

Regional Action Plan
Improving gender
sensitivity approaches
for media stakeholders

Southeast Asia



Introduction

In October 2023, media professionals and representatives from gender-focused non-governmental organisations (NGOs) from five Southeast Asian countries attended a two-day workshop in Bangkok, Thailand. The workshop formed part of the Public Media Alliance's project, "Violence against women – Bringing about changes in social attitudes and gender equity through enabling greater media participation" – the project targeted media workers and NGOs from Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines.

Over the course of 3-4 October, the workshop set out to build the capacity of 20 gender-focused NGOs and media workers. The goal? To bolster their ability to better raise awareness on gender discrimination and gender-based censorship within the media and to develop their skills to combat gender-related issues, including violence against women and girls. The workshop also provided the opportunity for participants to network with their regional counterparts and develop country-specific action plans that would contribute towards more effective and gender-sensitive reporting.

Designed to be multidisciplinary, each action plan considers approaches that would foster collaboration and address common challenges related to gender-sensitive reporting, women's safety, and responsible media practices across the diverse media landscapes of Southeast Asia. The plans offer collective initiatives for media workers, NGOs, policymakers, religious institutions, and the broader public in the region to undertake.

A Consolidated Approach

While the action plans were developed individually, there

were common points and themes identified across the five country-specific action plans:

- **Launch public awareness campaigns.** Stakeholders should, collectively and individually, launch regional public awareness campaigns that educate the general public about the importance of reducing gender stereotypes, promoting gender equality, and raising awareness about the consequences of gender-based violence.
- **Build engagement and collaborations.** Engagement and collaboration should be bolstered among stakeholders, including policymakers, national security forces, media organisations, gender-focused NGOs, and religious institutions. Stakeholders should advocate for change, including on issues related to gender-based violence and gendered discrimination, and foster collaborations that bolster understanding of the threats facing women, women journalists, and gender minorities so to better enable their protection and support.
- **Build capacity of media and NGOs.** Stakeholders should both offer and make use of gender and development training for media workers to ensure they report on gender-related issues accurately and sensitively. Furthermore, capacity-building opportunities for local NGOs and civil society organisations (CSOs) should be provided to strengthen their advocacy for gender issues and violence prevention.
- **Seek and establish funding.** Where possible, stakeholders should create or seek out regional funds and grant programmes dedicated to supporting initiatives and media literacy that focus on gender, violence against women, and women's empowerment, ensuring sustainable resources for relevant projects.

- Advocate for gender-responsive policies and guidelines.

Stakeholders should advocate for the development of regularly reviewed gender-responsive policies, guidelines, and codes of conduct to ensure media organisations, government officials, and other stakeholders adhere to existing policies and laws. Stakeholders should also advocate for the adoption of equality programmes within newsrooms, including gender policies that foster an inclusive and supportive environment while eliminating gender-based assignment biases, and increased job opportunities for women journalists.

- Establish a data collection and reporting system.

Where possible, stakeholders should establish a system for collecting and reporting data on gender-based violence and discrimination in media workplaces, enabling ongoing assessment and improvement of working conditions. Furthermore, stakeholders should conduct comprehensive reviews of existing laws, policies, and media ethics across the region to identify gaps and areas for improvement related to gender, violence against women and girls, and media practices.

- Implement newsroom safety protocols and support for women journalists.

Develop and implement comprehensive safety protocols, digital safety support, and mental and physical support specifically designed for women journalists, addressing risks and challenges they may face in the field and online.

- Establish a labour union for women journalists.

Establish a labour union specifically for women journalists that includes safety protocols, policies, protection mechanisms, and safety training, focusing on their unique needs and challenges.

- Develop and undertake intersectional approaches.

Stakeholders must recognise the intersectionality of gender with other factors such as race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, and tailor initiatives to address the unique challenges faced by women of different backgrounds across the region. Stakeholders should also increase and strengthen allyship with women's rights, LGBTQIA+, and migrant worker rights organisations.

- Establish an independent union of stakeholders.

Create an independent union that encompasses a wide range of partners, including media stakeholders, NGOs, women's rights groups, LGBTQIA+ advocacy groups, migrant worker support organisations, and other relevant stakeholders. This union should work collectively to advocate for gender-sensitive reporting, the safety of women journalists, and related media issues.

This consolidated regional action plan promotes cooperation and awareness across the five countries, addressing common challenges related to gender-sensitive reporting; the safety of women and gender minorities, and responsible media practices. Through a unified approach, it is hoped that the Southeast Asian media environment will further amplify women's voices, more accurately and sensitively report on gender issues, and promote the safety and rights of women and girls throughout the region.

