



Question 1

Women journalists in Pakistan are still not free to take up any beat for reporting. There are a few female journalists providing news coverage to politics and sports but majority particularly in smaller cities are only confined to beats like culture, lifestyle, showbiz, health and women issues. Very few female reporters would be encouraged by newsroom managers to cover politics, parliament, or foreign affairs.

Female anchors on television channels are mostly seen as more of providing face-value to the show rather for any intellectual input. Nearly one third of Women journalists are paid less than their male counterparts and about 39% of women journalists are working without a contract¹.

Media organizations are also not sensitive to the particular needs of women for example, providing a day care facility for working mothers or flexible working hours.

Facilities like health insurance are scarcely available in media organizations, and only 18% of women working in big media companies are provided with health insurance facility.

Harassment, intimidation of women journalists and media persons has been also noticed in the local media industry.

More than a quarter women journalists (27 percent) said they had experienced some kind of digital security threat. There are very limited facilities to train staff on maintaining their digital security. Physical security and safety also is lacking in media units be it male or female workers.

Lack of on-job professional training is given more to men as compared to women journalists, this leading to less opportunities for women to get promotions.

Question 2

Bytes for All monitors and maintains data of violations to individual or groups physical and digital security, restriction on free use of internet, social media and other communication facilities to express opinions and thoughts. The monitoring also focuses on collecting data about cases of harassment, technology driven violence and gender based hate speech. Cases of online violence, and discrimination to women is recorded in a separate database, to be able to make inferences as to what groups/professions are facing more discrimination against others.

Question 3

Under various grants and programs, Bytes for All has delivered holistic trainings (physical, digital, and psychosocial well-being) and separate digital security trainings to women journalists in various parts of the country. These trainings are targeted to women journalists and university students of mass communications/media studies to help them be aware and prepare on securing their communication effectively when using social media, mobile phones and other platforms like email.

Bytes for All also provides training and support to walk-in people large number of which is women who are victims of cyberbully and cyber attacks, seeking help. The cases entertained are also when females are harassed online through their social media accounts or their accounts are hacked and misused. Apart from training and helping women securing their emails, social media accounts and other communications, Bytes For All also guides them to report internet rights violations and cases of cybercrime to the concerned public service departments.

Question 4

There are no such measures or mechanism available at B4A except training them on digital security and sensitizing about their rights to privacy and expression.

¹ <https://www.solidaritycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Pakistan.Women-Journalist-Survey-Report.12.15.SC-and-CAR.pdf>

Question 5

Pakistan introduced sexual harassment laws in 2010 at federal and in some provinces. To prevent cyberbullying, online harassment, cyber stalking, etc. in newly introduced Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, 2016. There are laws to govern the harassment at workplaces.

In Bytes for All, specific policies exist on gender based discrimination, harassment at workplace, and the staff is orientated in the workshops about the policies and how to file a complaint. The policies are up on the office spaces for staff and visitors to read and know what their rights are. However, such policies do not exist in majority media houses in Pakistan and workplace harassment does take place.

Question 6

Legislations exists for working women to provide them better working conditions, spaces to leave kids while working, promotions and equal salaries. However, specific for women journalists, no law exists in Pakistan.

Question 7

Bytes for All uses secure encryption protocols for emails (PGP) and instant messages (Signal and Silent). While in trainings with women journalists and human rights defenders, we introduce the to these platforms for sharing information securely.

Question 8

Despite the fact laws and mechanisms are available against work place harassment, however, awareness with them is one of the biggest hurdles. Secondly, women journalists mostly are not encouraged to use these mechanisms, rather advocated by other colleagues for maintaining silence to avoid the stigma. In conflict situation or political instability, press clubs and others journalist bodies and unions provide help and raising their issues with government and other stakeholders.

Question 9

So we have not worked in that direction, but definitely there is a dire need. However, in special cases where journalists or human rights defenders face life threats, Bytes for All with the help of its international partners relocates them for short time period.