



# DIALOGUE WITH MEDIA

## DECEMBER 2022



## INTRODUCTION

In today's world, media plays a powerful role in the process of gender socialization. It also has immense potential to promote women's and girls' empowerment to a larger audience. UN Women Bangladesh has nurtured good media relations since its inception and the media has been an ally for this office to advance gender equality through different strategic engagements over the years. Bangladesh's vibrant media scene comprises of 30 privately and four state-owned television channels, 22 FM and 18 community radio stations, 1323 news dailies and 177 online news portals (Qurratul-Ain-Tahmina, 2022)\*. Almost all the print dailies and television channels have online platforms with millions of subscribers. However, there are a few topline or key media outlets that have credibility and the ability to influence public opinion as well as the Government of Bangladesh and development partners.

With the adoption of UN Women BCO's Strategic Note 2022-26, in line with the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and UN Women Global Strategic Plan, UN Women Bangladesh held the dialogue to i) have a space to discuss critical gender equality and women's empowerment issues with the media; and ii) share information on UN Women with media outlets to encourage collaboration on promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in Bangladesh.

In this backdrop and during the occasion of 16 Days of Activism, UN Women Bangladesh organized a dialogue with 10 media representatives from the most influential print, online and TV channels on 8 December 2022. The dialogue focused on the critical role of media in producing counter-narratives, representing women in roles that break gender stereotypes and raising awareness on gender equality.

## OBJECTIVE

- Share an overview on UN Women Bangladesh's strategic priorities for 2022-2026
- Identify areas of collaboration for advancing GEWE as well as areas where UN Women Bangladesh can support the media.
- Understand media's perspective on the challenges of gender responsive reporting and addressing harmful social norms.



Photo Credit: UN Women/Gulam Zakaria Titu

\*Gender Equality and Media Regulations Study 2022

## DISCUSSION

UN Women Bangladesh's Country Representative Ms. Gitanjali Singh opened the dialogue and shared an overview of the priority areas of UN Women. The guiding questions for the Editors helped to build the discussion in a constructive pattern.

- What is the narrative we are witnessing in stories related to gender-based violence?
- What are the trends that are being seen?
- How might we advance connections and consensus building for positive social norms change?

At the discussion, Ms. Aasha Mehreen Amin, Deputy Editor of the Daily Star said: "Newsrooms are mostly dominated by men which impacts the way headlines and stories are published. So, it is crucial to ensure gender equality at the decision-making levels and editorial boards of media houses to ensure gender sensitivity in reporting."

Ms. Munni Saha, News Head, ATN News said: "Media needs to address the gender balance inside newsrooms to avoid gender blindness (only 7% of editors are women in ATN News)." Adding to the discussion, Mr. Shahed Mohammad Ali, Editor of Kaler Kantha said: "Till today, less than 10% journalists are women at the daily newspaper Prothom Alo and only 5% of the journalists are women at Kaler Kantho."



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-Ms. Aasha Mehreen Amin, Daily Star



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-Mr. Matiur Rahman, Prothom Alo

Stressing on the importance of gender polices in media houses, country's leading daily newspaper Prothom Alo editor Mr. Matiur Rahman said: "Prothom Alo is one of the two dailies in Bangladesh that has a Women and Children policy to reduce sexual harassment. We have a dedicated weekly page "Nari Moncho" that publishes articles and stories on women's issues. But we do acknowledge that we have lack of knowledge on women's issues in the newsroom where UN Women can help." Discussants also highlighted that, preference of news leaders for economics and politics over gender-based violence issues leave less space for covering women's issues on headlines (research and data backed stories are prioritized as news items).



Highlighting women's strong leadership in media, veteran senior journalist, and Editor-in-Chief, TV Today, Mr. Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul said: "The Daily Sangbad's dedicated women page was dominated by women activists in the 90's. Things have changed with time. More and more women are coming to media and taking up challenging roles which helps to cover issues such as women's health, leadership. Rural women have also started talking about their reproductive health issues which has been neglected for the longest time till now." Emphasizing on positive storytelling, Mr. Shahed Ali added: "We do maintain certain editorial policy in terms of reporting on gender and women empowerment issues. We try to highlight the positive stories of aspiring women that creates better impact."



Photo Credit: UN Women/Gulam Zakaria Titu

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**-Mr. Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul, My TV**

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Need to introduce institutional policy for all English and Bangla daily newspapers to ensure inclusion of women and gender equality for decision making in media houses.
- Gender sensitive language needs to be strengthened in the media houses in Bangladesh.
- Training on gender for male journalists to enhance their understanding on gender-responsive reporting
- Share research reports, findings with media regularly. Ensure credible data on women's issues, especially from the remote areas of Bangladesh.
- More efforts required from women activists to involve news editors and journalists.

## NEXT STEPS

The discussion ended with closing remarks from the Country Representative and all documents were shared with the guests. Dialogue with Media 2022 was much appreciated by all the editors and deputy editors who were present. Going forward, UN Women Bangladesh will regularly sit with this cohort as well as take forward individual discussions to build a more strategic approach for addressing deeper issues on gender inequality and women's empowerment through media.



Photo Credit: UN Women/Gulam Zakaria Titu

## GUESTS

1. Matiur Rahman, Editor, Prothom Alo
2. Anisul Haque, Deputy Editor, Prothom Alo
3. Shumana Sharmin, Feature Editor, Prothom Alo
4. Aasha Mehreen Amin, Joint Editor, The Daily Star
5. Reaz Ahmed, Executive Editor, Dhaka Tribune
6. Shahed Mohammad Ali, Editor, Kaler Kantha
7. Hasan Imam Rubel, Executive Editor, Newsbangla 24
8. Talat Mamun, CEO, Channel 24
9. Munni Saha, News Head, ATN News
10. Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul, Editor in Chief, My TV