

Inside the News – Challenges and Aspirations of Women Journalists in Asia and the Pacific

RECOMMENDATIONS

Fostering Gender Equality in the Media Today

GENDER EQUITY IN MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS

1. The media can and should lead by example on gender equity. As such, media organizations in Asia and the Pacific should adopt a [gender or equal opportunity policy](#) and ensure this policy is communicated to all staff and implemented as a matter of routine. Any policy should include provision for diversity and inclusiveness of marginalised groups and make requirements for gender equity awareness training for decision-makers at middle and senior editorial levels as well as top management. In-house gender committees are strongly recommended in media companies with over 500 employees to deal with complaints and issues, and to advocate for a more equitable working environment.
2. Positive action is needed to overcome direct and indirect discrimination at work. Media should conduct self-initiated but independent [gender assessments](#) of their organizations, including pay audits to determine pay gaps and differences in employment conditions and contracts. Such audits should guarantee anonymity, be transparent and participatory and acted upon with appropriate strategies.
3. Media companies should strongly consider implementing [affirmative employment strategies](#) to target more women in areas of media where there is obvious and apparent male domination, particularly in decision-making roles at executive and senior and middle editorial levels. Affirmative action is also required, ad interim, in newsrooms and other sections of media houses, to ensure the mentoring of junior women professionals and supporting and encouraging women from disadvantaged classes, castes and ethnic groups as well as women in regional, remote and conflict ridden areas.
4. Media companies must appreciate the impact and benefits of [family-friendly work conditions](#) on general well-being and satisfaction for all employees in the workplace. Media companies should work toward a goal of family-friendly work strategies including transport after late shifts, childcare arrangements, implementation of maternity and paternity leave provisions and flexible work arrangements for employees.
5. Sexual harassment is a violation of human rights and an unfair labour practice that must be aggressively eliminated. As such, there must be a strict policy of [“zero tolerance” for sexual harassment in the workplace](#) and an effective complaint mechanism put in place in every company. This policy should be reinforced through appropriate training such as workshops which promote gender sensitivity among workers.
6. There is a need to address the root causes underlying the gender insensitivity of the print and electronic media, such as ingrained perceptions and social and cultural values regarding women and girls; and to:
 - facilitate the implementation of a [gender-sensitive code of ethics](#) by media houses and professionals;
 - promote pre-service and in-service gender orientation for both men and women media practitioners;
 - Follow IFJ guidelines on reporting on violence against women.

7. Both male and female journalists need to be trained as **media gender perspective monitors**. Journalists, script-writers and presenters/anchors need to be provided with an alternative dictionary of gender-sensitive terminology, in order to counter sexist and derogatory language in common usage.

8. Media has a responsibility to **inform and educate the public** in accordance with international conventions that gender equality is a fundamental human right and to:

- highlight real-life issues and human rights deprivations faced by girls, women and disadvantaged communities;
- demonstrate how women's contributions are essential to improving pay, work and conditions for society as a whole. This should include the contribution of women in the workplace and the changing role of women in decision-making and public life;
- report on the negative impact of discriminatory laws, policies and retrogressive ideological and social-cultural attitudes, customs and practices.

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND UNIONS

9. Unions must take active steps to **increase women's union representation**. A quota system or media-based proportional representation will give women genuine representation in their unions and genuine participation. This will in turn enable unions to grow and strengthen, better advocate by attracting more women members and to enable capacity building of women in the media.

10. Unions should **amend constitutions and statutes** to make structures more "women-friendly" and commit to the promotion of gender equality in all union approaches. This should include reserve or additional seats for women on executive and decision-making bodies; a quota system for women's participation in congresses, executive bodies, committees, negotiation teams, education and training. Ultimately this will raise awareness of gender equality and women's issues among both female and male membership, develop solidarity, empower women and change conservative and traditional attitudes.

11. All unions should implement **union gender equity and model sexual harassment policies** based on policies already in place and operating in the region, for example, the SAMSUN Charter on Gender Equity for Media and Journalism in South Asia that can also be proposed and adapted for media organizations.

12. Unions must create a **checklist for union action on gender equity** in workplace activity, action with employers and action with governments. This should include articles against sexual harassment in collective bargaining agreements and lobbying governments for improved sexual harassment legislation. Campaign aims should include regular salary reviews with employers, and promote the good practice in payment agreements, reduce gender gap etc.

GOVERNMENT, MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY

13. **Gender equity training** is both needed and wanted by both men and women media workers in the Asia and the Pacific region. A key strategy is needed to improve the working environment for men and women that will help people to better understand the issue and work to combat bullying, harassment and discrimination at work. More awareness is needed on gender equity and the rights of people to an equitable working environment. This should have a focus on their corresponding wages, working conditions and entitlements.