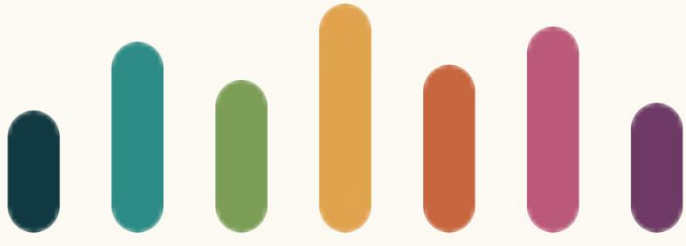
A VOLUNTARY, SELF-REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

PUBLIC VERSION PAKISTAN 2026

Gender Pluralism Charter

Public-interest media that strengthens the rights of women and society.



For Independent Digital Media in Pakistan — shared commitments to principles, standards and mechanisms for gender-plural newsrooms, content and audience.

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Gender Pluralism Charter for Independent Digital Media

Promoting Media Safety and Strengthening Digital Journalism in Pakistan

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August 2026

Acknowledgement and Disclaimer

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This Charter is a voluntary, self-regulatory framework. It does not constitute legal advice, does not create legal obligations beyond those already imposed by Applicable Law, and does not limit the editorial independence of any Adopting Organisation. It has been prepared in good faith and without prejudice against any person or organisation.

Preamble

Gender Pluralism Charter for Independent Digital Media

A Charter to provide a voluntary, self-regulatory framework with shared commitments to principles, standards and mechanisms for gender plural newsrooms, content and audience

The Digital Media Outlets Adopting this Charter,

Noting that journalism is a vital institution of democratic society and independent media performs an essential public function by informing citizens, facilitating public debate, holding power and powerful to account and enabling diverse voices to participate in public discourse;

Acknowledging that digital journalism has significantly transformed Pakistan's media landscape by creating new avenues for participation, expression, reporting and access to information, while simultaneously creating new forms of vulnerability, online abuse and exclusion;

Recognising that the manner in which newsrooms are governed and news content is produced materially shapes public understanding of gender and can directly impact the quality of reporting and editorial practices;

Recognising further that significant gender disparities continue to exist within news organisations due to structural and other barriers hindering their entry, retention and advancement in leadership and decision-making roles;

Considering that news media can influence the manner in which individuals, communities, institutions and social issues are understood and represented and therefore carries a particular responsibility to ensure that journalism does not reproduce discriminatory stereotypes, exclusions or prejudices;

Understanding that gender equality in journalism cannot be reduced to the numerical presence of women in newsrooms, but requires meaningful equality in recruitment, retention, remuneration, professional development, assignment of influential beats, editorial authority, leadership, decision-making and access to opportunities;

Noting that gender pluralism further requires recognition of the diversity of gendered experiences, identities, perspectives and voices in media institutions and in the content they produce, including the meaningful participation and dignified representation of women, men, transgender persons and other gender-diverse persons;

Mindful that the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973 guarantees equality before law and equal protection of law (Article 25), obliges the State to ensure full participation of women in all spheres of national life (Article 34), guarantees the inviolability of the dignity of every citizen (Article 14), guarantees freedom of speech and of the press (Article 19), and guarantees the right of access to information in matters of public importance (Article 19-A);

Recognising further that Pakistan has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, has endorsed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Section J of which specifically addresses women and the media, and has committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including Goal 5 (gender equality) and Goal 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) which provide a broader foundation for equality, non-discrimination, participation, freedom of expression and access to information;

Aware that the Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010 (as amended) provides a statutory framework for protection against workplace harassment, including protections extending to contractual, freelance, temporary, part-time and other categories of workers relevant in digital media context requiring compliance with the law;

Considering that the Protection of Journalists and Media Professionals Act, 2021 recognises rights of journalists and media professionals relating to life and protection against ill-treatment, privacy, independence, protection against abusive and intolerant behaviour and protection against harassment;

Noting that the international good practices including the Gender Charter for Sri Lanka Media (2020), the Gender Charter of

