

# Gender Sensitive Reporting

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# **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>Unit 1 - Women's status in Pakistan</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Unit 2 - Gender Sensitive Reporting in a Challenging Environment</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Unit 3 - Avoiding Gender Stereotypes</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Unit 4 - Story Angles: A Woman's Perspective</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Unit 5 - Identifying Good Stories</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Unit 6 - News and Feature Reporting</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Unit 7 - Ethics</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Unit 8 - Feature Articles</b>	<b>36</b>

**UNIT 1**  
**WOMEN'S STATUS IN PAKISTAN**

## **BACKGROUND**

The status of women in Pakistan varies considerably across classes and regions. The life of an upper class, Oxford-educated Pakistani woman living in Islamabad or Karachi is a world away from that of a poor Pashtun villager who was born and raised in the North West Frontier Province. In relative terms, however, there are very few women who go abroad to study, while there are millions who live in poor, remote villages. Between these two polar opposites, there is a large middle class where women face a range of different issues.

Gender equality was specifically guaranteed in the Constitution of Pakistan in 1973. The constitution stipulates “there shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex alone”. It also ensures “full participation of women in all spheres of national life”. However, these rights were eroded during the reign of Zia-ul-Haq who suspended all fundamental rights guaranteed in the Constitution. He introduced discriminatory legislation against women, including the Hudood Ordinance, banned women from participating in sport and promoted purdah. He also proposed Islamic penal laws governing retribution (qisas) and compensation (diyat) in crimes involving bodily injury. When the victim was a woman the amount of diyat was halved.

For decades human rights and women’s groups opposed the laws, particularly the Hudood Ordinance, which was enacted in 1979. The Hudood law was intended to implement Islamic Sharia law, by enforcing punishments for zina (extramarital sex), qazf (false accusation of zina), theft and the consumption of alcohol. The ordinance was most criticized for making it exceptionally difficult and dangerous to prove an allegation of rape. A woman alleging rape was required to provide four adult male eye-witnesses of good standing. Of course, in practice this was impossible.

Moreover, to prove rape the female victim had to admit that sexual intercourse had taken place. If the alleged offender was acquitted the woman now faced charges for either adultery, if she was married, or for fornication, if she was not married. According to a report by the Pakistan National Commission on the Status of Women “an estimated 80% of women” in jail in 2003 were there because “they had failed to prove rape charges and were consequently convicted of adultery”.

Stories of great personal suffering have appeared in the press because of the Hudood Ordinance. In 1983, an orphaned, thirteen year old girl, Jehan Mina, was allegedly raped by her uncle and his sons and became pregnant. She was unable to provide enough evidence that she was raped. She was charged with adultery. The court considered her pregnancy as proof of adultery. She was sentenced to one hundred lashes and three years in jail.

The election of the world's first Muslim Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto heralded hopes of change. But calls for the repeal of the Hudood Ordinance were not implemented by Bhutto or her successor, Nawaz Sharif.

In late 2006, the parliament passed the Women's Protection Bill, repealing parts of the Hudood Ordinances and allowing rape to be prosecuted under civil law. The bill was signed into law by Pakistani President, Pervez Musharraf. It allows for DNA and other scientific evidence to be used in prosecuting rape cases. The new bill has left both hard-line Islamist leaders and women's rights activists unsatisfied. Activists acknowledge the legislation is a step in the right direction, but continue to demand a complete end to the Hudood Ordinance. Fatima Bhutto, granddaughter of former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, says the act fails to protect rape victims or stop the prosecution of women who engage in consensual sex. She calls it little more than the previous sharia law "with a cosmetic makeover" or "Hudood Ordinance: the remix".

There have been positive developments for women in Pakistan during the past ten years. In 2004, the Ministry of Women Development became an independent ministry (separated from the Social Welfare and Education Ministry). In 2006, for the first time, women cadets from Pakistan's Military Academy assumed guard at the mausoleum of Muhammad Ali Jinnah. In the same year, the Pakistani Air Force inducted its first female fighter pilots. In 2008, Dr Fehmida Mirza was elected speaker of the National Assembly. She is the first woman to hold the position. In the same year, the cabinet approved a bill aimed at protecting women against workplace harassment. In another recent development, the National Assembly passed the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Bill in August 2009. The upper house still needs to pass the legislation and then President Asif Ali Zadari must sign it into law. Those found guilty of beating women or children will face a minimum of six months in jail and a fine of at least 100,000 rupees.

But much of the news is not positive. Former Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto was assassinated in December 2007. Earlier in the same year, Punjab's Minister for Social Welfare, Zilla Huma Usman was assassinated at a political rally by a fundamentalist because her face wasn't covered by a veil. Ms Usman had been widely criticised by conservative religious leaders for organising a mixed-race marathon.

Girls' education has suffered terrible setbacks recently because of the targeting of girls' schools in areas controlled by the Taliban, particularly in Dir and Swat in the North West Frontier Province.

According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan more than 1200 women were killed in 2008, at least half of them in the name of 'honour'. The Commission identified 37 acid burn victims. It also detailed stories about women who suffered because of tribal customs such as karo-kari and swara.

The most highly publicised case of violence during 2008 occurred in Balochistan where a group of women were murdered in the name of honor and no concrete action was taken by law

enforcement agencies. The women, three of whom were teenagers, were killed for wanting to marry a partner of their own choice. Two elder female relatives tried to intervene and they too were shot along with the younger 'offenders'. All five women were then thrown in a ditch and covered with mud. Some NGOs claimed that at least some of them were alive when they were buried.

The story from Balochistan is shocking and needs to be reported. Fortunately, however, this kind of extraordinary brutality is not what day-to-day life entails for the majority of Pakistani women. Many more women are concerned with educating their children, paying their medical bills and balancing work and family life. These sorts of issues might not be as dramatic as honor killing, but they are still important. The media should be asking questions about why the literacy rate for women is only 36 percent, while for men it's more than 60 percent. There should be more stories about sexual harassment in the workplace, which is a big issue for a significant number of women. There should be lots of stories about problems with the health system and suggestions for improving it. The National Assembly's recent decision to pass a bill outlawing domestic violence is a perfect opportunity to look more closely at this issue.

Don't forget there are also a lot of good stories about the many things that Pakistani women are achieving every day: whether it's a woman who's successfully started her own small business using micro-finance or the election of a new woman to the parliament. Don't forget the positive stories as well.

**Exercise 1:** Discuss the following questions:

- Why are we talking about the status of women in Pakistan? Why is it important?
- What is the status of women's rights in Pakistan today?
- Can you name any recent positive developments for Pakistani women?
- What are some of the main issues for women in NWFP, Balochistan and FATA?

## **UNIT 2**

# **GENDER SENSITIVE REPORTING IN A CHALLENGING ENVIRONMENT**

## **GETTING THE BALANCE RIGHT**

For the media to accurately mirror our societies, to produce coverage that is complete and diverse, it is critical that the news reflects the world as seen through the eyes of women as well as men. All journalists, male and female, can help to change attitudes by portraying women as they really are rather than re-enforcing gender-based stereotypes.

Many countries, including Pakistan, need more women in newsrooms. But that is not enough to guarantee gender-sensitive reporting. Women need to be represented in management and they need to be able to cover 'hard' news, such as business, crime and politics as well as 'soft' news like entertainment.

