

## **ENGENDERING MEDIA PARTICIPATION: THE CASE OF WOMEN JOURNALISTS IN ASSAM**

*by*

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### **Abstract**

*Journalism, considered as an inseparable part of any democratic set up is an institution in its own right. Although there are many women involved in careers in the communication sector, there is a dearth of hardcore women journalists which is why the sector is generally regarded as a 'men's sphere'. Media as a challenging profession involves all media workers to face risks and difficulties. However, lives of women are more challenging than man in the world of journalism. Unequal work status, gender based discrimination in duty allotment, poor working conditions, exposure to abuse are some of the challenges faced by women journalists in workplace as well as in field. Women journalists often have to negotiate with various personal, professional and socio-structural challenges, which are often less, talked about. Hence, it is necessary to identify the enabling factors that affect women in discharging their duties as journalists. The findings of the study will help in understanding the issues of women journalists thereby contributing to developing policy recommendations to effectively support and strengthen the position of women journalists in media profession.*

*Keywords: women journalists, media, gender discrimination, working condition, Assam.*

### **Introduction**

As reported in the Assamese regional English daily *The Assam Tribune* on 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2015, a female journalist working in a private news channel of Assam, while going to report on illegal possession of a government allotted police quarter by relatives of a police personnel was manhandled and physically abused by uniformed men on duty. The male video journalist who accompanied her to the reporting spot was also beaten up, resulting in severe injuries. Various organizations, including media bodies condemned the incident, terming it as an attack on the fourth estate. The issue got ample coverage across regional media in Assam and concerns were raised regarding the status and safety of women journalists in Assam. When approached for an opinion, the female journalist said –

‘I was shocked at how uniformed men on duty could attack a female reporter on duty. The video journalist with me too was beaten. An FIR was lodged after the incident, but still the case is in an inconclusive state. I know of other instances too where women journalists have been physically violated while reporting on issues. Here, I would like to say that if even after being into a privileged profession like journalism I am beaten up and physically abused, then what will happen to the security and safety of other common women?’

While women constitute nearly half of the population in India, they do not assume a significant position in most spheres of social organization or the institutions thereof like government, administration etc. The media is no exception. Even when women secure headlines in media it is mostly either as a victim or as an oppressed person. Women’s issues are trivialized, sensationalized or distorted. Women’s organizations across the country such as AWAG (Ahmedabad Women’s Action Group) in Ahmedabad, Vimochana in Bangalore, and the Committees on portrayal of women in media, in New Delhi and Bombay; periodicals like *Manushi* and *Stree*, and departments of women’s studies in universities, have been active in carrying out research on representations of women in various mass media.

Besides the question of ‘representations’, the focus of several researches has been the job opportunities for women, especially at decision-making levels, in the production, administration and technical departments of various media. The most widely discussed is S.R. Joshi’s study for UNESCO *Invisible Barriers: Women at Senior Levels of Decision Making in Doordarshan* (1985) which analyses the status of women’s employment at senior levels in

Doordarshan, India. The study reflected that women headed 3 out of 18 Doordarshan stations in India and that at the Delhi stations 40 percent of producers are women. At two other stations, 28 percent of the producers are women with responsibility for determining the content of programmes and one-third of the women at these levels are unmarried compared to only one-tenth of the men. The women were mostly educated in the arts stream. Again, a large proportion of the women thought that with an increase in the proportion of female employees, there would be a change in programme content, programme quality would improve and a more balanced perspective would emerge. Ammu Joseph and Kalpana Sharma in their article *Between the Lines* (1991) and in the book *Whose News? The Media and Women's Issues* (2006) mentions-

‘Although women account for just a little-less than half the population of India, they are not seen as important constituents in decision-making positions, in government, the media, academia or traditional development agendas. Consequently, while women, especially the poor majority, often bear the brunt of the chronic problems which beset the country and, in addition, carry other burdens related to the gender-based division of labour and the general devaluation of women by society, they rarely make it to centre stage in the nation's affairs’.

The current article examines the various challenges, limitations and also the present status of women journalists in both electronic as well as print media in Assam, India. Through actual life experiences of women journalists, it outlines their incompatibility while working with the males, the gender issues, their working conditions, newsroom environment, the challenges they face while reporting in the field, and family and society's attitude towards them.

