتا ہے، کہتے ہیں کہ عورت خود دعوت دیتی ہے۔ تو پھر برقعہ پہننے والیوں کو کیوں چھیڑتے ہیں؟

مزید یہ کہ لڑکے لڑکیوں کو آن لائن اسٹاک کرتے ہیں، ان پر کمنٹس کرتے ہیں، اور جب دوستوں کے گروپ میں بیٹھتے ہیں تو انہی لڑکیوں کو بے عزت ناموں سے پکارتے ہیں۔



#پہلے سوچو۔ پھر بولو

ایمان جنجوو

ایڈیٹر انچور اور تعلیمی مصنفہ



WE HAD A CASE WHERE INAPPROPRIATE VIDEOS/PICTURES WERE MADE OF WOMEN UNDER ANESTHESIA WAITING FOR SURGERY. OUR PARTNERS TOOK ACTION, GOT THE CULPRITS NABBED, AND ISSUED A NOTIFICATION TO BAN THE USE OF CELL PHONES IN OPERATING THEATERS.



#THINKBEFOREYOUSPEAK

Rashida Dohad

Executive Director, Omar Asghar Khan Foundation



What has Uks been up to?

“Pehle Socho, Phir Bolo” podcast

With WACC, Uks started a podcasts series that examines the extent of damage online misogyny causes on people who work in the media industry and are regular social media users. Tasneem Ahmar and Injie Anis took turns talking to people who gave frank admissions on how such misogynist attacks affected their lives and how it can be curbed, especially as it is causing issues for those who work in the media industry. Please click on the link below and watch all ten episodes:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLhyE7XfCGmxlpOgydgKqA6B6EaFQH3iG>

Uks – JS Bank “Kal, Aaj, aur Kal”

Collaborating for the first time, Uks and JS Bank reminded Pakistan that women have so much to offer and have been making powerful strides in their professional lives. Telling the stories from the past, present and future, Uks showed how amazing and trailblazing Pakistani women are, whether they are in sports, media, or in business. This collaboration resulted in three digital stories and three radio shows. You can watch the digital stories at our **YouTube page below:**

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLhyE7XfCGmxlpOgydgKqA6B6EaFQH3iG>

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

Some advertisements do more than just sell a product—they hold up a mirror to society and challenge the biases we often ignore. The Peek Freans Sooper commercial does exactly that by highlighting the stark differences in how boys and girls are treated within the same household. The advertisement follows a young brother and sister and as the scenes unfold, the contrast in their upbringing becomes painfully clear. The boy is encouraged and enjoys privileges that are seen as his birthright. Meanwhile, the girl is denied the privileges her brother takes for granted. By shedding light on these everyday inequalities, the advertisement delivers a crucial message: a happy childhood should not be a privilege reserved for boys. If families start treating their daughters with the same freedom and encouragement as their sons, we take a step toward a fairer, more equal society. This is the kind of advertising that sparks important conversations, and brands –especially those in our Bad and Ugly sections should take note



Mediamatters for Women

The Bad

Dalda's "Standing Ovation" advertisement celebrates women but ends up reinforcing outdated gender roles. A husband dramatically bows to his wife –not for her ambitions, intelligence, or achievements, but for cooking a good meal. While appreciation is important, why must a woman's worth still be tied to domestic duties? True empowerment goes beyond applause for household work—it means recognizing women as individuals, not just caretakers. Brands must do better.



Mediamatters for Women

The Ugly

Some advertisements don't just reinforce stereotypes—they prey on women's insecurities. The Muzz advertisement is a perfect example, portraying a string of women being dumped by men and their families for shallow, dismissive reasons— "she doesn't sit properly" or "we don't marry outside our caste". Yes, Pakistan is a patriarchal society where men often hold the power to "Choose" in relationships. But is that something to reinforce in an advertisement? Instead of challenging these outdated expectations, the advertisement validates them, implying that a woman's ultimate goal should be finding a man who deems her "marriage material." The "Solution"? Join Muzz, a matchmaking app that promises to connect you to men who actually want to marry you. The message is clear: a woman's worth is defined by whether or not a man chooses her. This kind of narrative is toxic and regressive. Women don't need to change who they are to be "marriageable." They need representation that empowers them beyond their relationship status. Brands should uplift women—not guilt them into signing up for a dating app.



Mediamatters for Women

The Ugly

And let's not forget the latest Olivola advertisement that reduces a woman's worth to her ability to bear children. A married woman is suddenly sidelined by her in-laws and is no longer "allowed" to work in the kitchen—until it's revealed she's pregnant. Her value instantly skyrockets because she is now carrying the family's heir. This narrative is deeply problematic. Pregnancy is not a disease, yet the advertisement portrays it as a condition that demands endless rest and over protection. More troubling is the underlying message: a woman's role in the household is only truly validated once she is an expectant mother. Women deserve recognition for who they are—not just for their ability to reproduce. Brands must stop reinforcing outdated, patriarchal ideals disguised as "family values."





A research Resource and
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Women & Media

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