Commitment for News Media, Bangladesh, UNESCO's Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media (2012), the Council of Europe's Recommendation CM/Rec(2013) on gender equality and media, the Global Alliance on Media and Gender's Framework and Plan of Action (2014), the guidelines of the International Federation of Journalists, and the style and coverage guides of GLAAD and the Trans Journalists Association, increasingly recognise that gender equality in media requires both institutional reform and gender-sensitive content, while inclusive journalism requires accurate, respectful and non-stereotypical representation of diverse identities;

Now Therefore, promulgate this Charter as a voluntary, self-regulatory framework with shared commitments to principles, standards and mechanisms for gender plural newsrooms, content and audience, to be implemented in good faith, subject to respective institutional capacities.

PART - 1

PRELIMINARY

1. Short Title, Scope & Application, Commencement and purpose:-

(1) Short Title:- This document may be called the Gender Pluralism Charter for Independent Digital Media, 2026.

(2) Scope:- This Charter applies to every Independent Digital Media Organisation operating in the territory of Pakistan that formally adopts it in accordance with Article 1(3) of this Charter.

(3) Commencement:- This Charter shall come into force, in respect of an Adopting Organisation, on the date on which it signs the 'Instrument of Adoption' in accordance with Article 36 and Schedule I of this Charter, and shall thereafter, apply it on a continuing basis, unless reviewed, superseded or withdrawn under Articles 31 or 33 of this Charter respectively.

(4) Purpose and Objective:- The purpose of this Charter is to establish a common framework through which Independent Digital News Organisations in Pakistan may:

a. promote gender equality and substantive equity within their institutions;

b. increase meaningful participation of women and gender-diverse persons across all levels and functions of digital journalism;

c. strengthen women's and gender-diverse persons' access to leadership, editorial authority and decision-making;

d. eliminate direct and indirect discrimination, gender stereotyping and exclusionary institutional practices;

e. provide safe, dignified and harassment-free working environments;

f. promote gender-sensitive, accurate, fair and pluralistic journalism;

g. ensure diversity of sources, experts, perspectives and experiences in news content;

h. improve the representation of women and gender-diverse persons in media narratives without tokenism, sensationalism or stereotyping;

i. strengthen journalists' capacity to identify and address gender bias, misinformation, disinformation and gendered online abuse through a Media and Information Literacy ("MIL") lens;

j. establish measurable institutional commitments and mechanisms for monitoring, reporting and accountability; and

k. strengthen public trust in independent digital journalism as an institution committed to equality, accuracy, dignity and democratic participation.

2. Definitions:- In this Charter, unless stated otherwise,

a. **"Adopting Organisation"** means an Independent Digital Media Organisation operating in Pakistan that has signed the Instrument of Adoption in accordance with Article 1(3) of this Charter;

b. **"Applicable Law"** means the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan or every statute, ordinance, rule, regulation or binding judicial order in force in Pakistan, or in the relevant province or territory, that bears on the subject-matter of this Charter;

c. **"Charter"** means the Gender Pluralism Charter for Independent Digital Media, 2026;

d. **"Constitution"** means the Constitution of Pakistan, 1973;

e. **"Digital Media Cohort" or "DM Cohort"** means the cohort of independent Pakistani digital news organisations that adopt this Charter in accordance with Article 1(3) of this Charter;

f. **“DM Cohort Charter Committee or Committee”** means the Committee of representatives of Adopting Organisations established under Article 30 of this Charter;

g. **“Independent Digital News Organisation”** means an organisation, platform, publication, newsroom, news agency or journalistic enterprise whose principal or substantial function is the production, publication or dissemination of news or public-interest journalism through digital or online media;

h. **“Intersectionality”** means an approach recognising that gender may interact with other characteristics or circumstances, including disability, age, socioeconomic status, geography, ethnicity, language, religion, marital or family status and other forms of disadvantage, to produce distinct experiences of exclusion or vulnerability;