### **Women in journalism- the current media scenario**

The fact that journalism is by and large still a predominantly patriarchal field with male bosses dominating the profession and women practitioners discriminated in a large number of ways is highlighted in various academic writings. Again, in most of the studies conducted involving the issue; the results are almost same in relation to women journalists and their challenges as such. The paper *Women at Work: journalism as en-gendered practice* (Ross, 2001) has explored the salience of gender in the working lives of women journalists. It has drawn on data from a small-scale postal survey of members of a British network of women journalists—Women in

Journalism—conducted in 1999 and suggested that gender is important in the newsroom for some women but not others and that its impact is often felt in negative ways. Journalists pointed to some of the problems associated with working in an industry still dominated by men, such as the low priority given to coverage of "women's" issues and the male-ordered culture which can be hostile to women with family responsibilities. Most of the women surveyed believe that more women in decision-making positions would have a positive impact on developing a more women-friendly news agenda although there were significant ambiguities about the salience of gender in determining a specifically en-gendered journalistic practice.

The article *Women as Journalists: Incompatibility of roles?* (Wijngaard, 1992) outlines the situation of women journalists in Senegal who had idealistic, ideological and economic motives for their choice of the profession. As soon as they entered the profession, they found that their professional knowledge and journalistic qualities were insufficient.

A project on the Status of Women Journalists in the Print Media initiated by the National Commission for Women was carried out to look into the issues affecting the role of women working in the print media. The Press Institute of India executed this study as part of a broader study on working women in India. Empirical data collected from almost all the States and Union Territories of the country demonstrated that women journalists portray resilience bred from years of experience. They have learnt that hard work, a supportive management, and a positive attitude can be key to success, but they have also learnt that within the newsroom, resentment, exclusion and hostility are flip sides of the coin. By and large, women journalists have a positive perspective and believe that advancement opportunities in the industry have improved over the last few years (Bhagat, undated)

*Feeling Much Smaller than You Know You Are: The Fragmented Professional Identity of Female Sports Journalists* (Hardin & Shain, 2006) is another research based on the various sports journalists that focused on whether women who succeed in sports journalism change its content towards becoming more friendly to women's sports reporting. The results of the study highlighted that newspapers with female-edited sports sections ran slightly higher percentages of stories about women's sports than in newspapers with sports sections edited by men. But an earlier content analysis of newspapers found that journalists' sex made little difference to the amount of space

afforded to women's sports (Pedersen, Whisenant, & Schneider, 2003). The study shows that women struggle to reconcile identities of woman and of sports journalist. The resulting tensions could encourage women to leave the profession in search of careers that involve less cognitive and emotional dissonance, keeping the "revolving door" for women in sports departments turning. The study's findings also undercut liberal feminists' assumption that employment automatically leads to empowerment. Getting in the door, perhaps as a token hire, is easier than it has ever been. Once hired, women are socialized into a newsroom that emphasizes their inferiority in relation to journalism, and into a department that emphasizes their inferiority in relation to sports. The findings of the study also indicate that the socialization of women into masculine-oriented newsrooms may not be as pronounced as previous research indicated. However, it is seen that some of the senior and more experienced women journalists were able to successfully advocate for women's sports coverage with their employers. Thus, the study stresses that advocacy for women's sports coverage is also advocacy for women in sports journalism; the fates of each group are intertwined.

Nowadays, violence against women- sexual harassment, rape, dowry, assault, abduction and kidnapping- has become common issues around the world. Even being in an esteemed profession like journalism, women face violence. The article *Violence against women journalists* (Sreberny, 2013) talks about four different ways in which violence against women journalists occurs. One is during the course of reporting dangerous events such as wars and conflict zones where a woman journalist, much like a male journalist, simply finds herself in a dangerous context. A second form is sexual violence, which, while meted out on occasion to male journalists, is preponderantly acted out against women. A third is state-sponsored violence in the form of arbitrary arrest, imprisonment and torture of journalists, many amongst whom are women. And a fourth form includes trolling and other forms of sexualized hate speech that women encounter on the internet. The article reflected some incidents around the world in countries like Iraq and Afghanistan where journalists were killed in the wars underlining the sad truth that journalism is often a dangerous profession conducted in the most risky of contexts and the risks for women journalists are even higher.