The Pakistani media faces additional challenges. In certain parts of the country, including NWFP, FATA and Balochistan, it can be very difficult to talk about sensitive subjects without creating very real problems. Journalists and their editors must work through these challenges and come up with their own creative ways of navigating these delicate but critical issues.

As a first step toward better reporting, journalists and students of journalism must be educated about gender issues. One of the first things that most journalists are taught is that each story must answer the questions: who, what, where, when, how and why. The same questions can be applied to gender-sensitive journalism, as outlined below in a document produced by the United Nations.

<b>WHO?</b>	The reporting journalist
<b>WHAT?</b>	Needs to be more aware of gender issues and incorporate this awareness into the way work is approached.
<b>WHERE?</b>	At the workplace, in the editorial department where decisions are made about stories to be covered and out in the field where information is gathered.
<b>WHEN?</b>	All the time
<b>WHY?</b>	Because professionalism, equity and good sense demand it
<b>HOW?</b>	By being aware of the language used, being open-minded and fair and through careful selection of the story and their sources.

### **Exercise 1:**

In Balochistan, NWFP and FATA, reporting fairly and accurately on women's issues can be very challenging. How can journalists cover sensitive issues adequately while not insulting local

sensibilities? Work in groups of two to fill out the table below and then share your work with the rest of the class.

<b>Gender Issues That Are Difficult To Report</b>	<b>The reason</b>	<b>Possible Solutions/Ways to discuss the issue without the story losing its integrity</b>
<b>Rape</b>	<b>It brings an unacceptable level of shame to the family of the victim and can lead to more violence</b>	

## UNIT 3

# AVOIDING GENDER STEREOTYPES

## **CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES**

The media plays a very significant role in shaping public perceptions about women. In Pakistan, only a very small percentage of journalists are female, which means that women’s issues often don’t receive the coverage they should and, in addition, many issues are only seen through a male paradigm. When journalists aren’t well trained or aware of their own prejudices, they’ll often unwittingly enforce stereotypes.

Stereotypes are generalizations about a group of people whereby we attribute a defined set of characteristics to this group. Stereotypes oversimplify reality. They often form the basis of prejudice. Stereotypes are forms of social consensus rather than individual judgments. Journalists should remember that women have a right to see themselves portrayed in the media in ways that accurately represent the complexity of their lives.

- What sort of stereotypes are there in Pakistan about women?
- How does the story in the previous chapter about female cab drivers in Delhi challenge gender stereotypes?

**Exercise 1:** Bring some examples to class of newspaper reports where you believe women have been misrepresented or portrayed in a stereotypical role.

**Exercise 2:** Look at the examples of stereotyping and fill in the blank spaces.

<b>Examples of Stereotyping enforced by the media</b>	<b>Ways of thinking encouraged by this stereotype</b>	<b>Other possible ways of thinking not shown by stereotype</b>
Many newspaper articles about prominent Pakistani women focus on their appearance.	That a woman’s appearance is more important than what she has to say.	These women often have important jobs to do and we should be reading/listening to what they to say about their area of expertise.
In stories about sexual crime, journalists often emphasise the looks and character of the victim.		
Women are very often portrayed as ‘victims’ in stories.		

Many journalists only ask female politicians about women's issues.		
A lot of magazines portray woman only in the home: as domestic creatures who cook, clean and look perfect.		

**Exercise 3:** Look at the English-language and Urdu press and identify stories that are discriminatory. Find examples of stories that suggest the following:

- Women are weaker than men
- Women are sex symbols
- Women should stay at home
- Women are dangerous (i.e. they can lead good men astray)

## REPORTING SEXUAL CRIME

Analysts who study the Pakistan media's reporting of sexual violence, consistently find that newspapers focus on trivial factors, particularly the physical appearance of the victim. The reporting often suggests that the women were 'asking for it'.

Below is the edited text of a speech, Gender Stereotyping: South Asian Perspectives by Rita Manchanda. She delivered this speech at a conference of the South Asian Free Media Association in Kathmandu.

*A headline in a leading Urdu daily sensationally announced the murder of a woman by describing her clothes, henna and nail polish. The photo caption read “Dead body of a fashionable lady found on train arriving from Karachi” – drawing a link between the woman’s appearance and the crime. There’s a subtle suggestion that the woman ‘asked for it’. It insinuates sexual assault although nowhere is it mentioned. One of the lines in the story read: “Leaving the home of a poor mother beautiful Praveen dies on the path of a sinful life” - deflects attention from the experience of forced prostitution and murder and implies that had she remained home and not been disobedient towards her mother, she would still be alive.*

*Common in the non-English language media’s coverage of rape, is the reluctance to name rape and minimize the crime by calling it ‘molestation’, e.g. “seven year old molested”, tends to de-emphasize the sexual nature of the crime. According to a survey conducted by Unnati, it is the entry of women into newsrooms that has produced a consciousness about the need to expose rape as a brutal crime.*

In the 70s Indian newspapers were hesitant about using the word rape and couched it in phrases like “outraging a women’s modesty” or “assault”. Also there is the persisting tendency to label violators as “maniacs” thus taking away social responsibility for brutal systemic sexual violence against women. Its flip side is to ‘naturalize’ rape as reflected in the candid remarks of an Indian Minister justifying the inevitability and normalness of the act of rape – like having a cup of tea! This ‘naturalization’ of rape interpreted as a crime of lust rather than violence and power to dominate and humiliate, is the dominant frame of the rape story in conflict. However, feminist researchers and women journalists increasingly interpret rape in conflict, not as an aberrant act of a maniac or an inevitable act of lust, but as an instrument of war.

Coverage of women in conflict manifests the gender stereotyping of women as ‘victims’ – the dominant image being a mother cowering with her children as the firing rages; grieving for the dead; a desolate woman refugee with children clutching at her or a woman lost amidst the debris of her home – passive victims. You do not find the other faces of women- managing survival of family/community, preventing or freeing ‘boys’ taken into custody; going to the courts and administration to find the disappeared; taking on ‘male’ roles of ploughing and thatching and taking up arms.

Women are cast as victims, but they are not seen as being worthy newsmakers or sources of news to ask about their differentiated experience of the conflict, their understanding of its nature or options for resolving the conflict and effecting reconciliation. Women in our societies have authority in the informal sphere but journalists rarely go beyond the obvious list of people to quote and they’re usually male.

#### Exercise 4

- What do you think about this speech?
- Is it relevant for you?
- Is the language the media uses to describe rape ‘minimizing the crime’?

## SEXIST AND JUDGEMENTAL LANGUAGE

Accuracy is fundamental to good journalism. Research must be thorough and we must be prepared to check, cross-check and seek advice, to ensure this. Wherever possible, we should gather information first-hand by being there ourselves or, where that is not possible, by talking to those who were. Accuracy can be difficult to achieve. It is important to distinguish between first and second-hand sources. An error in one report is often recycled in another. Material already broadcast and newspaper cuttings can become out-of-date quickly or simply be wrong.

But it is not sufficient just to get the facts right. As the BBC’s producer guidelines state, “We must use language fairly. That means avoiding exaggeration. We must not use language inadvertently so as to suggest value judgements, commitment or lack of objectivity.” This is very relevant when reporting on women.

**Exercise 5:** Below is some of the language used to discriminate against women. Identify the problem with each phrase. Think about the double standards at play and the judgemental language. Often these stories are not even newsworthy – they are just tantalising gossip that demeans women.

