



# UKAAS-THE REFLECTOR

Spring- Summer 2025

## Editorial:

### Uks: Rewriting the Media Story


**At Uks, 2025 has been a year of bold steps forward. From monitoring how women are portrayed in the media, to holding conversations that challenge stereotypes on our television screens, to venturing into the world of artificial intelligence, our work continues to centre around the core truth that women's voices matter.**

This May, Uks joined the Global Media Monitoring Project for the fourth consecutive time, reaffirming our commitment to ensuring that women are seen and heard in Pakistan's media landscape. Uks also conducted an independent gender audit of budget coverage that revealed just how far we still need to go in making women visible in stories that affect their everyday lives. And at T2F, through Shifting Narratives on TV, we came together with storytellers Sultana Siddiqui, who is the Founder of Hum TV, and ace director Saife Hasan to imagine television as a space for resistance and transformation.

The launch of our YouTube series Badlao Mumkin Hai! Sunday Kay Sunday has reminded us that change begins at home, with the words that we speak, the ideas that we challenge, and the silences that we refuse to accept. And with our feminist AI project, Seen, Heard, Respected, Uks is stepping into the future, ensuring that technology itself can become a tool for equity and inclusion.

Yet our work remains unfinished. Patriarchal norms continue to shape media and society. Women remain underrepresented, and their stories remain untold. Each monitoring exercise, public dialogue, and digital advocacy effort we undertake is a step toward achieving balanced gender representation.

We believe that change is not only possible but that it is already happening. That every voice that speaks out, each story that defies the norm, and each tool that calls out bias is only strengthening the tide of change.



**Tasneem Ahmar**  
**Executive Director**

# What has Uks been up to?

## Uks Launches Groundbreaking Feminist AI Project (12 February 2025)

Uks Research Centre has taken a bold step into the world of artificial intelligence with the launch of 'Seen, Heard, Respected: AI for Inclusive Communication', which is Pakistan's first feminist AI platform. Building on nearly three decades of monitoring gender in media, Uks is now embedding its research into a tool that will help journalists, NGOs, educators, and content creators detect bias, improve their work, and generate inclusive narratives.

Unlike tools like ChatGPT, which require advanced prompting skills, Uks' AI will be trained with feminist parameters, including those from the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), to make bias-free content generation simple and accessible.

The project is under development with support from a technical team, and the first English-language prototype will be ready for beta testing soon. Later Uks hopes to introduce Urdu and regional languages, expanding access to communities across Pakistan and wherever those languages are spoken.

Uks has invested its own resources to kick-start the project. This signals Uks' continued commitment to challenging harmful stereotypes, addressing online gender-based violence, and shaping more inclusive storytelling in Pakistan's rapidly evolving digital space.

**News Link:** <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1282210-uks-unveils-ai-tool-to-tackle-media-s-gender-blindness>

**News Link:** <https://www.dawn.com/news/1891511/ai-tool-unveiled-to-identify-gender-bias-in-media-content>



# What has Uks been up to?

## TV for Change: Uks and Hopscotch Spotlight Gender-Sensitive Storytelling (12 April 2025)

On April 12, 2025, Uks Research Centre, in collaboration with its digital community Hopscotch, hosted a dynamic discussion at T2F in Karachi titled Shifting Narratives on TV: From Tradition to Transformation. The event explored how Pakistani dramas can move beyond stereotypes to drive social change.

Hopscotch which was launched by Uks in 2021, is a digital space dedicated to engaging audiences in conversations about gender portrayals in entertainment media. It works as part of Uks' advocacy, encouraging debate, criticism, and resistance to the portrayal of gender roles in storytelling.

At the event, HUM TV founder and producer Sultana Siddiqui and director Saife Hassan joined Uks Director Tasneem Ahmar to discuss dramas like Mann Jogi, Nadaan, and Tan Mann Neelo Neel. These Hum TV short serials were praised for their bold and sensitive portrayal of issues such as halala, mob violence, emotional abuse, and male rape, presenting women as powerful change agents.

Sultana Siddiqui emphasised the media's moral responsibility to spotlight social issues, while Saife Hassan reflected on the risks and rewards of unconventional storytelling. Messages from TV writers Saji Gul, and Mustafa Afridi, and director Mehreen Jabbar added momentum to the call for progressive television narratives.

The evening was attended by media professionals and drama enthusiasts, who were united in the belief that storytelling can shift mindsets. As Tasneem Ahmar noted, "These stories are acts of resistance."

**News Link:** <https://www.dawn.com/news/1903849>



# What has Uks been up to?

## **Uks and the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP+30) 2025 (06 May 2025)**

On 6 May 2025, Uks once again joined the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), marking its fourth consecutive participation since 2010 as the national partner for Pakistan. This year's monitoring carried special significance as GMMP was also celebrating its 30th anniversary (GMMP+30).

