



A MEDIA GUIDE FOR GENDER-SENSITIVE RADIO PROGRAMMING

Compiled by:

Tasneem Ahmar - Uks Resource Center

&

Tabinda Zuberi - Search for Common Ground Pakistan

Edited by

Sabrina Shanze Quamber - Search for Common Ground Pakistan

This guidebook has been produced by Search for Common Ground Pakistan (www.sfcg.org) in collaboration with Uks Resource Centre. SFCG is an international organization which works to transform the way the world deals with conflict, away from adversarial approaches and towards collaborative problem solving.

The contents of this publication are the responsibility of SFCG Pakistan. All content, including text, illustrations and design are the copyrighted property of SFCG Pakistan, and may not be copied, transmitted or reproduced, in part or whole, without the prior consent of Search for Common Ground Pakistan. All rights reserved.



Uks - A Research, Resource & Publication Centre



© Search for Common Ground 2013.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Chapter One: Politics, Gender and Media	3
'Unlearn' to 'Relearn': The Role of Media in Politics	4
Chapter Two: Radio for Communication	6
Women as Effective Leaders: Time to Change the Approach	8
Chapter Three: Taking the Message Forward	9
Suggested Talk Show Themes	10
Best Practices	11
The Common Ground Approach	13
Common Ground Media	13
Further Suggestions	13

INTRODUCTION

'Strengthening Women Parliamentarians in Pakistan for Effective Government' is a project of Search for Common Ground Pakistan (SFCG) which aims to increase the capacity of elected women parliamentarians as well as former and aspiring women councillors by magnifying women's voices and bolstering engagement in decision making at the provincial and local levels. Through effective and transformative leadership training in fields such as media messaging, political advocacy, conflict analysis, resolution & transformation, coalition and consensus building, SFCG and its partners, seek to strengthen women's voices by equipping them with the required skills needed for better representation within and outside their political hubs. Radio talk shows and other media interventions implemented under the program are focused on shifting attitudes towards women's participation in government and creating greater awareness about issues affecting women.

To support women's political leadership in Pakistan at all tiers, SFCG Pakistan has launched a first of its kind campaign whereby SFCG celebrates, recognizes and highlights the contributions made by these women. The campaign "Women's Initiative for Learning & Leadership - WILL" is a tribute to all such women who have been contributing tirelessly at policy as well as grass-root levels since the inception of Pakistan. Also with this campaign, SFCG aims to open doors for aspiring women politicians to take up political leadership roles.

This media guide has been prepared specifically for radio producers and hosts for engaging with the audience on the specific issues - themes (see page 10) - identified by elected women parliamentarians and women politicians at the district level who have been part of the project. The guide includes various techniques to help participants engage in gender-sensitive and solutions-oriented interactions with their audiences:

- To create awareness and perception amongst the population about the role of women politicians as effective decision-makers in government;
- To increase women's participation in politics, not only in formal political structures but also civic engagement in politics;
- To strengthen gender-awareness and capacities among both women and male politicians as well as civil servants;
- To sensitize media for the development of gender sensitive programming and gain support for WILL.

Interactions with participants at multiple platforms under this project gave an insight into their lives as public figures. It was, however, just the tip of the iceberg and it is imperative to continue to hold such interactive dialogue with them, in order to best address their needs and gain an in-depth understanding of the role media is required to play in response to those needs. The task is to translate this first-hand information into effective media messages in order to bring about change in the pre-established cultural codes and traditional power relations. Through this particular project, women who usually only see themselves as the audience, became message producers and senders. Their point of view shifted from one of passive receivers with little control, to that of messengers who had something important to convey.



Chapter One

Politics, Gender and Media

The media, and particularly the electronic media, plays a crucial role in shaping voter interest in and attitudes about an election. The way the media portrays women, how it deals with issues of special concern to women, and whether it conveys effectual voter education messages can have a major impact on women's participation in an election. Even more important than the amount of media coverage devoted to women is the quality of such coverage. The media may perpetuate stereotypes of women in their traditional roles rather than conveying a positive image of women as political leaders. Women candidates may receive coverage focusing more on their personal qualities or their responsibilities as wives and mothers than on their political positions. The quality of media coverage can have a major impact on the advancement of women as candidates and as voters. The portrayal of women in the media as active political participants and leaders can greatly boost their political participation. In countries with low literacy rates, radio and television can play an exceptionally important role in promoting women's political confidence and participation.¹

While women's political participation is compulsory for the development and progress of Pakistan, the women of Pakistan have been discriminated against, both economically and politically, and in some parts of the country, they are not even registered as voters. The patriarchal and male dominated society of Pakistan provides more economic and political power to men in all spheres of public and private life. The position of women in this regard is secondary and they do not have any say in economic and political affairs because they are not included in the decision making processes. Owing to this complex structure of society, women in Pakistan do not have easy access to politics, from taking part in political activities down to casting votes. They are barred from taking an active part in politics parallel to men, and if they do so, their participation is on an ad-hoc basis, and they are never made part of the legislative and decision making bodies.