<b>Sexist and Derogatory phrases</b>	<b>What is the problem with this? Is it news? If so, how would you re-write it so that the language is neutral?</b>
Kanwari Maan ne Gunahoon ka bojh kooray key dher par phaink diya (virgin mother throws her burden of sin – her baby - on a garbage dump).	
Saat bachoon ki ma aashna key sath bagh gayi (mother of seven elopes with lover).	
Aurat to hoti hi Naqasul Aqal hey (a woman is intellectually inferior).	

Baiti ka bojh jatni jaldi uttar jayey uttna hi acha hey (the burden of a daughter needs to be removed as quickly as possible)	
Ghairat Mand Bai nay behan ko tikhanay laga diya (honorable brother puts sister to a deserving death).	
Barhana Laash Mili Hai (naked body found)	
Muashray ka Kamzor Tabqa (the weak segment of the society)	
Khubroo Doshiza aur nojawan rang ralian kartay giraftar (Young beauty and youth caught in a compromising position)	

**Exercise 6:** Look at the image below. Is this kind of picture familiar to you? What impression do you have of the women in the shot? What impression do you have of the man?



## UNIT 4

# STORY ANGLES - A WOMAN'S PERSPECTIVE

## **CAPTURING WOMEN'S VOICES**

There are thousands of untold stories about the issues faced by women in Pakistan. One of the best things you can do to find those stories is very obvious: talk to women, all sorts of women. Many stories will be richer, more balanced and more interesting if they contain a woman's perspective.

Sometimes stories haven't been covered properly simply because journalists didn't think to ask women for their views. For example, in 2005, the MMA government in NWFP approved special arrangements where women could spend the night with their husbands in jails. One of the most important angles to the story was largely ignored: how did women feel about this. If women had been asked for their opinion, it would have been clear that the arrangements were never going to work. Pashtun women would find it too embarrassing to enter a jail, escorted by police, and then endure a range of procedures and security checks in order to spend time with their husbands. This was an interesting story that journalists, working on auto-pilot, failed to adequately explore.

Sometimes, however, stories aren't so obvious. One of the things that can help, however, is to look at what's making news and simply asking whether there's a women's perspective to the story. It won't work all the time, but often it will.

**Exercise 1:** Look at the following stories and think of ways you may be able to find a 'women's angle'. How would you investigate the stories? Who would you speak to?

- Hundreds of thousands of refugees are pouring out of the Swat Valley because of fighting between the Pakistan military and the Taliban.
- Pakistan celebrates Defence Day.
- The Federal Government has announced it's slashing the health budget by a hundred million rupees a year.
- A UNAIDS report says that between 80,000 and 140,000 Pakistanis are infected with HIV and the rate could spiral because of under-reporting of cases.
- The global financial crisis may have hit South Asia, but it's not deterring many Muslims from throwing traditional banquets at Iftar during the holy month of Ramazan.
- On International Literacy Day, the government concedes that more than half the population cannot read or write.
- Pakistan's President, Asif Ali Zardari, is celebrating his first anniversary in the top job.
- Pakistan is in the midst of a sugar crisis, with prices doubling in just over six months.
- An earthquake in Balochistan leaves 20,000 people homeless.

- A flood of cheap heroine has crossed the border from Afghanistan into Pakistan and hundreds of men are becoming addicted.
- Six thousand people have sat the entrance examine to be accepted into the Bachelor of Science program at the University of Peshawar.

### **New Angles, Old Issues**

Some of the most important women’s issues in Pakistan have been told many times before. We all know about karo-kari, swara, domestic violence and problems surrounding the dowry. These stories should be told and re-told but ONLY if you can find new angles, strong talent or fresh ways to tell them. If you simply repeat the same stories again and again people will tune out.

**Exercise 2:** Work in pairs and try to come up with new ways of telling old issues. What do you need to find to turn these issues into fresh stories? Who will you speak to? Try to think of different ways of telling the story.

OLD ISSUES	NEW ANGLES
<b>Karo-kari</b>	
<b>Swara</b>	
<b>Dowry</b>	
<b>Domestic violence</b>	

**UNIT 5**  
**IDENTIFYING GOOD STORIES**

## **WHAT MAKES A STORY ENGAGING?**

**Exercise 1:** Think about the following questions:

- Why do we engage with one story and not another?
- What makes a story interesting?
- Why is one person better talent than another?

**Exercise 2:** Listen to the following stories produced by journalists from *Meri Awaz Suno* Do you like these stories? Why?

**Exercise 3:** Look at the following story and see if you can identify some of the problems with it. How would you have done it differently?

THE NATION

By: Farehia Rehman | Published: September 04, 2009

ISLAMABAD - The state of violence against women, silent sufferers of the society, is turning from bad to worse with every passing day with varying degrees of discrimination, exploitation and violence cases.

Women the world over, more so in Pakistan, have been subjected to varying degrees of discrimination, exploitation and violence. Violence against women is a multifaceted issue, which finds its roots in biological, psychological and social fabric of the society.

The condition of women in most developing countries like Pakistan can be best understood in the light of the most recent report titled "Sorrows of woman" of the Pakistan Human Development Foundation.

The women in Pakistan, whether they are based in rural or urban areas, face multiple forms of violence including sexual violence, domestic abuse, burning and disfiguring through acids beating and threatening, honor-killings, custodial abuse and torture, dowry-related violence, rape and female genital mutilation. "Sorrows of woman", a sorrowful tale of women miseries is an effort to unveil the brutalities committed to women in South Punjab so that true situation of violence and advocate for implementation of laws and plead for necessary amendments, to prevent further violence in religion.

The study has revealed that the women in Pakistan, generally, and South Punjab, particularly, experience discrimination since their childhood.

This fact-sheet contains data on different forms of violence that women of South Punjab suffered from in the year 2007 and 2008.

The figures obtained are mind-boggling, as the number of cases contained in this fact-sheet is more than double that published by other organisations. Sources of this data were newspapers of South Punjab, hospitals, police stations, personal visits and social activist.

The report contained first hand information with name of the district, city, Moza, name of victim and accused and their relationship, reason of violence and response of police in case of registration of case is written in the form of short story to avoid any misunderstanding or confusion.

Cases contained in the report imply that women face discrimination and neglect at all levels in our society. Most of the cases revealed the saddening aspect that own guardians of the women are usually the violators of their rights.

In this situation the women are left totally in misery because if there is no justice for them under roof of their own home then they find no well-wisher outside and face despair in getting justice everywhere.

**Exercise 3** Compare the next story with the previous one. Why does it work? Why is it so much better than the previous story? In what way does it challenge stereotypes?

## Delhi slum women hail a taxi to equality

Thursday, 27 Aug, 2009 | 12:00 PM PST |



Trainee woman drivers attend an elementary English speaking class at Azad Foundation in New Delhi on August 10, 2009. Hailing from some of the poorest quarters of the Indian capital, they are part of plans to launch the city's first radio taxi-service run by women, in time for the October 2010 Commonwealth Games. -Photo by AFP

NEW DELHI: A battered housewife, a Muslim widow and an illiterate mother of four are among a group of Indian women looking to carve out a living by breaking into the male preserve of New Delhi taxi drivers.

Hailing from some of the poorest quarters of the Indian capital, they are part of plans to launch the city's first radio taxi-service run by women, in time for the October 2010 Commonwealth Games.

The project is the brainchild of Meenu Vadera of the Azad Foundation, a voluntary group that works with disadvantaged women whose employment prospects -- if they exist at all -- are usually limited to the world of domestic help.