The essay, *The struggle of women in news* (Byerly, 2013) says that women's ability to participate in their societies is bound up in their right to communicate publicly. Feminists seeking women's

advancement, one of those being greater access to journalism and other media professions, have pursued obtaining the right to communicate on a number of fronts. This essay inquires to what extent women's entree to the first of these – journalism – has been successful by looking at women's participation in newsrooms (i.e. as reporters, editors and managers) and in governance (i.e. policy-making roles) of news companies, as revealed in recent research. The discussion is presented within a feminist political economy framework of analysis which helps reveal the gendered relations of power at work in news making. This essay points out the change in technologies where it talks about digital convergence (i.e. the integration of online, cable, broadcast and other formats), concentration of ownership (i.e. the diminishing number of news outlets and jobs), the rise of online reporting through internet news sites and blogging, pointing towards the question of 'symbolic annihilation' of women journalists. As per the essay, women see journalism as a route towards empowerment. Their enrolment in university journalism programmes today surpasses men's in many nations.

There are two lessons as to women's future engagement with their rightful places in news organizations (and the profession they enable) emerge from the feminist research to date. The first is that women enjoy greater progress in the news profession in general when there are national laws in place that provide the statutory basis for gender equality and structural supports for the raising of children. The second lesson, though less obvious, is that women should enter media policymaking in a more determined way to advocate for their own interests. In the broader political economy of neoliberalism that has emerged since the 1970s, men's power has been consolidated in both the financial and political realms, serving to further marginalize women. The article argues that if women are to gain the voice they seek through journalistic practice, they have to seek organized ways to more actively engage the policies that allow this consolidation

An essay titled *Women in decision-making structures in media* (Ross, 2001) highlighted that despite increasing numbers of women graduating from professional and vocational programmes and entering the industry they get stuck at middle management and rarely achieve the really top jobs. The study says that women continue to be under-represented in the decision-making structures of major media organizations, both at operational levels as senior managers and at strategic levels, as CEOs and board members. Importantly, the results of this study suggest that

there is no clear link between the existence of gender or diversity or equality policies in organizations and high numbers of women in decision-making positions: sometimes the two things went together and sometimes not. This is largely because, unless policies are actively monitored, workforce analyses undertaken and action plans developed, then policies remain at the level of paper but not of practice. The testimonies of many of the senior women who were interviewed made clear that the cultural context, at different levels of an organization, has a significant impact on women's career prospects. In other words, a supportive working environment which recognizes the value of women's contribution and which acknowledges their different caring and family responsibilities is as important as the existence of formal equality policies.

### **Women Journalists in Assam, India**

With economic liberalization, globalization and privatization ushered in India during the 1990s, unprecedented mushrooming of media especially the 24/7-television news channels have been observed. Recently, the northeast region of India has witnessed a media boom particularly in Guwahati, Assam which is the virtual capital of Northeast.

Presently there are about 23 dailies in Guwahati alone (data collected from *Janasanyog*, Directorate of Information and Public Relations, and Press Information Bureau, Guwahati), half of which are Assamese language newspapers, while others are regional and national English dailies distributed in the whole of northeastern states from Guwahati. There has also been an increase in the number of television news channel operating from Guwahati. At present there are 6 major private news channels established in Guwahati.

Along with this media boom there is also an emergence of journalism discipline offered in all the central universities of northeast region including private institutions. Hence, in the light of this development, one can say that there exists tremendous potential for the media to make a far greater contribution to the advancement of women in the state of Assam as well across the northeast region. But while more women are involved in careers in the communications sector in Assam, the concern is that only few have attained positions at the decision-making level or are serving on governing boards and bodies that influence media policy. The current study is an

attempt to highlight the various challenges, the various limitations and also the present status of women journalists in various media houses in Assam.

### **Research Methodology**

The objective of this research is to examine the problems and issues confronting women working in the media, to gauge the extent of direct and indirect discrimination in the workplace and to identify contemporary issues that need to be addressed.

The present study employs an exploratory research design which intends to find out how women journalists in Assam negotiate the various personal, professional and socio-structural challenges faced by them and to identify the enabling factors, if any, towards discharging their duties by analyzing the views of a section of women journalists in electronic and print media in Guwahati, Assam. It is important here to mention that exploratory research, as the name states do not aim to provide final and conclusive answers, but merely explores the research topic with varying levels of depth. The study uses qualitative methodological approach to explore the challenges of women journalists in different media houses in Guwahati.

### ***Selection of Interviewees***

In this study, women journalists from Assam were interviewed in an in-depth manner. A total of 8 journalists were interviewed, out of which 4 were from electronic media, 3 from print media and 1 from new media. The purposive sampling technique was instrumental in selecting the interviewees because they were considered to be relevant in facilitating the study.

