

## **BREAKING THE BARRIERS – WOMEN JOURNALISTS IN BALOCHISTAN**

Human Rights Day is observed every year on 10 December to commemorate the day on which, in 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. On this day, when individuals across the globe come together to reaffirm their support for the rights of others, UNESCO interviewed two women who have chosen to stand tall for their own rights.

Seema Kanwal and Sadia Jehangheer are both journalists from Balochistan, a province which ranks highest amongst its counterparts in terms of female illiteracy, unemployment, gender disparities and maternal mortality. Here the two women share their experience of fighting the odds to pursue their career of choice.

### **Seema Kanwal, Assignment editor at Dunya News**

Having completed my studies in mass communication at Balochistan University, I had already ventured further than most girls from my background. However, I was keen to blaze a path that would take me further still and decided to embark on a career in journalism.

The initial obstacles came from both my immediate and extended family who were reluctant for me to pursue a career and that too in a male dominated environment. However, I persisted despite the opposition and was lucky enough to be offered a job during the course of my internship with Jang News. The job itself came with its own challenges and opportunities and the initial years were, unsurprisingly, the most difficult. A lack of vocational training led to a number of embarrassing situations including stumbling into crime scenes. Other challenges, such as the attitudes of male colleagues, proved more enduring. Nonetheless, my perseverance has paid off and I've recently been promoted to the post of Assignment Editor.



*Seema Kanwal, Dunya News*

Buoyed by my achievements, I'm becoming increasingly confident in my abilities and I'm excited to push the envelope still further. More importantly, I'm very optimistic that my journey will soon become unexceptional as an increasing number of girls join the profession.

### **Sadia Jahangeer, Reporter at 92 Channel**

As a Balochi woman, a wife, a mother of three and a reporter on Channel 92, I'm juggling a number of identities. However, it's only after a number of years in the job that I'm finally learning to strike a sustainable balance.



*Sadia Jahangeer, Reporter Channel 92*

Starting out, I found working in a male dominated environment and the realities of reporting from the field on incidents such as terrorist attacks and homicides bewildering. Nor did the staff shortages and very long hours make things any easier.

However, the biggest challenge of all came a number of years into my career when my relationship with my boss became increasingly strained and I grew disillusioned as a result of the persistently poor working conditions. Not only was there a lack of consideration for my physical condition when I was pregnant, I also faced denigration for speaking my mind notwithstanding the quality of work I was continuing to produce. Eventually I decided, along with other colleagues who were facing similar attitudes, to resign.

This could have proved to be the end of my professional career. However, with the support of my husband and friends, I began working again eight months later and have never looked back. I am, however, very conscious that entrenched misogynistic attitudes as well as a profound lack of effective support systems for newcomers are continuing to hold back women who are less lucky.

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