'We have trained one batch of nine women and the training of another batch of 11 is underway,' said Vadera, who aims to have five taxis on the road by February and a fleet of 20 by the time the Games begin.

'I was looking at a programme that would combine a livelihood for the girls with the idea of having women cab-drivers who will provide safe transport to working women in Delhi.'

Of all major Indian cities, the capital ranks worst in terms of violence against women, with more than 4,300 registered cases in 2007-08, according to the National Crime Records Bureau.

To ensure their own safety, the women have received some basic self-defence instruction as part of their training at a professional drivers' school run by India's largest car manufacturer, Maruti Suzuki India Ltd.

Supplementing these are classes in grooming, etiquette and spoken English.

'The goal is to establish a company with the women as stakeholders. This way it does not look like a charity but a business run collectively,' Vadera said.

India's emergence as a global economic power has done little for millions of unskilled or illiterate women for whom menial work as domestics or care-givers remains a chief source of regular but often underpaid employment.

The work is generally unregulated and unprotected, leaving them vulnerable to harassment and exploitation.

'Some come from families where only the menfolk work,' said Poonam Bala, a Delhi University Sociology professor. 'For others, their background is such that they are totally unprepared to enter the professional job market.'

Rita, 24, ran away from her marriage and home after suffering seven years of abuse at the hands of her parents-in-law. Living at the home of a friend in Delhi, Rita saw the female taxi project as a way out of a social and economic dead end.

'I jumped at the idea,' she said. 'It would give me independence and the ability to support myself'.

Shanno Begum, a 32-year-old Muslim widow, signed up for the programme last year.

'My husband died three years ago. I had three children and my parents-in-law to support. As a private nurse, I used to earn 4,500 rupees (90 dollars) a month for a 24/7 job,' Shanno said.

'Now, I will earn the same amount working eight hours and can devote more time to my children.'

For Ekta, a 28-year-old mother of four, the taxi project opened doors that she had thought closed to her as an illiterate woman married into a conservative family.

'Persuading my husband to let me work was very difficult,' she said. 'Now I feel empowered as if I have my own identity other than a wife and mother.'

The project has not been without its problems. With the commercial licence necessary to drive a taxi-cab requiring a year-long wait, Vadera has been trying to find short-term chauffeur employment for her fully trained drivers -- with little success.

'I underestimated the gender bias,' Vadera said, citing repeated questions from potential employers as to whether women could be trusted to drive safely and turn up to work on time.

'Despite my assurances, they decide against women drivers. This is despite the fact that records show women are more careful than male drivers -- they obey traffic rules, don't drink and drive, don't get into brawls on the road,' she said.

Some of Delhi's male cabbies, unimpressed by the idea of an all-woman taxi service, have decided the best reaction is one of collective ridicule that panders to a disparaging stereotype of women drivers.

'It's bad enough having women behind the wheel in private cars,' said Pamma Singh, who runs a taxi company with his two brothers.

'They take ages to reverse, negotiate turnings, to park properly. So what kind of challenge will they be to us? Just be prepared for more chaos on the roads,' he said.

Another of Vadera's recruits, Heena Khan, 22, said she treated such remarks with contempt but was still angered by her inability to get a part-time chauffeuring position.

'It is disheartening that after all this hard work, we still can't get jobs because we are women. I am the sole breadwinner and no work means no food,' said Khan, who has 10-member dependent family.

**Exercise 4:** Look at the story below. It contains some excellent information. If you were making a radio program about this issue, how would you do it? Who would you talk to and what do you consider to be the most important information?

## PAKISTAN: Baby formula risk for IDPs



Photo: [Tariq Saeed/IRIN](#)

Babies in vulnerable situations particularly need breastmilk, say experts

LAHORE, 2 September 2009 (IRIN) – At a relief camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Lahore, capital of Pakistan’s eastern Punjab Province, donations are coming in. “The response remains good,” Ijaz Ahmed, a volunteer at the camp set up by local traders, told IRIN.

Among the tins of cooking oil, stacks of bedding and sacks of wheat flour are several cartons containing infant milk formula, but Ahmed appears confused when told that formula, when mixed with unsafe water, can cause diarrhoea in infants.

Some formula has reached IDPs. Several local and international websites, seeking relief goods, included it as a requirement for the over two million IDPs displaced by the conflict between militants and government forces in northwestern Pakistan.

Formula has also been donated by private organizations and groups who rushed to help when the displacements began in early May.

“A teacher asked us to bring formula for the babies,” Sidra Azam, 13, a schoolgirl in Lahore who has been helping collect donations for IDPs at her school, told IRIN.

“I gave formula for a week to my one month-old-baby son. I thought it would make him strong. But I stopped after a lady doctor told me he could get very sick,” said Zahida Bibi, 22, now based with relatives in Lahore. She had initially gone to the Jalala camp in Mardan District, North West Frontier Province (NWFP), after fleeing her village near Mingora, the main town in NWFP’s embattled Swat District.

### Concern

There has been concern about donations of the baby milk by companies. The Islamabad-based NGO The Network for Consumer Protection (The Network) claimed formula milk had been distributed in camps, in violation of the International Code and Pakistan’s own laws.

Rubina Bhatti, project coordinator for The Network, told IRIN: “Despite laws to promote breastfeeding, companies continue unethical practices.”

A meeting of the National Alliance for the Promotion of Breastfeeding was held at the end of May in Islamabad, with UNICEF support, to discuss the issue. Decisions taken included an agreement to raise awareness about the need to promote breastfeeding.

“In an emergency situation breastfeeding is particularly important. A mother’s milk contains antibodies that can protect infants against disease. This is very valuable when they are living in conditions where sanitation is poor, making them vulnerable to sickness,” Shereen said.

### **Hazards of formula feeding**

The lack of access to safe water, and to utensils and fuel to boil it, adds to the hazards of formula feeding, Shereen said, adding: “Women often just mix the formula with ordinary water, which is often contaminated, and bacteria flourish when this happens.”

Asiya Shiraz, a Peshawar-based paediatrician who has volunteered at IDP camps in NWFP, said that displaced women from remote areas had never seen formula before. “In the camps, some of those who received donations of formula thought these would be beneficial for their babies,” Shiraz said.

“We had never seen powdered baby milk before. My husband said it would be good for our baby, who is three months old. I had no idea how to mix it, so I just added tap water to a few spoons of the powder, as advised by some other women,” said Naheed Bibi, from Buner, based with a host family in Peshawar. She received some infant milk as part of parcels distributed from a relief camp in the city.

“UNICEF is actively promoting breastfeeding to avoid such risks and working to make mothers aware it is best for their babies, with the right mix of nutrients for them,” Shereen said.

# UNIT 6

## NEWS AND FEATURE REPORTING

## **The Principles of Good Journalism**

Stories about women's issues must adhere to all the principles of good journalism. You need to thoroughly research your subject, ensure that it's balanced, accurate and clear, know how to find 'good talent' and pre-interview that talent where possible. You must understand the difference between fact and opinion. You also need to make sure that the story is complete: you've answered the 5W's and one H (who, what, when, where, how and why). Any opinions expressed should be attributed to that person. Be careful not to include your own opinion. It's also important to think about your audience. What are they interested in hearing about? When you sit down to write, imagine that you're telling the story to a friend. What is the most interesting part of the story? If you only had 30 seconds to tell your friend, what would you say? This can help you clarify the most important parts of the story.