i. **“Informal Referral Networks”** means the recruitment or engagement of Media Workers through personal contacts, word-of-mouth or internal referrals, rather than through open, advertised and documented hiring processes;

j. **“Gender”** means the socially constructed roles, behaviours, expressions and identities that a given society, at a given time, regards as appropriate for persons of different sexes, which is distinct from, and not limited to, biological sex;

k. **“Gender Audit”** means the periodic internal assessment by Adopting Organisations under Article 27 (iv) and (v) of this Charter, to examine how well their policies, practices and content supports gender pluralism, dignity and safety in their workplaces;

l. **“Gender Equality”** means fair presence, participation, representation and treatment of all genders within various forms of media, including Independent Digital News Organisations;

m. **“Gender Equity”** means fair and context-sensitive measures designed to address existing barriers, disparities and unequal starting positions so that equality of opportunity and meaningful participation of Media Workers can be achieved;

n. **“Gender-Based Discrimination”** means treatment of a person based on his/her gender less favourable than persons of other genders;

o. **“Gender Based Abuse or Violence” means** physical, verbal, psychological, sexual or socio-economic violence perpetrated against a person’s will, based on socially ascribed gender differences among men and women, boys and girls;

p. **“Gender-Diverse Person”** means a person whose gender identity or expression does not conform to binary or normative expectations and includes a transgender person within the meaning of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018;

q. **“Gender Focal Point”** means the individual or committee trained in gender sensitivity, designated under Article 4(3) of this Charter to facilitate an Adopting Organisation's implementation of this Charter;

r. **“Gender Pluralism”** means the recognition and meaningful inclusion, within media institutions, decision-making structures, journalistic processes and content, of the full spectrum of gender identities, experiences, perspectives and voices, extending beyond a binary understanding of gender, while upholding equity, dignity, non-discrimination, safety and freedom of expression for all;

s. **“Gender Pluralism Action Plan”** means the Gender Pluralism Action Plan to be established by an Adopting Organisation under Article 27 of this Charter after submitting the Instrument of Adoption under Schedule 1 of this Charter;

t. **“Gender-Responsive Outcome”** means a specific action or institutional consideration that, without necessarily altering the structural cause of an inequity, actively reduces that inequity and strengthens information integrity from a gendered lens;

u. **"Gender-Transformative Outcome"** means a result intentionally designed to, or which does in fact, change a discriminatory norm, exclusionary practice, policy, behavioural bias, newsroom culture, or systemic barrier, so as to advance information integrity, justice, equity and safety;

v. **"Gender Transformative Measures"** means actions that are deliberately designed to identify and alter discriminatory norms, institutional arrangements, biases, behaviours or structural barriers rather than merely accommodating existing inequalities.

w. **"Gender-Sensitive Reporting"** means reporting which recognises the ways in which gender may shape experiences, access, vulnerability, power and social outcomes and which seeks to present or report such matters accurately, fairly, contextually and without stereotyping, sensationalism or discrimination;

x. **"Gender-Sensitivity Training"** means periodic, structured training provided to or arranged for Media Workers on gender pluralism, inclusivity and intersectionality and including but not limited to, recognising and preventing gender-based harassment, gender stereotypes and gender-based discrimination, and on applying gender-sensitive practices in the workplace and in editorial content;

y. **"Harassment"** has the meaning given to it under Section 2(h) of the Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010, as amended in 2022, and includes non-sexual discrimination on the basis of gender;

z. **"Media Worker"** means any person engaged, on a permanent, contractual, freelance or internship basis, in editorial, production, technical or administrative work for an Adopting Organisation, including freelance, remote and gig-based personnel;

aa. **"Meaningful Participation"** means participation which is substantive and capable of influencing decisions, priorities, editorial agendas or institutional outcomes and shall not be

satisfied by nominal, token or purely numerical representation;

bb. **"Media and Information Literacy (or MIL)"** means the competencies necessary to access, evaluate, critically analyse, use, create and communicate information and media content ethically and effectively, including the capacity to recognise bias, misinformation, disinformation and harmful representations;

cc. **"Rights-Based Approach"** means an approach grounded in equity, non-discrimination, dignity and freedom of expression, drawing on the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution and Pakistan's international human rights obligations.

dd. **"2010 Act"** means the Federal Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010.

ee. **"Vulnerable Persons"** means survivors of gender-based violence, minors, transgender and gender-diverse persons, and other individuals who may be at an increased risk to their safety, dignity or wellbeing due to their intersectionality, environment and circumstances, different-abilities, or other unique attributes, requiring heightened editorial care in reporting on them.