The GMMP is the world's largest and longest-running research and advocacy initiative on gender in the news. Conducted every five years across more than 100 countries, it captures a one-day snapshot of how gender is represented, in print, electronic, and digital media.

On monitoring day, Uks together with trained volunteers tracked and analyzed content from nine newspapers, six television channels, Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation (PBC), six news websites, and four Twitter/X handles. The monitoring also looked at how gender intersects with issues such as gender-based violence, coverage of marginalized groups, and the role of technology.

Findings from Pakistan will contribute to the global GMMP 2025 report, which will be launched in full on 25 November 2025. Highlights will be presented earlier at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2025.

With over 25 years of experience in gender-sensitive media monitoring, Uks remains committed to ensuring that women's voices are seen and heard in Pakistan's news media.

**News Link:** <https://www.dawn.com/news/1908897>

**News Link:** <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1309082-pakistan-joins-gmmp-30-as-uks-research-centre-leads-the-way-in-monitoring-gender-representation-in-media>

# What has Uks been up to?



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## Sunday Kay Sunday - Badlao Mumkin Hai | With Tasneem Ahmar (11 May 2025)

Uks Digital Studio's weekly series **Badlao Mumkin Hai | Sunday kay Sunday** with Tasneem Ahmar, Uks Founder-Director kicked off just after Mother's Day (started 11 May 2025), with the first episode, "Ek Din Maaon Ke Naam - Magar Faqat Apni?", taking on the culture of 'Ma ki gaaliyan' and asking what real respect for mothers should look like.

Uploaded every Sunday, the series has since sparked important conversations on various topics including breaking taboos around menstruation, to questioning society's reaction to the birth of girls, to unpacking the misogyny behind phrases like "Chooriyan Pehen Lo."

Each short video is bold, reflective, and rooted in everyday realities, reminding us that change begins with the language we use and the attitudes we normalize.

You can watch the Badlao Mumkin Hai | Sunday kay Sunday series here: Uks Digital Studio on YouTube

**Youtube Link:** [https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLhyE7XfCGmxll6Gj97V2sDYYB\\_IXsQScJ&si=exMxgg\\_XO4Mv3iiy\\_](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLhyE7XfCGmxll6Gj97V2sDYYB_IXsQScJ&si=exMxgg_XO4Mv3iiy_)



# What has Uks been up to?

## Where Are the Women? Uks' Gender Audit of Budget 2025-26 Media Coverage (June 2025)

In June 2025, Uks Research Centre released *Where Are the Women? A Gender Audit of Budget 2025-26 Media Coverage*. This was a non-funded, voluntary study that monitored leading newspapers (Dawn, The News, Express Tribune, Business Recorder, Jang, Mashriq, Daily Pakistan) and TV channels (Geo, Dawn News, ARY, Samaa, Khyber News) to examine how women's voices and concerns were represented in Pakistan's budget coverage.

The audit found that women remained largely invisible in the reporting, both in terms of representation among reporters and experts, and in the attention given to issues such as healthcare, education, social protection, and labour rights. While there were isolated examples of inclusive reporting, the overall picture pointed to male-dominated narratives and extremely limited space for women's perspectives.

By shining a gender lens on budget reporting, Uks highlighted the urgent need for more gender-sensitive journalism and for media to hold policymakers accountable for gender-responsive budgeting.

**The full report is available here:**

<https://uksresearch.com.pk/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/budget-report-1.pdf>



# 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 campaigns don't just spread awareness they force society to face the injustices we've normalized. **UNICEF's recent collaboration with Saba Qamar** does exactly that by confronting the cruel reality of child marriage. Instead of masking the issue under the banner of culture, the campaign shows how these marriages strip girls of their education, health, and future opportunities. With Saba Qamar's influential voice, the message becomes impossible to ignore: child marriage is not tradition, it is injustice. What makes the campaign powerful is its refusal to settle for pity it demands action. It urges families and communities to see girls not as burdens, but as individuals with rights, choices, and dreams. This is the kind of advocacy that sparks conversations we cannot afford to shy away from, and brands especially those content with playing it safe should take note.