### **Fact and Opinion**

**Exercise 1:** Knowing the difference between fact and opinion sounds easy, but inexperienced journalists often include their own opinion in a story. Leave it out! Let the people in your story express their opinion, but be sure that when an opinion is expressed the audience is clear who it's coming from.

In the following exercise decide what is opinion and what is fact.

- Pakistani women are more beautiful than other women in South Asia.
- Benazir Bhutto was the first Muslim woman to be elected Prime Minister of a country.
- US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton is a very intelligent woman.
- In 2008, Dr Fehmida Mirza was elected speaker of the National Assembly. She is the first woman in Pakistan to hold the position.
- *Meri Awaz Suno* is an excellent program that deals with a broad range of issues affecting Pakistani women.
- Pakistani women are 'silent sufferers'
- There are not enough media reports about women's issues in Pakistan.
- The Pakistani constitution stipulates "there shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex alone".
- The introduction of legislation to outlaw domestic violence is long overdue.

Remember you can broadcast opinions, as long as they're not your own and as long as the audience is clear who's opinion they're hearing.

## DEVELOPING CONTACTS

A good reporter is constantly updating his or her contact book. That book should include all the women in prominent positions in your community. That way, when a story breaks you can call the appropriate person immediately.

**Exercise 2:** Work with a partner and come up with a list of women you will add to your contact book. Perhaps you don't know all the women who are represented in politics at your local level, but be sure to find out. Which other prominent women in your community will you include in your contacts? As part of this exercise, find the names of three appropriate women, track down their phone numbers and add them to your contact book immediately.

## USING THE INTERNET

As a reporter, you should always be constantly reading newspapers and monitoring the broadcast media. If you have access to the internet, you should also use it daily. Many new sites are constantly updating their web pages and many prominent organizations also have websites that you will want to check frequently.

Some useful sites:

BBC: [www.bbc.co.uk/news](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news)

IRIN: <http://www.irinnews.org/Asia-Country.aspx?Country=PK> (IRIN is the United Nation's news site)

Dawn: [www.dawn.com](http://www.dawn.com)

Human Rights Commission of Pakistan: <http://www.hrcp-web.org/>

The Aurat Foundation: <http://www.af.org.pk/>

The World Health Organisation: <http://www.who.int/countries/pak/en/>

Uks Pakistan: [www.uksresearch.com](http://www.uksresearch.com)

The News: [www.thenews.com.pk](http://www.thenews.com.pk)

## NEWS

News reports the world over are dominated by male voices. That's because men, in most countries, hold the majority of top tier positions in politics and business. Women are often seen on soft news or entertainment programs, which don't reflect the diverse contribution they make to society.

In Pakistan, 21 percent of the seats in the federal parliament are held by women. There are 74 female politicians in the National Assembly, including Fehmida Mirza who is first woman in Pakistan to hold the position of speaker. Women are also represented in politics at a provincial and a local level (at this level a third of legislative seats are reserved for women). It's your job to talk to these women, and not just about so-called 'women's issues'.

To achieve more balance in your news bulletins, think about finding more women's voices. Often journalists become lazy and use the same talent repeatedly. They find an expert who is articulate, well versed in his subject, and always available, and, so, rather than looking for new voices, they go back to the same person repeatedly. Next time you're doing a story about the economy, ask around and find out if there is a woman who's just as well qualified and articulate as the man you normally interview. It might require a bit more work but it will make your news bulletin more interesting. There are many well-educated, confident, articulate Pakistani women that you can use as talent.

Also, be sure to watch out for double standards in news reports, where women are treated one way and men another. For example, single fathers are sympathized with because of their circumstances, whereas single mothers are said to "deserve" the hardship. These double standards are common, simply because they're reinforced so often.

**Exercise 1:** Select a radio or television station and follow one of its major news bulletins every day for a week. How often do you hear women's voices? When you do hear them, what are they talking about? Are they mostly portrayed as victims? Present your findings to the class.

**Exercise 2:** You may have found a story, but first you need the approval of your editor and that's often difficult when covering sensitive issues. Divide the class into two groups; the editorial team and the journalist team. The journalist team needs to come up with a story idea and then a series of arguments to try to convince the editors of the importance of this story. One representative of each group will deliver the arguments for and against.

## FEATURE REPORTS

Feature reports are more in-depth than news stories and give you, as the reporter, much more room to explore an issue. Features are generally about something that's current – they may be an in-depth look at a news story. (Documentaries, on the other hand, are longer and can be about anything as long as it's interesting).

- A feature means you are going to cover/describe/report on an issue in more depth.
- A feature means you will be looking at a different angle to a news story or more angles
- The interviews in a feature may not be as simple as the interviews you would do for a news story
- There will be more interviews in a feature story, not always but often.
- There will be more personal stories. Features are about layers of meaning. People's stories – the human side of an issue – is often the best illustration of all when attempting to describe a complex situation or issue.
- Reporters should look for opportunities to use natural sound to help create word pictures and make the feature more interesting.

**Exercise 3:** Imagine you have been asked to do a radio feature (8 – 10 minutes) following the shooting of Punjab's Social Welfare Minister, Zilla Huma Usman. As you will remember, she was killed in 2007 as she prepared to address a public meeting in Gujranwala. Officials say she was killed by a 'fanatic' because she didn't have a dupatta covering her face. Ms Usman was wearing a shalwar kameez but her dupatta wasn't covering her face. She had previously drawn the ire of ultra-conservative religious groups when she helped organise a mixed-gender marathon.

Ms Usman, a married mother of two sons, joined the Pakistan Muslim League after being elected in 2002. She was a strong supporter of Musharraf's policy of 'enlightened moderation' – designed to tackle extremism.

Your feature will air seven days after the assassination. Imagine that you can travel to the Punjab to do this story. How will your feature be different from the news reports which have described the assassination in detail? Who will you interview? What sort of natural sound will you use? Work in pairs and then provide a brief outline to the class, explaining what you would do.

**Exercise 4:** Produce your own radio or newspaper feature. Find a story that is new and interesting. Your print feature should be 800 words. If you choose to do a radio feature make it 3 – 4 minutes long. Try to have three different people or 'talent' featured in your story. At least two of these people need to be female.

# UNIT 7

## ETHICS

## **A JOURNALIST'S RESPONSIBILITY**

In most countries, including Pakistan, the media does not provide a balanced picture of women's diverse lives and contributions to society in a changing world. As an ethical journalist, you must examine your own prejudices and strive to change them. Your job brings with it a great deal of power and you should only be entrusted with that power if you accept the responsibility that goes with it. You, in your role as a journalist, can help to improve the quality of the Pakistani media simply by being gender-sensitive.

**Exercise 1:** Divide into groups of two and answer the following questions. When you've finished, share your answers with the class.

- You are asked to cover a story about HIV/AIDS. You plan to interview a woman who you know is living with HIV. You've decided the interview is important because it gives the story a human angle and makes it interesting. Would you reveal the identity of the woman in your story?
- You are in an editorial meeting with the rest of your colleagues discussing possible stories to be chased up that day. Somebody suggests a story about a man and a woman who have apparently eloped, much to the anger of their families. The young woman was supposed to marry her cousin. The editor asks for your thoughts about covering this story for the news. What do you think?
- You notice that one of your female colleagues in the newroom is being harrassed by a male colleague. What, if anything, would you do about it?
- Children are very vulnerable and reporters should take extra ethical precautions when interviewing them. Explain some of the things that you would do to ensure that children are not exploited during interviews.
- You interview a well-known maulvi about a decision to increase the number of women in parliament. He is angry about the decision and says very passionately, "aaurat to hoti hi naqasul aqal hey" (a woman is intellectually inferior). Do you use this quote?