3. Guiding Principles:-

Adopting Organisations shall be guided by the following principles in the implementation of this Charter:-

(1) **Rights-Based Approach:-** Adopting a rights-based approach in their governance, recruitment, retention and promotion policies and practices and fostering an environment that promotes equity, non-discrimination and inclusion for all Media Workers, irrespective of gender or gender identity.

(2) **Gender Pluralism as an Underlying lens:-** Incorporating Gender Pluralism as an underlying lens in their governance and operations and looking beyond numerical parity between men and women to consider who holds editorial authority, whose expertise is treated as authoritative, whose stories are told, who is invited to speak, whose perspectives

may be underrepresented or absent and how gender and gendered experience, including the experience of transgender and gender-diverse persons, are reflected and portrayed in their content.

(3) **Gender-Responsive and Gender-Transformative Action:-** As far as is practicable, to move beyond gender sensitivity, toward Gender-Responsive Outcomes that reduce inequity within existing structures, and ultimately toward Gender-Transformative Outcomes that change the discriminatory norms, practices and structures that produce that inequity in the first place.

(4) **Safety and Dignity:-** Ensuring safe and dignified workplace and working conditions for all Media Workers to ensure that they are able to perform their professional duties free of harassment, intimidation, violence, retaliation or discrimination on the basis of gender.

(5) **Do No Harm:-** Minimizing avoidable harm, particularly to survivors of violence, children, vulnerable persons and persons exposed to gender-based abuse or violence, in their editorial and institutional practices

(6) **Non-Regression:**- Nothing in this Charter should be read to reduce any protection, benefit or entitlement that a Media Worker enjoys under any Applicable Law or under an Adopting Organisation's existing policies at the date it adopts this Charter.

(7) **Accuracy & Fairness:-** Maintaining, factual accuracy, verification, fairness, context, public interest and the opportunity to respond as fundamental aspects of reporting and content.

(8) **Transparency and Accountability:-** Promoting transparency in their practices and working towards translating their gender commitments into identifiable responsibilities, measurable actions and, where feasible, measurable outcomes that may be reviewed periodically.

(9) **Merit & Objectivity:-** Taking recruitment, performance evaluation, promotion and termination decisions, based on relevant and transparent criteria, while seeking to avoid decisions being influenced by gender stereotypes, personal preferences, family status or assumptions regarding mobility, caregiving or availability of Media Workers.

PART - 2

GENDER PLURALISM IN NEWSROOMS

(RECRUITMENT, RETENTION & PROMOTIONS)

4. Institutional Commitments:-

(1) **Commitment to Gender Pluralism:-** Adopting Organisations aspire to take active measures, as far as is practicable, to increase the representation of women and gender-diverse Media Workers in senior editorial and managerial positions and in editorial, strategic and policy decision-making.

(2) **Gender Plural Policy:-** Adopting Organisations should develop, adopt or incorporate a written gender plural policy, in accordance with this Charter, proportionate to its size and resources, which shall be accessible and available on its website, annual reports and workplaces.

(3) **Gender Focal Point:-** (i) Upon adoption of this Charter, the Adopting Organisation, proportionate to its size and resources, should designate trained Gender Focal Person(s) or Committee for coordinating the Gender Pluralism Action Plan; facilitating staff awareness; monitoring institutional indicators and progress; receiving and escalating concerns where appropriate; coordinating periodic gender assessments and reporting to senior management in accordance with their Gender Plural Policy.