The wider project was spearheaded by the Public Media Alliance with support from the UNESCO Bangkok Office and UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), and saw partnerships with AWARE Singapore, Konde.co, and the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Thailand.

Indonesia

Geared at stakeholders in Indonesia – including media organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), government bodies, and policymakers – this plan aims to foster gender-sensitive reporting, enhance women's safety, and promote responsible media practices. It involves advocating for comprehensive regulations, gender training, legal protections, and public awareness campaigns, to ultimately foster a media environment that respects diversity, upholds ethical reporting, and safeguards women journalists and vulnerable communities.

1

Strengthen collaboration between NGOs and media organisations

Foster collaboration between NGOs and media organisations to provide data, facilitate reporting, and advocate for gender-sensitive regulations and in-depth journalistic reporting, especially on gender issues.

2

Strengthen collaboration between the government and the Press Council of Indonesia

Establish an effective intersection between the government and the Press Council of Indonesia to create and enforce regulations that promote gender-sensitive reporting and media ethics.

3

Encourage gender-sensitive training for media professionals

Stakeholders should offer gender sensitivity training to media workers, including journalists and editors, to enhance their understanding of gender-related issues and promote balanced reporting.

4

Commit to intersectional approaches

Recognise and address the intersectionality of gender with other factors such as religion, ethnicity, and social class, tailoring initiatives to address the unique challenges faced by women from diverse backgrounds and gender minorities.

5

Develop and implement editorial guidelines for gender sensitivity

Develop and implement editorial guidelines that encourage media outlets to report on gender and violence against women and girls with sensitivity, accuracy, and respect.

Indonesia

6

Advocate for legal protections for journalists

Advocate for legal protections against gender-based discrimination and harassment within the media industry, ensuring that women journalists have legal recourse when they face discrimination or violence.

7

Develop a media code of conduct

Media organisations, industry associations, and relevant stakeholders should collaborate to create a comprehensive code of conduct specifically designed for media workers. This code should outline guidelines for responsible and ethical behaviour, including gender-sensitive reporting and the treatment of women journalists and other marginalised communities.

8

Seek and establish funding

Establish funds and grant programmes dedicated to supporting media initiatives that focus on gender, violence against women, and women's empowerment, ensuring sustainable resources for relevant projects.

9

Launch public awareness campaigns

Organise national and local public awareness campaigns to educate the general public about the importance of gender-sensitive reporting and the consequences of violence against women and girls.

10

Establish a data collection and reporting system

Develop a systematic approach to collect, analyse, and report data on gender disparities, gender representation, and violence and harassment within media organisations to enable evidence-based interventions and policies, accountability, and industry improvements.

Malaysia

For stakeholders in Malaysia – including media organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and policymakers – this plan aims to promote gender-sensitive reporting, enhance women’s media safety, and encourage responsible practices. It involves advocacy for transparency, training, legal protections, and diversity initiatives, fostering a media environment that embraces equality, diversity, and the well-being of women journalists.

1**Encourage transparency in decision-making**

Encourage media leaders to adopt transparent decision-making processes and provide equal opportunities for women journalists to contribute to editorial decisions.

2**Commit to gender-sensitive training**

Collaborate with NGOs to provide gender-sensitive training to media workers, including journalists and editors, to enhance their understanding of gender issues and reporting practices.

3**Strengthen gender policies for media**

Work with NGOs and human resources/legal departments in media organisations to strengthen and enforce gender policies that promote gender equality, diversity, and inclusion.

4**Develop a code of conduct for government officials**

Advocate for the development of a government code of conduct with input from or for media councils/unions, such as the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) and the Center for Independent Journalism (CIJ), ensuring accountability and responsibility in media practices.

5**Develop online community guidelines**

Collaborate with media councils, the tech industry, and NGOs to develop and implement online community guidelines that promote respectful and gender-sensitive communication, particularly in the digital space.

Malaysia

6**Promote gender training at tertiary level of education**

Promote the inclusion of gender sensitivity training in universities and colleges for students studying media and journalism, academics, and NGOs to ensure that the next generation of media professionals is well-prepared to address gender-related issues.

7**Encourage media diversity initiatives within newsrooms**

Encourage media organisations to develop and implement diversity and inclusion initiatives that promote equal representation and opportunities for women journalists at all levels, including leadership positions.

8**Implement newsroom safety protocols for women journalists**

Develop and implement comprehensive safety protocols specifically designed for women journalists, addressing risks and challenges they may face in the field and online.