## **BBC Producer Guidelines**

The BBC has a responsibility to serve all sections of society in the United Kingdom. Its domestic services should aim to reflect and represent the composition of the nation. Globally we should apply the principles of fair portrayal to all our international services, which should strive to present balanced pictures of the people and the countries covered.

When portraying social groups, stereotypes should be avoided. But we must also beware the danger of depicting a society that does not exist. The BBC is not in the business of social

engineering. Where prejudice and disadvantage exist we need to report and reflect them in our programmes. But we should do nothing to perpetuate them.

When describing different groups a good rule of thumb is to ask how people describe themselves: there have to be good reasons for calling them something different.

People from all groups should be represented in the full range of our programmes. Programmes should draw their participants from a broad range, and not concentrate unreasonably on able-bodied white men.

People should appear in the full range of roles that reflect reality.

BBC programmes should not categorise black people as criminals, women as housewives, disabled people as victims, gay people as ineffectual, old people as incapable, or people of any particular profession, vocation or walk of life as inevitable figures of fun.

### **Women**

Women form the majority of the population in the UK. In spite of laws and changing attitudes women are still discriminated against in some respects and are often under-represented in programmes. Older women are particularly under-represented in programmes and their portrayal is often limited.

Use of non-sexist language is one way to avoid perpetuating the impression that certain activities are the preserve of one sex only.

For many words which refer to a time when women were barred from many types of work (firemen, policemen, taxmen, newsmen, manning) there are comfortable alternatives which are not sexist (firefighters, police officers, tax inspectors, journalists, staffing).

### **Misleading images**

Black and Asian people suffer considerably from negative stereotyping. Programmes must not allow offensive assumptions or generalizations in scripted material, and interviewees who express them need to be challenged wherever possible.

### **Disabilities**

Programmes can be sensitive to the rights and dignities of disabled people without losing editorial integrity or strength. People with disabilities should not be patronized. Stereotyped thinking that characterizes people with disabilities as either 'brave heroes' or 'pitiable victims' often cause offence.

## **Children**

It will normally be appropriate to seek the consent of parents or legal guardians before interviewing children, or otherwise involving them in programmes. Journalists should consider carefully the impact of the programme on a child involved in it – both in the way it is made, and any possible impact it may have when broadcast. Interviews with children need particular care. Children can be easily led in questioning and are often open to suggestion. Young children in particular may have difficulty in distinguishing between reality and fantasy and teenagers do not always have the skills to distinguish truth from hearsay and gossip.

**UNIT 8**  
**FEATURE ARTICLES**

## In Pakistan tribal belt, female reporters get a voice

Radio Khyber's female journalists defy a Pashtun tenet barring women from being heard by strangers. Even so, the Taliban-wary trailblazers avoid issues such as women's rights and tribal politics.



Asma Nawar edits a segment for Radio Khyber, which airs in northwestern Pakistan's tribal belt, an area partly controlled by the Taliban. The female reporters focus primarily on children, education and healthcare. (Alex Rodriguez / Los Angeles Times / August 17)

By Alex Rodriguez

*August 18, 2009*

Reporting from Peshawar, Pakistan - Radio Khyber airs in the heart of Pakistan's wild and volatile tribal areas, where women are bound by strict centuries-old codes of conduct handed down by generations of Pashtuns, the dominant ethnic group in northwestern Pakistan.

The code's tenets are oppressive and nonnegotiable. Women should confine themselves to their homes and the sole task of raising children. When they go to markets and other public places, a male relative should accompany them. And their voices should never be heard by strangers.

Asma Nawar, a 25-year-old Pashtun with wide brown eyes and a crisp, resonant voice, repeatedly breaks that last rule as a reporter for Radio Khyber.

"I feel good about that," she says, peering out from the maroon-and-yellow veil that covers the rest of her face. "I can't say that our cultural values are wrong, but I think women should come out and work, and get the jobs they want."

Nawar and two other women hired in the last year as reporters for the radio station see themselves as trailblazers in a part of Pakistan that mires its women in old world thinking.

The Taliban, which believes in keeping women away from college and work, still controls large swaths of Pakistan's tribal belt along the Afghan border. In the poverty-ravaged Federally Administered Tribal Areas, the dismal 3% literacy rate for women is far lower than the already low overall rate of 17% for the region.

Additionally, the Taliban does not hesitate to demonstrate its views on education for women. This year, Taliban militants burned down scores of girls' schools throughout the Swat Valley.

Nawar narrows her gaze when the subject of the Taliban comes up.

"We know they are listening to us," she says in a studio at the University of Peshawar, where she and Radio Khyber's other two female journalists prepare and edit their radio pieces. "Am I worried? No, because I'm doing the right job."

Based in the village of Jamrud, 28 miles from the border with Afghanistan, Radio Khyber is able to employ women as journalists because its editors and producers know just how far to push the boundaries.

They minimize the risks for the women by barring them from doing stories in the tribal areas. And they have Nawar and her female colleagues focus primarily on children, education and healthcare, considered here as women's issues. Subjects such as tribal politics and regional military operations are off-limits. Their editors ask them to not conduct interviews in the homes of women, a practice that Pashtun society frowns on.

RadioKhyber director Taib Afridi also discourages his female journalists from delving into issues of women's rights. Stories interpreted by tribal elders as calls for women in the tribal areas to rise up could trigger a strong backlash against the station, Afridi says.

"The dilemma for women in [the tribal areas] is that they can go to the village water tank to get water, but to go to a hospital or a school, a wedding or a funeral, they need to be accompanied by a male," he says.

"These journalists must be very careful to not give advice that could be viewed as promoting women's rights or empowerment," he says. In the tribal areas, "if you give voice to the voiceless, this could be dangerous."

Pashtun women outside the tribal areas enjoy a bit more freedom. Nawar, who grew up in the town of Nowshera just outside Peshawar, took the job at the FM radio station eight months ago after graduating from the University of Peshawar with a journalism degree. Her parents supported the idea, though her younger sister, Sumaira, told Nawar that a recent spate of

suicide bombings in Peshawar had made working in the city too dangerous.

"She said, 'One day there could be a bomb blast, and we'd be searching for you at the local hospital.' I told her, 'Everybody has to die.' "

Nawar says she sought out work at Radio Khyber because she thinks the constraints Pashtun society puts on women are outdated.

"It's wrong that Pashtun women are held back like this," she says, taking a break from editing a piece on children's healthcare. "It's unfair, and that's what inspired me to work here."

Her pieces have focused on a wide range of topics, from the availability of wheelchairs in the tribal areas to a segment about curfew restrictions placed on tribespeople fleeing violence in their area. Because it's too dangerous for her to report in the tribal areas, she interviews the region's residents in neighboring Peshawar and gets much of her information from Peshawar-based organizations that work in the tribal areas.

Much of the feedback on the segments produced by the women has been positive, Afridi says. No one from the tribal areas has called in to decry the sound of women's voices on the air, and so far the Taliban hasn't issued any threats.

"Even the militants have women in their families, and the problems of those women are being covered by our reporters," Afridi says. "So maybe the Taliban appreciates what we're doing."