# Mediamatters for Women

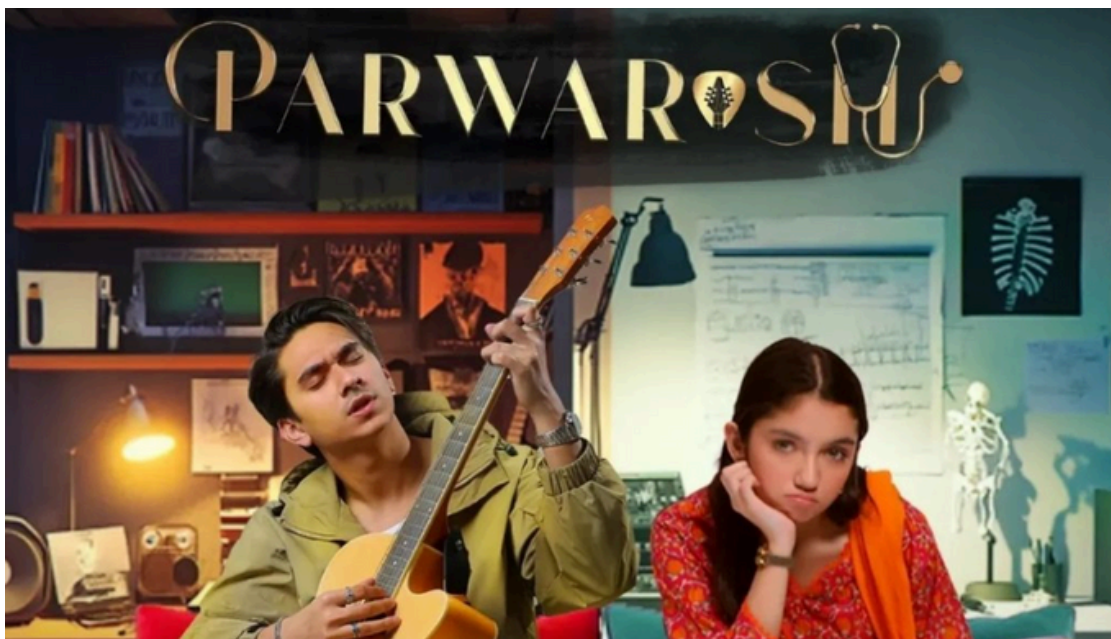
## The Good

In a television landscape where Gen Z is often reduced to memes and women to martyrs, **Parwarish** offered both groups some rare dignity. The drama featured young characters and also trusted them. It trusted them to feel complex emotions, to make decisions, to stumble, and to grow, all without turning them into stereotypes or the story into a cautionary tale. Whether it was Wali negotiating the weight of generational control or Maya juggling education, love, and societal pressure with resilience, Parwarish gave its young characters the space to exist as real people.

The drama's depiction of women was also quite nuanced. In one of the show's most powerful moments, Maya's mother steps between her daughter and an angry, violent father, not with melodrama, but with conviction. It was a rare portrayal of maternal courage that was not rooted in sacrifice but in agency. It was a mother finally saying "enough."

Whether it was mothers, daughters, wives, and grandmothers, Parwarish allowed women across generations to hold their truths. From Savera Nadeem's Mahnoor, who challenges her family's expectations, to Shamim Hilaly's grandmother, who resorts to traditional tactic to keep the family together, the women in this drama weren't reduced to symbols of tradition or rebellion. They felt like real people.

Parwarish also showed healthy masculinity. Fathers who listen, brothers who cry, cousins who support instead of compete were all a refreshing break from the toxic families that have been normalised in Pakistani dramas. When Suleman consoles his son after a drug-related crisis, not with shame but with understanding, it's felt like a masterclass in parenting that was likely a first for our screens. The show wasn't perfect, but it was honest and had its heart in the right place.



# Mediamatters for Women

## The Bad

During a **Ramzan transmission**, actor and host Danish Taimoor made a casual remark about having the "permission from God" for four marriages, adding, "I'm not doing it...for now." The statement which was delivered in front of his wife, actor Ayeza Khan, might have been intended as a joke, but it struck a nerve with many viewers. The comment casually reinforced patriarchal norms under the guise of religious entitlement, treating polygamy not as an ethical decision but as a casual option, that is sitting on the shelf.

Later Taimoor apologised, claiming it was a "slip of the tongue" and an expression taken out of context. But this did little to repair the real issue which is the normalisation of male privilege, especially during what was supposed to be a spiritual broadcast. Ayeza Khan's quiet support in the aftermath raises additional concerns about the burden placed on women to preserve the public image of harmony, even when they are undermined publicly. In a media landscape where women's respect is too often treated as collateral for entertainment, this moment was in poor taste.



# Mediamatters for Women

## The Ugly

Soon after it aired, in true Khalil-ur-Rahman Qamar style, **Main Manto Nahi Hoon** courted controversy and made headlines. Not for the great writing, but for a fat-shaming joke that frankly speaking belonged in the 1990s. In one episode, Sajal Aly's character flirts with her professor, which in itself is problematic. But wait, there's more. She says to her teacher that his face shows no "motivation," so he must have a "fat wife." The class laughs. We didn't and we are sure that many in the audience didn't either.

This wasn't just a throwaway line. It is part of a larger pattern in KRO's considerable body of work, where women are mocked, shamed, or punished for simply existing outside narrow standards. The fat joke may seem trivial, but it reflects the same mindset that sees opinionated women as enemies and romanticises power imbalances.

That dialogues like this still makes it to air, delivered by major stars, backed by a big network, shows how little has changed. The backlash was loud, but whether anyone in power is listening is another matter.

When "bold" writing keeps punching women down, it's not bold. It's tired....and ugly.





A research Resource and  
Publication Centre on  
Women & Media

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