

Screening of Television and Radio Programs from Gender Perspective

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June 14, 2001

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is a report of a study on the gender-sensitivity of the programs of BTV (Bangladesh Television) and the Bangladesh Betar (Radio Bangladesh). It was conducted by HDRC (Human Development Research Centre), Dhaka. The study was commissioned by the CIDA-funded PLAGÉ (Policy Leadership and Advocacy for Gender Equality) Project, being implemented by the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs of the Government of Bangladesh. The objective of the study was to find out ways to recommend to BTV and Betar in order for them to orient their programs toward further gender-sensitivity. In all, three steps of survey were followed in this study, that is:

- Content analysis of the BTV-and-Betar programs
- Sample opinion survey on watchers and listeners of these programs throughout the country
- In-depth analysis of these programs through in-depth discussions with women activists, including a panelist discussion.

The sample survey was conducted on a total of 568 respondents representing both rural and urban areas. The content analysis was carried out in both BTV and Betar. Two fortnights' programs of Betar were analyzed. The analyzed programs were:

- Banhishikhaa
- Angana
- Dramas (2 dramas)
- Porhashonaa
- Jivon Jivoner Jonnyo.

Two months' programs of BTV were analyzed. These programs were:

- Samata
- Ujjivon
- Drishtipaat
- Angana
- Jarowa
- Shwasthyo Totthyo.

The respondents in general thought that the commercial advertisements of BTV distorted the images of women the most. These suffer from a super-commercialization devoid of reality or development flavour. Religion always plays a major role in defining the media-image of women, however unrealistic. There is discrimination also in the allowance for participation of women in these two media. The social essence of most of the programs is full of the typical feudal images of women. At times, the BTV and Betar programs come

to highlight the reason for sharing of males and females in family matters; but with regard to professional involvement of women, BTV and Betar has regularly been averse. There is strict control on broadcasting of programs on fatwabaaz for unknown reasons, regulated mostly by the Government's policy makers. The timing of the programs are not made to the convenience of the target listeners. These programs are scheduled randomly allowing no chance for equal listening/watching by the male and female population of the country. However, though the participation of women in BTV and Betar is increasing, gender-sensitivity in these has failed to keep pace. In contrast, the general population (especially in the rural areas) has appeared to like the programs participated by women on the BTV.

With regard to gender-management of programs, BTV seems to fare better than the Betar. The Betar people seemed to know less of gender implications, as well as they were more inimical to introduction of more gender-sensitive programs. This fact got reflected in the way their programs were scheduled, designed, produced and broadcast. The resistance of broadcasting authorities to radical gender-orientation of programs is more prominent in the BTV than in Betar. The extra strength of the audio-video media than the simply audio-media is the reason for this phenomenon. As a result, historical women personalities have come to be propagated more in Betar than in BTV.

In context of the prevailing situation in BTV and Betar largely counteracting the engendering of the sense of gender-sensitivity, the following recommendations are being made:

1. A gender orientation in appropriate forms for BTV and Betar people of all types should be organized.
2. A gender-correct guidelines for script writers of Bangladesh Betar and BTV should be prepared/made available, wherein, "don'ts" are clearly mentioned.
3. It is known that gender focal point is available in every ministry of the government and the government has formulated a gender policy; in view of the above, the gender focal point of every ministry and gender concern of the government should be activated. PLAGE can, among others, lobby with the women members of the parliament to contribute in this respect.
4. The policy makers in Betar and BTV should be appraised about gender issue and made convinced about gender issue. This is a matter of education that is difficult, no doubt, particularly when adult learning is involved. None the less, a workshop or something for them can be an option.
5. The Bangladesh Betar people can be approached to offer more gender-sensitive programs for the listeners, bearing in mind the listening habit of the folks.

6. For-the-women and by-the-women type of talk show in Bangladesh Betar should be organized wherein the discussants can talk about traditional role as well as non- traditional roles of women in Bangladesh and abroad. These programs can be one of the ways to convince the viewers that women are intellectually capable as men.
7. Many women personalities at national, regional and local levels are there who are contributing in one way or the other for the benefit of the society. These personalities from all walks of life should be portrayed along with their works and achievements.
8. It is not always true that the menfolk intentionally disregard the womenfolk rather it is a matter of conditioning and shaping of behavior. One of the ways to reshape the behavior is communication between two sides. The Betar and BTV can be an effective vehicle for that communication.