### ***Data Collection***

Primary data for the study were collected from interviews with women journalists and secondary data were derived from relevant literature to the study, including books, various articles from different journals and internet sources. The current study is an attempt to highlight the personal, professional and socio-structural challenges of women journalists through their personal narratives.



## Profile of the Women Journalists Interviewed

|          | Journalist Name       | Media House  | Designation   |
|----------|-----------------------|--|---|
| <b>A</b> | Teresa Rehman         | The Thumb Print<br>(www.thethumbprintmag.com) a contemporary online news magazine. | Editor; she has worked with 'India Today' magazine, 'The Telegraph' and 'Tehelka'                                     |
| <b>B</b> | Chayamoni Bhuyan      | Newslive   | Senior Journalist   |
| <b>C</b> | Mitali Konwar         | Pratidin Time  | Reporter  |
| <b>D</b> | Mousumi Sharma Baruah | Pratidin Time  | Reporter  |
| <b>E</b> | Rituparna Das         | DY365  | Anchor and Reporter   |
| <b>F</b> | Gitanjali Goswami     | Janahadharan   | Sub-editor  |
| <b>G</b> | Chandrakala Choudhury | National Monthly   | Sub-editor; she has worked as a programme anchor in 'Doordarshan Northeast' and with a news portal 'northeastnews.in' |
| <b>H</b> | Ranjita Devi          | Amar Axom  | Reporter  |

## House-wise Distribution of Women Journalists in Guwahati

### Print Media

| Sl no. | Publication         | No. of Women Journalist |
|--------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| 1      | Amar Axom           | 2                       |
| 2      | Purvanchal Prahari  | 2                       |
| 3      | Axomia Khobor       | 1                       |
| 4      | Edin                | 1                       |
| 5      | Dainik Batori Kakot | 1                       |
| 6      | Axomia Pratidin     | 1                       |
| 7      | Axom Bhumi          | 1                       |
| 8      | The Telegraph       | 2                       |
| 9      | Gana Adhikar        | 1                       |
| 10     | Ami Axomor Janagan  | 2                       |
| 11     | Ganahongbad         | 2                       |
| 12     | Jugasankha          | 1                       |
| 13     | Agradoot            | 3                       |
| 14     | Rahassya Magazine   | 1                       |
| 15     | Dainik Axom         | 0                       |
| 16     | Shankarjyoti        | 0                       |
| 17     | The Assam Tribune   | 2                       |
| 18     | Eastern Chronicle   | 1                       |
| 19     | Niyamiya Barta      | 0                       |
| 20     | The Economic Times  | 0                       |
| 21     | Dainik Purvoday     | 6                       |
| 22     | Times of India      | 0                       |

### Electronic Media

| Sl no. | Media Organization | No. of women Journalists |
|--------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| 1      | News Live          | 2                        |
| 2      | DY365              | 3                        |
| 3      | Focus NE           | 2                        |
| 4      | Prag Channel       | 3                        |
| 5      | Pratidin Time      | 3                        |
| 6      | Doordarshan        | 10                       |
| 7      | All India Radio    | 0                        |

From the primary data collected from the Press Club of Guwahati, it was found that there are approximately 50 female journalists in media houses in the city. Apart from DainikPurvoday newspaper and DoordarshanGuwahati, which accounted for 6 and 10 female journalists respectively, other media houses had only one or two ladies on pay as journalists. Many others, including All India Radio do have no regular women

journalists.

Journalism is a profession, which involves tremendous challenges and risks, and more so for a state like Assam, which is regularly witnessing ethnic and political conflicts. At times, challenges gravitate towards risks to life, restriction of movements and mobility, news blackout, and other blatant human rights violations. There are also cases of kidnappings where journalists are held at ransom and are used as messengers, not on their own volition to transmit messages. Although these threats, restrictions, and violations in covering conflict situations apply both to men and women; women are more vulnerable to them. Even within the organizations women face discrimination and problems which are either ignored or not taken into consideration.

### **Women vis-à-vis Men in Journalism**

The women in news profession regularly need to tackle the field challenges like their male colleagues however daunting those might be. However, the organizational space within which they need to operate, poses additional challenges which are often gender specific leading to inequitable working conditions.

In the profession a woman journalist faces many constraints in herday-to-day life. For instance, lack of separate toilets, safety, issues related to maternity leaves and certain other requirements. Men don't have such issues and hence are more preferred in this profession, which is a sad thing. (Interviewee F)

As the above interviewee mentions, women have to face different issues related to maternity, inadequate sanitation facilities and other basic requirements even within the organization she works for. These issues hinder in making the profession gender friendly and pro-women, thereby, telling upon women's interest in entering the profession and even if they enter, facing immense difficulties for sustenance in the profession.

