

Women under-represented at all levels of media in ASEAN, report finds

Women media professionals make up only three out of 10 newsroom staff in many countries across the Asia-Pacific. They often earn less than their male counterparts and are subject to sexual harassment while struggling to reach decision-making positions.

These are some of the findings in "Inside the News: Challenges and Aspirations of Women Journalists in Asia and the Pacific", a study launched on Monday by Unesco, UN Women and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Thailand.

Anothai Udomsilp, director of Thai PBS' Academic Institute of Public Media, underlined the importance of gender-sensitive journalism within his organisation and discussed the recent drafting of an ethics manual tailored for Thai media based on Unesco's Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media (GSIM).

Successful implementation of such measures requires both everyone in the workplace to understand the benefits of and actively pursue gender equality in media.

"In order to achieve real progress in that area, one crucial aspect is [to get significantly more men involved in these questions]," Anothai said.

Speaking at the launch, Unesco Bangkok director Gwang-Jo Kim said: "[This report] outlines the efforts, achievements and remaining challenges in transforming media to ensure that they advance a culture of gender equality and women empowerment in Asia and the Pacific."

For Roberta Clarke, regional director of the UN Women's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, the report reflected a "mixed bag of progress and challenges".

"The report is reflective, but more important for us now in 2015 it is meant to be a catalyst for further change. Gender equality and empowerment of women is everyone's business.

"The media is powerful and therefore has great responsibility in redressing the imbalance in the portrayal of women and men and also in ensuring that women participate. Members of the media can accelerate that change by changing the media from the inside out."

Some of the findings concerned the ratio of women in jobs in the media: Reporters (30 per cent), feature writers (16 per cent), editors (11 per cent), sub- or copy editors (10 per cent), columnists (8 per cent), news anchors (8 per cent), producers (7 per cent), photographers (5 per cent), design/layout (2 per cent), media support (2 per cent), camera or sound staff (1 per cent).

Gender pay gap in Asia-Pacific media: US\$69 (S\$93), (average monthly salary of \$437 for women, \$506 for men).

How can we foster gender equality in media?

Women journalists said: "Having more women in decision making roles" (25 per cent) and "Affirmative employment strategies" (20 per cent). Male journalists said "Having more women in the media at every level" (28 per cent) and "More family-friendly work conditions" (22 per cent);

Women working in media: 3 out of 10 news-staff are women; 23 per cent are middle editorial decision-makers; 20 per cent are senior editorial decision makers; 18 per cent media executives;

18 per cent of women journalists have experienced sexual harassment, while 34 per cent have witnessed it;

Do women have enough visibility in unions?

48 per cent of the respondents said "No", 23 per cent said "Yes", 25 per cent "don't know".