9**Increase and strengthen collaboration between media organisations and gender-focused NGOs**

Forge partnerships between gender-focused NGOs and media organisations to empower survivors of violence. This could, for example, focus on advocacy, enabling survivors to share their stories and advocate for change, or to better inform management regarding how best to respond to incidents of violence.

10**Establish a data collection and reporting system**

Establish a system for collecting and reporting data on gender-based violence and discrimination in media workplaces, enabling ongoing assessment and improvement of working conditions.

The Philippines

This action plan is directed at stakeholders in the Philippines, encompassing media organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), policymakers, and the general public. Its purpose is to combat violence against women and girls by promoting gender-sensitive reporting, enhancing women's media safety, and cultivating responsible media practices through comprehensive assessments, policy advocacy, awareness campaigns, capacity-building, and intersectional approaches.

1

Conduct assessments

Conduct a comprehensive review of existing laws and policies related to gender, violence against women and girls, and media ethics to identify gaps and areas for improvement.

2

Engage with policymakers and other stakeholders

Collaborate with policymakers and other stakeholders such as religious institutions, to advocate for necessary legal reforms and policy changes that enhance the protection and rights of women and girls.

3

Launch public awareness campaigns

With the goal of educating the general public, stakeholders should launch public awareness campaigns about the importance of tackling gender stereotypes and bringing about gender equality, and the consequences of gender-based violence.

4

Build partnerships

Partnerships should be established and strengthened among media professionals and organisations, civil society organisations (CSOs), NGOs, diplomatic missions, local government units, and other stakeholders to create a supportive network for gender-focused reporting and safety initiatives.

5

Build capacity of media and NGOs

Stakeholders should offer or seek out gender and capacity-building training for media workers to ensure they are equipped with the knowledge and skills to report on gender-related issues accurately and sensitively. Similarly, capacity-building opportunities should be made available to local NGOs and CSOs to strengthen their role in advocating for gender issues, violence prevention, and supporting women journalists.

The Philippines

6

Advocate for change

Engage in targeted advocacy efforts to promote gender equality and safety for women journalists through policy changes, both at the national level and organisational level. Stakeholders should also mobilise public support for these issues.

7

Seek and establish funding

Stakeholders should prioritise seeking grant programmes dedicated to supporting media initiatives that focus on gender, violence against women, and women's empowerment to better ensure sustainable resources for relevant projects. Where possible, stakeholders should consider establishing their own funding programmes to support initiatives that target gender issues.

8

Advocate for adherence to the *Safe Space Act*

Advocate for effective adherence to the *Safe Space Act* to ensure that media organisations provide safe environments for women journalists to work without fear of harassment or violence.

9

Establish a data collection and reporting system

Where possible, stakeholders should establish a system for collecting and reporting data on gender-based violence and discrimination in media workplaces, enabling ongoing assessment and improvement of working conditions. This system may be implemented collaboratively or within organisations.

10

Consider an intersectional approach

Recognise the intersectionality of gender with other factors such as race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, and tailor initiatives to address the unique challenges faced by women of different backgrounds.

Singapore

This plan is designed for stakeholders in Singapore, including media organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and policymakers. Its purpose is to advance gender-sensitive reporting, enhance women's safety in the media, and foster responsible media practices through funding, collaboration, legal protections, and inclusivity. The plan strives to foster a media environment in Singapore that champions gender equality, diversity, and inclusiveness, while ensuring the well-being of women journalists and marginalised communities.

1

Commit to gender-sensitive training

Media organisations should collaborate with NGOs to provide comprehensive training programmes to media workers, including journalists and editors, to enhance their understanding of gender issues and reporting practices; these programmes should focus on gender sensitivity, responsible reporting, and the unique challenges faced by women journalists, with an emphasis on fostering understanding and empathy.

2

Develop journalistic code of ethics

Develop a comprehensive journalistic code of ethics that prioritises gender-sensitive reporting, inclusivity, and the responsible treatment of women, marginalised communities, and gender-related issues in the media. Ensure that this code of ethics and existing guidelines are dynamic, with regular reviews and updates to adapt to evolving social and gender norms.

3

Invest in research and data collection

Invest in research and data collection to better understand gender disparities, challenges, and opportunities within the Singaporean media landscape, facilitating evidence-based initiatives.

4

Facilitate opportunities for exchanges and collaboration

Facilitate exchanges and collaboration opportunities between media workers, NGOs, and relevant partners to share best practices, resources, and expertise in gender-sensitive reporting, with a focus on increasing and strengthening allyship with women's rights, LGBTQIA+, and migrant worker rights organisations.