### **Gender Equity in Newsroom**

Journalism is still a predominantly patriarchal field with male bosses dominating the profession. Low wages, marginalization, unfair labor practices, and sexual harassment are only some of the issues that confront women members of the press. Although none of the interviewees have

experienced such instances in their respective organizations, but all of them said that at one point or the other, there is still a prevalence of gender bias in an invisible dormant form.

Like when the management says that this news will be covered by a man and not by a woman or when the management sends a man instead of a woman for covering certain types of central stories, at that point of time I am hurt. It feels like just because I am a woman I am underestimated and discriminated on the basis of my gender. (Interviewee D)

The gender bias issues are present in almost every organizational set up. It is because of the existing social constructs revolving the role, capability and status of women that they are often discriminated and sidelined professionally. Gender bias in the media profession too is an outcome of the pre-constructed mindset of the people within organizations in particular and society at large.

### **Training in the field of journalism**

Out of the eight journalists interviewed, three said that they had formal training in journalism. Of them, one studied in Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC), Delhi, which is a premier institute providing journalism training in India and other two studied in regional institutes within Assam. The three expressed that the training or knowledge they acquired through academics was however not enough and the institutions offering training in journalism should include more training and orientation programmes, internships and media visits for the benefit of the students. One who did not have formal training in journalism said-

In my time I didn't get anything. I was the challenger, I was the fighter and I fought and I came out. But for everybody it is not possible. So, some orientation programme, some training, physical fitness, martial arts etc. will help. (Interviewee B)

It becomes important for educational institutes which have been running courses on journalism and mass communication to take necessary steps that could enable students, especially women to enter the media world better equipped with pertinent skills and conviction. Adequate field-based orientation and basic training in safety measures can boost their confidence and prepare them for boldly tackling the challenges involved in the journalistic profession.

## **Leadership Role- Women Journalists**

Out of the 8 women journalists interviewed, two of them are higher positioned senior journalists in their respective organizations and the remaining 6 are staff reporters in print and electronic media. The women expressed that in journalistic profession it becomes harder for women to enjoy the same status as their male counterparts. The general view is that- high-positioned jobs are male preserves and women are not made for these.

Every time in this profession need to prove that being a woman you are equally capable of doing what man can do. What a male counterpart can easily get, you will have to fight to get that. Discrimination is there and you will be suppressed if you are not strong enough to fight against the odds. When I face such discrimination I always speak and protest.(Interviewee H)

Change in attitude and tackling gender bias towards women in the organization is an absolute requirement. Nobody can bring any change if women themselves do not want the change and act against it. So, sensitization among both men and women is a must. (Interviewee D)

The interviewees during the study expressed that amidst difficulties; women should never take backseat in fighting against the primitive mind-sets and dominant mentality. They say that women in the profession should grasp opportunities and chances whenever possible. It is important for them to reflect their talent and capabilities despite the challenges. This can happen only when they do not succumb to the pre- dominant set-up and take pro-active steps within their capacities to challenge the prevalent state of affairs.

This resilient attitude among the women journalists in Assam needs to be appreciated in the current context wherein it is indicated by many scholars that though more women are seen entering the daily press as reporters instead of being confined only to news desk or features and magazine sections of newspapers, the continuing predominance of men-across the board and especially in decision-making positions-cannot be disputed. This is particularly evident in the

regional language press where the entry of women into the field has been much slower (Joseph & Sharma, 2006).

### **Compatibility in handling both personal and professional roles**

A woman in any profession has to manage both personal and professional roles. Data collected from the interviewees indicated that they face many difficulties while managing both the roles. Some said, one needs to be a good manager for efficiently managing the roles both at personal and professional level.