## Women in FATA find a voice



**DAWN NEWSPAPER: PESHAWAR:** In a small recording studio in Peshawar, Asma rushes around with a minidisc recorder. She has to finish editing a news bulletin and make it back to her home in Nowshera before it gets dark. 'If I don't get the bulletin done in time for this evening's show, the station won't let me continue as a radio journalist,' she says. 'But if I don't get home on time, then my parents won't let me continue working either.'

'Asma is one of 15 reporters for Radio Khyber, a Jamrud-based FM radio station, and one of the few legal media outlets in Pakistan's tribal belt. The station, which is supported by the Fata Secretariat, aims to counter the extremist, pro-jihad and anti-West programming that is typical of dozens of illegal radio stations run by hard-line clerics throughout the tribal agencies.

The station's programming is notable – listeners enjoy a mix of infotainment shows, call-in talk shows, development-oriented programmes that touch on social taboos and health care, and music, particularly hits in Pashto by Fata-based artists. Broadcasting for a total of six hours a day – three hours in the morning, and then again in the evening – the station also airs religious programming, but sermons or religious discussions are kept short and are sandwiched between music shows and humorous chat shows.

What is particularly remarkable about Radio Khyber, though, is that it employs three women as radio journalists. Given that women in the tribal belt do not have as many job opportunities as their counterparts in settled areas or major cities, the option to work for Radio Khyber is invaluable. But the symbolic value of these women's participation in the station is even more important.

According to Aurangzaib Khan, the manager of Media Development at Internews Pakistan – a non-profit organisation that trains radio journalists – it is highly unusual to have women's voices on the airwaves in Fata. 'People in the tribal areas don't like it if their women call in to radio shows.

They think it is shameful if their voices are broadcast on air because the radio goes to the public,' adds Tayyab, Radio Khyber's news editor. In fact, when women call the station to request songs or ask questions during a talk show, their queries are broadcast on air under men's names. In this context, Asma and her female colleagues' determination to be radio journalists is admirable.

But it also means that they have had to defy their families to pursue the career of their choice. For example, Kulsoom, a radio journalist from Quetta who is temporarily based in Peshawar to work with Radio Khyber, says that her parents and brother strongly disapprove of strange men

hearing her voice on air. 'But I wanted to do something unique,' she says. 'I'm the first Pathan girl from Balochistan who has come into the media.'

The station, which is supported by the Fata Secretariat, aims to counter the extremist, pro-jihad and anti-West programming that is typical of dozens of illegal radio stations run by hard-line clerics throughout the tribal agencies.

In addition to their families, the women had to overcome their own reservations about entering the public sphere.

Andaleeb, a young reporter from Landi Kotal, admits that she wanted to work behind the scenes. 'I was scared of reporting and had heard that women face problems when they come into the field,' she says.

'But once I started I realised we get more respect than the men and everyone is more cooperative.' Now, Radio Khyber's female reporters know that their struggle to be on air is worth it. For example, Andaleeb is proud of her involvement with Radio Khyber.

'It's good that we're the voice of the people,' she says, 'but it's even better that we're the voice of the women. If you only run men's voices on the station then how can anything change? If women get on air then maybe other women will be encouraged to call and maybe even come into this field one day.'

That said, none of the female reporters are willing to be confined to covering women's issues alone. 'Sometimes my inner woman says that I should focus on women's issues,' says Kulsoom, 'but then I think that if men can do something, then why not me too?' Asma also complains that female journalists 'get dumped with women's issues, but we should be able to do anything – we should be able to touch all issues.'

Between them, Asma, Andaleeb and Kulsoom have submitted news bulletins on traffic, health issues, imprisoned children, taxation, strikes, the plight of internally displaced persons, military operations against militants in Khyber Agency and more.

As such, they comprise an integral part of Radio Khyber's reporting team, the most vital wing of the station.

Under the Fata Secretariat's direction, Radio Khyber was meant to restrict its programming to music and entertainment shows. 'Once the military operations and Talibanisation began, we felt that in our position as journalists, we had to do something more,' explains the news editor, Tayyab. 'The mood in the tribal belt was not for fun programmes, so we opted to do news bulletins. In a crisis, people want to hear what's happening down the road, they want the facts so they can make up their mind.'

For that reason, Radio Khyber now offers regular news bulletins on happenings in Fata by local journalists, including the female reporters. The station's news offerings have secured its popularity among listeners in the tribal areas, who are slowly gravitating away from the illegal FM broadcasts of clerics to hear locally relevant news and information.

And hearing a woman's voice deliver the latest news or conduct an interview with a government official is the beginning of an important paradigm shift. 'When a woman does reporting, it reminds the listeners that she exists, that she is also participating in society, that she also has information and skills to offer,' says Asma.

Luckily, now that Radio Khyber's female reporters have been bitten by the reporting bug, residents of FATA can expect to hear them regularly. 'I want to do on-the-spot reporting,' says Asma. "Women aren't usually allowed to do this, but I want to cover the military operations underway in the agencies.' Having entered the public sphere, these women are here to stay.

## **Women in Swat**

MINGORA, 13 September 2009 (IRIN) - There has been some return to normality in Pakistan's troubled Swat District since the army's military campaign in the area, but fear of Taliban militants persists and is affecting people's - especially women's - lives.

"I still do not dare venture out without my burqa, though there are more and more brave women who do, wearing only 'chadors' [shawls]. Under the Taliban, we were constantly warned to cover ourselves and ordered not to leave our homes," Razia Bibi, 30, a teacher at a private school for girls, told IRIN in Mingora, Swat's principal town.

Razia stopped teaching last year "after a militant followed me home, knocked threateningly at our door and warned my husband to stop me going out to work," she said. She has not dared return to teaching even after the recent army successes.

"Those who associated themselves with the militants are still around. I have lost confidence, even after eight years of work, and am scared to go out," she said.

Sahar Gul, research coordinator for the government's National Commission on the Status of Women, told IRIN many female teachers were afraid to go back to their workplaces "due to the fear of threats and targeted killings".

Gul also said the 1,000-1,200 Swat women who used to work in cosmetics factories before the Taliban appeared were now jobless after the factories closed down. Many in the garments sector were also unemployed for the same reason, she added.

Razia's family is feeling the pinch: "We used up our savings when we were displaced and it is tough supporting my two children on just my earnings as an accountant," said Razia's husband, Muhammad Jamil. But he understands his wife's reluctance to go back to work: "Few women were left unscarred by what happened here and the abuse they suffered at the hands of men wielding sticks," he said.

The situation is worse still for women who have no one to support them. "My husband stayed behind during the conflict when I went to Mardan with my three children, and is missing. We assume he is dead," said Samreena Bibi, 28. Samreena had worked as a seamstress before she was married. "No one gives me a job now. Some say they do not employ women. How am I to feed my children?"

Like other women, she feels unsafe going to a bazaar without a male escort - especially after the most recent attacks in Mingora. "This means I must ask my elderly father or a brother-in-law to help [me] even buy a few vegetables," she said. "Our life has become very difficult."

Security concerns mean "there remains a lack of women in the workforce in most areas of return," according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) situation report of 3 September.

Gul bemoans the changed circumstances: "Before Talibanization, women used to go out in Mingora for all daily routines, including employment, [but not any more]" she said.