Studies on media coverage of politics show that women are more likely to be

¹ Source: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/publication/Chapter3.htm>

subjected to negative gender distinctions than men, a negative gender distinction being a reference to one's gender that could be perceived as a hindrance. Conversely, men are more likely than women to be described in gender-neutral terms, in which a subject's gender is irrelevant to how he or she is portrayed.²

'Unlearn' to 'Relearn': The Role of Media in Politics

- The media has a crucial and increasing role in shaping the image of politicians. Instead of acting as a mere mirror of the social and cultural traditional patterns, the media should become an agent of change through its approach to women or rather to gender at large.
- Media personnel at all levels, from editor to reporter, from publisher to columnist, should be made aware of the fact that "stories" that sell or pretend to do so often perpetuate gender patterns which are adverse to the strengthening of democracy.
- Women politicians must understand the importance of media in their lives and learn how to get their message across in an effective manner ensuring clarity and substance.
- Women political leaders have to be more assertive in presenting their ideas and achievements as the media tends to come to people, irrespective of sex, who stand tall and believe in their cause.
- The media often tends to treat women politicians as women and objects rather than political protagonists, something it rarely does for male politicians. Media personnel must be gender sensitized to capture content free of gender biases.
- Women politicians are not covered by the media as much as male politicians. Reporters should, when covering stories, ensure that they do not feature male politicians solely.
- The media should provide women candidates with at least as much airtime and print space as that given to men.
- The media must open its doors to the concerns and achievements of women politicians on equal grounds.
- If it understands that the integration of women into politics strengthens

² Source: <http://www.portrayingpolitics.net/research.php#1>

democracy, the media, which has a crucial and increasing role in the democratic process, should try to convey this message in all possible ways.

- Governments should restructure their communications policy so as to make it more gender sensitive while promoting a fairer image of women politicians.
- The media should provide gender-sensitive coverage of elections, avoiding negative stereotypes and presenting positive images of women as effective leaders.
- The media should focus attention on issues of special concern to women in news programming.
- The media should undertake voter and civic education programmes aimed specifically at women.

Source:

<http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/media.htm>

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/publication/Chapter3.htm>



Chapter Two

Radio for Communication

Although a lot of effort has recently been made regarding women's rights, Pakistani society remains a highly male-dominated one, with the female half of the population continuing to be disadvantaged, marginalized and deprived. Women in Pakistan continue to be subjected to archaic traditions and customs and are forced to remain largely unseen and unheard. Restrictions of multiple sorts limit their mobility meaning that they have inadequate access to the outside world, a much lower literacy rate than men, and by and large, no voice on any issues, even those directly related to their lives.

Why Radio? - A Powerful Medium for Positive Change

This deprivation continues even regarding women's access to means of communication and, in many parts of the country, the only viable option is radio. The outreach of radio remains unmatched by any other medium, especially because it reaches all corners of the country including conflict prone areas. That is why development communication experts have long been stressing upon the fact that radio provides one of the most powerful ways to reach, educate and enlighten all segments of society in order to empower women.

Realizing the important role radio can play in reaching out to previously unreachable masses, the government has also, in recent times, facilitated the sector and many new radio channels have been launched. The goal is to now utilize the availability of all these radio channels for development communication and for that, more training, thought and effort needs to go into radio production and programming. A concentrated effort needs to be made to induct more women into radio production as they can have better access to other women while also equipping men with gender sensitive programming skills. They would then be in a better position to not only understand what is needed but also to reach across

the dividing walls. The aim is to use the powerful reach of private and state owned radio stations to address as many of their issues as possible and open up closed channels of communication.

