

PRESS RELEASE

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UNESCO is committed to the development of a peaceful and gender transformative media environment in Pakistan

Karachi: In an effort to contribute to gender equity in media houses and in content, UNESCO Pakistan in collaboration with Uks, organized a National Consultation, entitled “Gender Sensitive Guidelines for Women in Media in South Asia” in Karachi. The objective of the National Consultation was to refine and validate the Gender Sensitive Guidelines for Women in Media in South Asia, developed earlier this year in a Regional Consultation, and to propose an action plan for the next steps to be taken.

The National Consultation brought together senior and mid-level media professionals from print, electronic and online media including advertising and entertainment, self-regulatory authorities, representatives and activists of civil society, women’s focused and media development organisations.

The Gender Sensitive Guidelines for Women in Media in South Asia are the result of UNESCO-SWAN (The South Asian Women’s Network) Regional Consultation, held on 3rd May of this year in New-Delhi. Representatives from seven countries including Afghanistan, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka participated and contributed to the development of these guidelines.

Inspired by the developed guidelines, the National Consultation addressed 6 issues that represents a priority for the Pakistani media institutions: 1) the importance of gender balance in media institutions (at decision making level, in work and working conditions including ethical codes for gender-sensitive policies), 2) Role of unions, associations and clubs in promoting gender balance, 3) Gender sensitisation in education and training, 4) addressing gender based violence, safety and harassment at work place, 5) Portrayal of women in news and current affairs and finally, 6) Portrayal of women in entertainment and advertising.

Speaking at the opening, UNESCO Representative to Pakistan, Ms. Vibeke Jensen, emphasized on the important role of the all media in promoting gender equality in society at large. She said the media in Pakistan needs a better balance of men and women in key decision making positions and in investigative journalism. At the same time media content needs to be gender responsive and all kinds of stereo typing including gender stereo typing needs to be eliminated. To this effect, the guidelines are being prepared at a critical point in time, and if implemented will undoubtedly help Pakistan in contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls).

Ms. Tasneem Ahmar, Director, Uks, presented the first collected data of the desk study and underlined, “Although women are making strides in the right direction, the often-negative portrayal of women in the media lends strength to misogynist mindsets, trying to push women towards the wall. There has to be some guidelines for the media so that these negative elements could be checked and corrected”.

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