

# The Statesman: Gender impact

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The fact that there are more women media professionals than ever in many countries across Asia-Pacific, can be seen as a big step towards effective women empowerment. Although, the harsh truth still remains that in spite of this they represent only three out of 10 newsroom staff, often earn less than their male counterparts and are subject to sexual harassment, while struggling to reach decision-making positions. Under-representation, glass ceilings and sexual harassment are common, says a recent report spanning seven countries, launched at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Thailand on 23 June.



Inside the News: Challenges and Aspirations of Women Journalists in Asia and the Pacific, the study brought out by UNESCO, UN Women and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) brought out many such findings. Drawing case studies from the personal accounts of media professionals in Cambodia, India, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Vanuatu, Inside the News highlights how issues of gender impact the lives and work of journalists in the region.

"(This report) outlines the efforts, achievements and remaining challenges in transforming media to ensure that they advance a culture of gender equality and women empowerment in Asia and the Pacific," said UNESCO Bangkok director Gwang-Jo Kim, at the launch. "It is my hope that this report helps to position gender equality and women's empowerment at the centre of the global agenda, as an essential means for the achievement of sustainable development in all its dimensions."

The launch brought together a diverse group of women journalists and media experts from around the region to share the challenges they face in their work as well as strategies that can help foster greater gender equality in the media.

Roberta Clarke, regional director, UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, said the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action stressed the need for women to have greater access to media both in creating content and in decisionmaking and also called for an end to gender stereotyping. As in other areas of the declaration currently

under review, Clarke said the report reflected a "mixed bag of progress and challenges". "The report is reflective, but more important for us now in 2015, it is meant to be a catalyst for further change. Gender equality and the empowerment of women is everyone's business," she said.

Jane Worthington, deputy director of IFJ Asia-Pacific, said the report was the broadest of its kind that the IFJ had worked on in Asia-Pacific and provided important insights into the realities of women journalists in this region.

"This report is important and provides significant research, which provides in-depth details of women's experiences at work: from sexual harassment to representation to pay gaps issues, while providing practical and effective suggestions for change," Worthington said. Anothai Udomsilp, Director of Thai PBS's Academic Institute of Public Media, said, "In order to achieve real progress in that area, one crucial aspect is to get significantly more men involved in these questions."

"This report gives orientation on where to concentrate our advocacy efforts in the future, namely: women in decision-making positions, the corporatisation of the media and its impact on women's depiction in media content, and safety at the workplace," said Laxmi Murthy, consulting editor for the Himal Southasian magazine.

Nearly 700 journalists from the target countries participated in the study, which drew on surveys of journalists and focus group interviews, with representatives of media outlets, as well as interviews with media organisation and national professional associations.