I face difficulties but my family is supportive that's why I am able to work. This is not a 9 am to 5 pm job. Any incident can happen anywhere at any time; any big news can come at any time. I cannot switch off my mobile; sometimes even at morning 3 o'clock I get phone calls from people. This profession is different from other jobs. (Interviewee C)

Interviewee A said that she too had faced many difficulties while managing both household and workplace when she was associated with *Tehelka*. But now she is associated with *The Thumbprint*—a contemporary news magazine where she works from her home. She also mentioned that in print it becomes easier to manage but in electronic media the schedule is so hectic that one doesn't get enough time for her family. Interviewee B pointed out that when a woman is a working lady, it is obvious that she might not be able to play the role of a 'perfect housewife' or an 'ideal daughter-in-law', but the family has to be understanding and supportive in this regard. The interviewees highlighted that a woman in society, irrespective of her working status is always expected to perform her household duties efficiently, at times even prioritizing the household responsibilities over professional liabilities. This creates stress, pressure and burden on women; many of them leaving their job due to lack of family support and cooperation. In contrast to the common notion which says- 'Women are not suitable for the media profession because when time comes, they like to prefer household responsibilities to professional commitments' it is important to understand that many-a-times though women do not want to leave their job, they are compelled to choose household duties over their profession due to inflexible societal set-up and customary patriarchal norms.

### **Attitude of Family and Society towards Women Journalists**

The interviewees said that it automatically becomes a matter of pride for the family members when a woman works in a media organization. They opined that the social status of the family enhances with a woman working in the media field. However, many-a-times, women journalists are severely criticized by certain sections of the society when they stand against the wrong doings, mostly because of the fact that they are women who dared to report it.

What I feel is journalism is a very thankless job. Yes, some people feel very proud about it but most of the people don't love us because we at times write unusual things about certain people who are loved or respected in society; sometimes we write about the sad truths and harsh realities of society.(Interviewee G)

As the profession demands, both women and men are required to stand for objectivity and truth. But people often fail to recognize contribution of women in this profession. At times when women are late at home or have attended late night events as part of their work, people severely criticize them for breaking the norms and "crossing the line". However, such criticism is never directed towards the men working in the profession, thereby reflecting the orthodox attitude towards women working in the journalistic profession.

### **Enabling Policies to Facilitate Women's Participation in Journalism**

The interviewees emphasized that the difference in the value on education put on for boys and girls also influence women's entry into the journalistic profession. Again there are women who choose the field thinking that journalism is a glamorous profession. But when they realize that the profession requires hard work, responsibility and dedication to be put in, they leave it.

Often girls are either not allowed to go to school or are taken out of school earlier than boys; the choice of a career for boys and girls influenced by the belief that women should not enter into a profession like journalism are factors which play decisive role in women's entrance and participation in journalism. (Interviewee E)

Many girls enter the media profession for the glamour quotient involved in it. However, later on, when they realize that the profession involves risks and liabilities apart from the glamour portion involved, they tend to leave the profession. These happen because many-a-times they are infused with the idea that women are appropriate only for the glamour side of profession and not for hardcore journalism. Women entering the profession with

such a perception when at times fail to take on professional challenges and responsibilities, ultimately end up leaving their jobs. (Interviewee F)

The interest and aim towards journalism to a large extent depends on existing notions and perception about the profession reflected in the society. Many families consider journalism as a risky profession with no timetable. Therefore, it is essential that robust and proper counseling at various levels in order to attract women's entry into the profession is conducted. In this regard, government, educational institutions as well as media organizations could collaboratively play a crucial role in creating awareness that will ultimately lead to change in mindsets so that women are allowed to choose journalism as a preferable career option.

## **Conclusion**

The key findings of the study reveal that most of the women journalists in Assam are involved in doing soft news rather than hard news or hardcore journalism. Moreover, due to prevalence of gender dynamics and security issues, women journalists either need to be content with fewer opportunities than their male counterparts in this field or leave their jobs. Factors such as discrimination in work allotment, poor working environment, inadequate sanitation facilities are some of the difficulties that women have to encounter in their profession. In addition to these the absence of clear guidelines and in-house policies regarding maternity leave also pose problems for married professionals. In the absence of an appropriate institutional framework it becomes an arduous task for female journalists to consolidate their position within the organization and work towards career growth.

Compounded to these, the lack of family and society's support are some of the bottlenecks that women journalists regularly have to negotiate in Assam. Without taking into consideration the factors and issues that ultimately define a woman's entry and position in hardcore journalism, it would be insensitive to claim that journalism is a profession where only men can excel and women are not fit for the profession. In order to make the journalism arena more women-friendly and responsive, what becomes essential is to find out effective measures that could help tackle the issues, which women regularly face as hardcore journalists. Greater media organizational responsibility, proactive initiatives, academic research, policy follow-up and better training in safety and prevention of violence against women could be measures that could help in this

regard. In addition to this a little appreciation and acknowledgement for the women journalists, who while working in a challenging environment and amidst difficulties are constantly trying to meet the highest standards of professionalism, could be the first step towards encouraging other women to enter into the field and sustain successfully.

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