5

Bolster the transparency of media codes and guidelines

Media organisations, unions, agencies, and councils should ensure greater transparency in the development and scope of new and existing guidelines and codes of practices. This includes providing clear definitions and illustrative examples where appropriate. Additionally, they should ensure easy access to these documents for the public and other stakeholders.

Singapore

6

Bolster funding for training and events

Where possible, stakeholders should secure funding for training programmes and events that focus on gender-sensitive reporting and safety for women journalists, and consider collaborating with relevant organisations to pool resources.

7

Establish fellowships and features

Establish fellowships and publish features or articles that bring awareness and transparency to gender issues and women's experiences, promoting in-depth journalistic reporting on these topics.

8

Advocate for legal protections for journalists

Advocate for legal protections for journalists, with a particular focus on safeguarding women journalists against harassment, discrimination, and violence.

9

Advocate for a media regulation consultancy

Advocate for a public consultancy by the government or national regulator on media-related regulations and the development of a journalist code of ethics with regular updates and review, ensuring that these regulations promote gender sensitivity and media responsibility.

10

Establish an independent union of stakeholders

Create an independent union that encompasses a wide range of partners, including media stakeholders, NGOs, women's rights groups, LGBTQIA+ advocacy groups, migrant worker support organisations, and other relevant stakeholders. This union should work collectively to advocate for gender-sensitive reporting, the safety of women journalists, and related media issues.

Thailand

For stakeholders in Thailand – including media organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and government agencies – this plan aims to advance gender-sensitive reporting, improve the safety of women journalists, and encourage responsible media practices. It entails collaboration, advocacy for gender equality initiatives, support for women journalists, and public awareness campaigns. The goal is to foster a media environment in Thailand that champions gender equality, safety, and inclusivity.

1

Foster collaboration with government security agencies

Foster collaboration with government agencies, the military, and police to ensure better understanding of the threats facing women journalists so to better enable protection and support, especially for those covering sensitive or high-risk topics.

2

Establish a labour union for women journalists

Establish a labour union specifically for women journalists that includes safety protocols, policies, protection mechanisms, and safety training, focusing on their unique needs and challenges.

3

Encourage the development of gender equality initiatives within newsrooms

Promote the adoption of equality programmes in newsrooms, including gender policies that foster an inclusive and supportive environment and eliminate gender-based assignment biases. These initiatives should consider safety protocols (including where to seek help) for when women journalists and LGBTQIA+ journalists encounter sexual harassment and/or gender micro-aggressions inside and outside of the newsroom.

4

Advocate for job opportunities and assessments within newsrooms

Advocate for more job opportunities for women in newsrooms and implement Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to track performance, ensuring equality and advancement opportunities.

5

Develop gender-focused support initiatives within newsrooms

Develop support programmes for women and LGBTQIA+ journalists covering high-risk subjects, such as terrorism and violence, and provide emotional and psychological assistance to cope with the stresses of their work. Further, senior editors and media executives should support digital safety, empower women in media, and promote women's leadership roles in news organisations.

Thailand

6

Increase and strengthen collaboration

Stakeholders should seek potential allies and partners, including local media organisations and gender-focused NGOs and international media organisations and NGOs, to collaborate on gender-sensitive reporting and women's safety initiatives.

7

Bolster financial resources for media literacy

Where possible, stakeholders should secure necessary resources, including funding, for media literacy programmes and improved education for women journalists, enabling them to excel in their roles and contribute to more gender-sensitive reporting. Financial resources should also seek to promote media literacy programmes among the general public to raise awareness about the importance of gender-sensitive reporting and the consequences of violence against women and girls, fostering a more informed and responsible society.

8

Launch public awareness campaigns

Organise national and local awareness campaigns to highlight the achievements and contributions of women journalists, showcasing their expertise and encouraging more women to pursue careers in media. Further, stakeholders should confront the challenges of patriarchy, local culture, male-dominated media ownership and management, government interference, and internet users with patriarchal mindsets through awareness campaigns, advocacy, and education to change societal norms.

9

Build capacity of media professionals

Stakeholders should offer gender and development training for media workers to ensure they are equipped with the knowledge and skills to report on gender-related issues accurately and sensitively.

10

Develop a code of conduct for media workers

Local journalists and media workers must be guided by a code that not only supports their efforts in reporting on gender more effectively and responsibly, but also keeps them accountable to the public by emphasising the value of a gendered approach to journalism.

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