Meanwhile, humanitarian agencies have expressed concern over the plight of women who head households. According to Pakistan's National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), which has been collecting data on internally displaced persons (IDPs) since displacements began in May, 12.2 percent of all registered IDPs are female heads of households.

However, according to an OCHA report of 11 September, World Food Programme (WFP) data show that only 10.4 to 11.3 percent of the monthly food distribution goes to women. These findings suggest that a disproportionate number of female-headed households are not receiving their food entitlements each month. OCHA said this was an ongoing concern, with similar discrepancies showing up in July and August.

## PAKISTAN: Pregnant displaced women lack facilities, skilled medics



Photo: [Shabbir Hussain Imam/IRIN](#) 

With temperatures rising to 39 degrees Celsius, IDPs in NWFP have said the inside of their tents are like ovens

KARACHI, 24 May 2009 (IRIN) - Some 4,375 internally displaced women in northwest Pakistan are due to give birth in June with very few trained medics available and meagre facilities, according to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). They are among about 6,000 pregnant women who are displaced as a result of clashes between the Pakistan security forces and Taliban militants in the northwestern Swat region.

“But there is no plan for these women,” said Dr Mohammad Ali, a Mardan District programme officer who is supervising UNFPA’s emergency services.

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) said some 1.7 million people had fled the conflict areas of Buner, Dir and Swat, in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) since the beginning of May, when the Pakistani army

began its operations. A further 550,000 had already left over the past eight to nine months.

About 200,000 of the recently displaced are living in 16 camps set up by the NWFP government in conjunction with UNHCR.

Doctors are concerned about a lack of emergency obstetric and neonatal care in the camps.

“If, God forbid, there is an obstetric emergency in the camp after seven in the evening, there are no female medical officers or paramedic staff, such as skilled birth attendants, or lady health visitors to provide assistance,” said Dr Aurang Zeb, executive director of Health Society, an NGO working in IDP camps in Mardan.

### Complications, malaria and anaemia

Dr Khalid Khan, a UNFPA district project officer working with IDPs, said about 15 percent of women giving birth would develop complications and might require blood transfusions or surgery. He said that in any conflict situation, pregnancy-related complications increase.

“There is a rise in the number of malaria cases,” said Salma Naheed, programme officer with HS. “This poses a threat to these pregnant women, who may be pre-disposed to abortion.” She said medicated mosquito nets were badly needed as those supplied so far were not enough.

Fouzia Bakht Sher, a health worker in a camp in Swabi, said that three out of every five women she attended to was anaemic, adding to the potential risk of a childbirth complication.

However, while there is sufficient medicine - including iron and vitamin supplements – in the camps, there are no labour rooms or mid-wives. “Either the deliveries have to be conducted in tents, or the women have to be shifted to hospitals,” said Bakht Sher.

With current temperature highs of 39 degrees Celsius in NWFP, displaced people have said being inside their tents is like being in an oven and giving birth there would be a test of endurance for mothers and medics.

### **UNFPA mobile units**

In response to this problem, UNFPA has begun bringing in to the camps specially designed mobile service units (MSU) that are equipped with a labour/operation room and skilled staff.

“There will be a five-member team in each MSU including a female medical officer, a lady health visitor, a skilled birth attendant, a driver and a helper,” explained UNFPA’s Ali.

Ali said the main purpose of the MSUs was to turn rural health centres into 24-hour Emergency Obstetric Care facilities.

“The rural health centre in Takht Bhai is 3 kms away from Jalala camp in Mardan, and it takes just five minutes to get to the facility,” said Ali.

“Because providing safe and secure accommodation for our female staff is paramount, we are proposing that the MSUs should operate in the day time and by night they can provide their services at the health centres,” he said.



Photo: [Faisal Rafiq/IRIN](#) 

Pregnant women wait to see a doctor in an IDP camp. There are about 6,000 pregnant women who are displaced as a result of clashes between the Pakistan security forces and Taliban militants in the northwestern Swat region

## PAKISTAN: Video footage of flogging sends shockwaves across country



Photo: [Kamila Hyat/IRIN](#) 

Video footage of the flogging of a young girl by Taliban extremists in Swat Valley has sent shockwaves across Pakistan

PESHAWAR, 7 April 2009 (IRIN) - Video footage of the flogging of a 17-year-old girl by bearded Taliban extremists in volatile Swat Valley, North West Frontier Province (NWFP), has sent shockwaves across Pakistan and highlighted the issue of violence against women.

Like millions of others, Uzma Khan (not her real name), 16, watched the public flogging of the girl in the village of Kala Killay in Swat's Kabal Tehsil area, and wept. "The screams of that poor girl were just unbearable. She was treated like an animal. Now I want to leave Swat for ever," Uzma told IRIN on the phone.

The case of the teenager, identified as Chand Bibi, hit the headlines after private TV channels repeatedly played a low quality video of her being held down in a blue 'burqa' and flogged in a street by the Pakistani Taliban.

Protests have been held in all major cities; the president and prime minister have demanded an inquiry.

The story being circulated in the media is that the girl had been spotted with a man unrelated to her. The local Taliban ordered that both Chand Bibi and Adalat Khan, with whom she was spotted, be flogged 30 times for "immoral" behaviour.

"The media is not telling the whole story. The girl alone is being shown. The man with her was also suitably punished," Muslim Khan, spokesman for the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan in Swat, told IRIN, adding that the video footage was nine months old and shot during the government's military operation against militants in Swat.

### "Warning"

"This is not just about flogging. It is a warning of what could be in store for all of us," prominent human rights activist Asma Jahangir told the media in the eastern city of Lahore where she participated - along with hundreds of others - in a protest rally against what happened. "Taliban have to be resisted," she said.

Ali Dayan Hassan, senior South Asia researcher for the US-based rights watchdog Human Rights Watch, said: "This is just one incidence of the wider violence against women in the country. Particularly under the Taliban, women have faced brutality."

"This kind of incident should simply not take place under a democratic government,"

Sherry Rehman, a former federal minister and member of parliament, said.

Various Taliban atrocities in Swat have surfaced from time to time, and media reports say at least 25 men and two women apart from Chand Bibi have been flogged in public over the past few months, but violence against women is commonplace.

Quoting the Islamabad-based Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences, Amnesty International said in a 2002 report that “over 90 percent of married women report being kicked, slapped, beaten or sexually abused when husbands were dissatisfied by their cooking or cleaning, or when the women had 'failed' to bear a child or had given birth to a girl instead of a boy.”

Meanwhile, the sense of fear is growing. Sumaira Ijaz (not her real name) told IRIN in Peshawar: “We are all afraid this incident could give ideas to extremists in other places... We are already far too afraid to even talk to a male cousin in public because of what could happen. Now perhaps we won't even chat on email or messaging services because of what the consequences could be.”

#### **Female NGO workers killed**

On 6 April three female NGO workers and their driver were shot dead near Mansehra, in a part of the NWFP where Islamists have attacked aid groups, Reuters reported.

They all worked for Rise International, an NGO which works in the education sector in collaboration with the government and with the support of the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

The NGO workers had been meeting parents to persuade them to enrol their children, especially daughters, in schools.

“Everyone is just shocked,” Shezad Ahmed, project coordinator of Rise International, told IRIN, adding that Rise had not received “any kind of threat”.

Since the October 2005 earthquake which killed at least 72,000 in the NWFP and Pakistan-administered Kashmir, Mansehra has served as a hub for NGOs with many setting up offices there as the town offers easy access to many northern areas.