What is imperative at this stage is to have radio professionals who understand and recognize these issues and who have the capability to bring gender sensitivity into all their programming. Along with mainstreaming gender in radio programming, this project aims to train journalists on how to cover politics in a gender sensitive manner, prevent stereotyped representations of women and positively contribute to women's participation in political life. Additionally, it includes media training for women candidates and elected women politicians on how to deal with and make the most effective use of the media, while also raising their profiles, keeping in mind the forthcoming elections. Particularly in remote, rural areas, radio can prove to be very helpful in the exchange of ideas between grassroots women organizations and women politicians. The basic aim of the project is to bring about behavioral change through radio programming amongst listeners in general, and gain support for women politicians by recognizing and supporting their inputs for effective governance. It is expected that the entire process will also help change stereotypes and improve awareness and perception regarding the role of women politicians as effective decision-makers in government.



Radio can:

- be a form of communication between protagonists,
- correct misperceptions by inviting guests and experts to explain themselves clearly,
- make one side more humane to the other,
- serve as a platform for women politicians by giving them opportunities to share their efforts and success stories with the population at large.

Source: Radio Talkshows for Peacebuilding, A Guide, 2nd Edition, Ross Howard and Francis Rolt, Radio for Peacebuilding Africa and Search for Common Ground, October 2006

Women as Effective Leaders: Time to Change the Approach

Another common mistake the media makes is in presenting women as victims. It is important to consider the kind of picture created in the minds of listeners when talking about women. Even when presenting women who have had to undergo terrible ordeals, live in inhumane conditions or survive without their basic rights, it is imperative to understand that they are not helpless or weak. Rather, having survived what they have had to bear, they are in fact, very strong. So instead of portraying women through the lens of victimhood, the focus should be on covering the success stories of women who have been contributing significantly in leadership roles in the past and continue to do so.

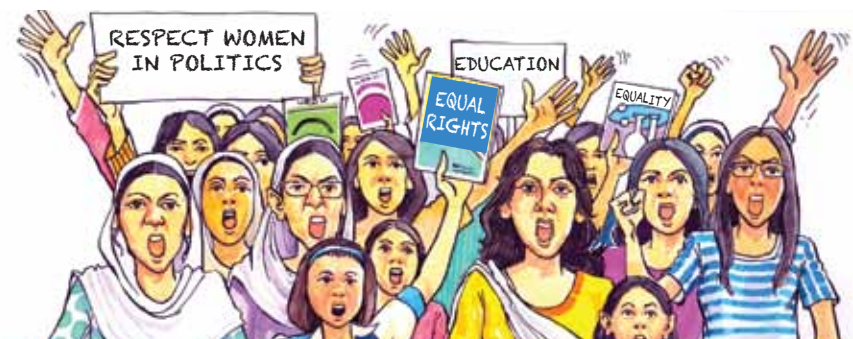
A very important factor to keep in mind is the power of language. Words carry connotations which can be positive or negative. When using words, always be careful as to how they are being used, in what context, and what picture they create. Also try to avoid generalizations which are usually based on stereotypes, and are often discriminatory. Use gender-fair language, particularly when dealing with a language that makes gender distinctions. Always search for alternatives to ensure that the language being used is non-discriminatory, gender-fair and inclusive.

Radio broadcasters are also journalists as they have the power to select what to report on, what not to report on and how it should be reported. Always remember that you are reporting about the lives of others, their experiences, situations, activities and status in society and whatever you report will eventually affect real people, either positively or negatively. Therefore, be responsible from the start. Be accountable to yourself for what you portray.

Chapter Three**Taking the Message Forward**

This chapter encapsulates inputs from participants in the form of Common Ground Radio Programming and Key Messages under the themes stated below. SFCG Pakistan and Uks jointly held a training workshop for radio producers / talk show hosts and presenters, as a result of which, media professionals themselves outlined best practices which they feel can be instrumental in future programming when engaging on constructive, positive themes pertaining to women's leadership in Pakistan.

Radio talk shows being produced under the WILL Campaign (for details see page 1), are being held in recognition and support of Women Political Leaders of Pakistan. The themes highlighted below have been developed during a consultative process with women politicians at the provincial and district level. These themes are reflective of the key messages that our beneficiaries identified. It is them who feel the need for these messages to reach out to the larger population in all corners of the country. Conveyed literally or taken as inspiration, all these messages have the potential to become powerful communication hooks which can be built into programmes or programmes can be built around them. SFCG Pakistan and Uks Research Centre support and recognize the efforts of women politicians working at all tiers!



Suggested Talk Show Themes

1. When She Leads, Pakistan Succeeds
2. She Has and She Will
3. Celebrating and Supporting Women Political Leaders of Pakistan who can Help Realize the Dreams of Every Pakistani
4. Women Political Leaders of Pakistan - Uplifting Communities, Building a Nation
5. Celebrating Women Political Leaders of Pakistan for Transforming the Nation's Destiny
6. Powerful Women, Powerful Nation
7. Educated, Strengthened Women; Brighter Pakistan
8. Let's have Gender Balance in Politics!
9. Increased Representation, Increased Numbers
10. Women Politicians - Purposeful, Resolute and Decisive!
11. Unity of Women Political Leaders: Progress of Women Political Leaders
12. Women Politicians - Essential to Ensure Gender Sensitive Policies
13. Men in Support of Women's Political Empowerment
14. Respect the Women who are Serving the Nation
15. Party Support to Women Political Leaders
16. Media: A True Mirror of Women Political Leaders
17. Positive Approach of Media towards Women Political Leaders: Positive Projection and Constructive Coverage Highlighting Productivity and Efficiency

Best Practices

Gender Focused

- Why focus on gender? Gender sensitivity should be explained where possible.
- When interviewing women politicians, it is important to remain gender sensitive.
- The importance of women's leadership in society should be highlighted, particularly in the context of Islam. (Research with references must be done prior to engaging on this topic)
- Talk realistically and be practical keeping in mind the situation on ground.
- Scene setting is vital for any fruitful discussion.
- Ensure a gender balanced panel and invite participation from both sexes.
- Use simple and easy language.
- When engaging on gender issues during talk shows, discourage stereotypes to promote women's empowerment at all levels.
- Contributions by women politicians working at the grass roots level should also be recognized along with prominent names.
- It is better to mention concrete examples as they substantiate a discussion.

Media Focused

- When dealing with politicians, the media needs to operate in a different manner. It should be aware of their work environment and the challenges they are beset with.
- Being in a Muslim majority state, we can't underestimate the question of what is acceptable and what is not in our society. Keeping this in mind, the media needs to carefully design and implement radio talk shows so that they are in accord with cultural sensitivities.
- Media professionals must not target women politicians on personal grounds and appearance.

- Radio talk show hosts must not generate a debate or fights. It is important that any discussion being held with multiple stakeholders is mature, organized and in the form of constructive dialogue.

Related to Programming

- When identifying panel speakers, gender balance must be ensured. Talk shows being produced under the WILL campaign will feature at least one project beneficiary along with other experts for a healthy and inclusive discussion.
- Effective and timely planning within the given resources.
- The talk show host, while facilitating the discussion, must NOT make any gender sensitive comments.
- The time slot in which the program will be aired must be kept in mind when designing the talk show. (It is preferred that radio talk show hosts and producers select appropriate time slots in which women have access to and control over the radio.)
- Detailed information about the topic, guests and current political scenario is vital for the host to effectively conduct the talk show. Hence pre-planning and research is crucial for a successful talk show.
- Talk show hosts must refer to similar programs held earlier as reference and quick tips.
- The talk show host must NOT clutter the program with multiple themes, clear focus is important.
- Every talk show must be facilitated through the lens of the "Common Ground Approach".
- Participants must be encouraged to share during the talk show any examples where they have exercised "Common Ground".
- The importance of Common Ground Media should be highlighted during the programs.

The Common Ground Approach

The Common Ground Approach involves understanding differences, and acting on the commonalities. The CG Approach to conflict is the adoption of a collaborative problem solving approach, instead of an adversarial one.

The Common Ground Approach is built on the following principles:

- Conflict is a common phenomenon and it can be resolved.
- Common ground and compromise is not one and the same thing.
- Conflict transformation can be achieved.
- Peace is a process.
- Human welfare is interdependent.

Common Ground Media

Common Ground Media productions are objective in their reporting - an equal amount of time is dedicated to exploring the differences between the parties and what they have in common, with a strong focus on the root causes of conflict and possible long-term solutions.

The building blocks of Common Ground Media are:

- Look for Areas of Agreement
- Counter Stereotypes
- Suggest Commonalities and Areas of Common Ground
- Promote Dignity
- Question Assumptions
- Humanize the Actors/Build Trust

Further Suggestions

- Reality programs should be held in educational institutes to explore and identify leadership qualities.
- Simple language must be used and examples should be used for explanation.
- Participants who are gender sensitive should be included in panels after ensuring relevancy of topic being discussed.