(ii) The Gender Focal Point should develop a phased implementation plan including a Gender Pluralism Action Plan, with reference to the organisation's size and resources, and report periodically to the organisation's senior management on implementation progress and challenges.

(iii) The Gender Focal Point should, subject to privacy and data-protection safeguards, may maintain gender disaggregated information regarding, recruitment, promotion, remuneration, training, retention and attrition, allocation of assignments and beats and other relevant indicators for purposes of monitoring and evaluation of

Gender Pluralism in their Media Outlets in accordance with their Gender Plural Policy.

(iv) The Gender Focal Point, of an Adopting Organisation, proportionate to the size and resources, may conduct periodic internal review of gender representation at each level of their organisational hierarchy, document corrective measures taken, if any, and, where feasible, establish leadership and mentorship pathways for early- and mid-career women and gender-diverse journalists in accordance with their Gender Plural Policy.

5. Recruitment and Selection:-

(1) Adopting Organisations should, in the first instance, aim to publicly and widely advertise editorial, technical and management vacancies through open and public channels,

Provided that where a position remains vacant, despite public advertisement, beyond a reasonable time, then selection through informal referral networks may be pursued in accordance with the Guiding Principles contained in Article 3 of this Charter.

(2) The advertisements for vacancies should provide clear eligibility criteria, job description, selection criteria and complete recruitment process beyond the stage of application.

(3) The advertisements for vacancies should reinforce that the Adopting Organisation is an equal opportunity employer and expressly welcome applications from all genders.

6. Retention and Promotion:-

(1) Clear Criteria for evaluation and promotions:- Adopting Organisations should endeavour to develop and apply, clear, objective criteria, for performance evaluation and promotion decisions

(2) Assignment and Beat Allocation:- Adopting Organisations should strive to allocate reporting assignments and beats fairly and equitably to Media Workers, on the basis of professional competence, interest, experience and organisational needs, rather than on stereotypical gender-based assumptions.

(3) Safety Training and Logistics:- Adopting Organisations, as far as is practicable and proportionate to their size and resources, should endeavour to provide safety training, field logistics and reporting resources equitably to enable Media Workers of all genders to pursue assignments in traditionally male-dominated reporting areas on fair and equal terms.

(4) Parental Leave:- Adopting Organisations shall provide parental leaves in accordance with Applicable Law, and shall strive to ensure that the taking of such leave does not adversely affect an employee's performance rating, remuneration or eligibility for promotion.

(5) Protection of Leave Entitlements:-The Adopting Organisations shall not penalise any person in recruitment, appraisal, promotion or assignment merely because they exercised a lawful entitlement to leave.

(6) Flexible Work Arrangements:- Adopting Organisations should facilitate and encourage flexible working arrangements, wherever practicable, including but not limited to remote or hybrid work, flexible working hours and staggered shifts.

Provided that Adopting Organisations should develop working arrangements that recognise caregiving and family responsibilities without treating them as evidence of reduced professional commitment.

(7) Infrastructure:- Adopting Organisations, proportionate to their size and resources and where practicable, seek to facilitate access to basic gender-appropriate workplace infrastructure, including separate sanitation facilities and separate prayer rooms for all Media Workers.

(8) Professional Development:- (i) Adopting Organisations should aim to provide, allow or enable equitable access to training as well as fellowships and leadership development opportunities across genders to their Media Workers, especially to those who are underrepresented in those fields.

(ii) Adopting Organisations, as far as is practicable and in proportion to their size and resources, should arrange, allow or provide periodic trainings, amongst other things on,

gender sensitivity, protection against harassment at the workplace, gender equality, gender pluralism; unconscious and institutional bias; gender-sensitive language and representation of gender-diverse persons; reporting gender based violence; emerging technologies and AI, digital and online safety; intersectionality; misinformation, disinformation, gendered disinformation and Media and Information Literacy.

7. Pay Parity and Transparency:-

(1) Adopting Organisations should ensure that Media Workers performing work of equal value shall be treated equitably in remuneration, benefits and opportunities irrespective of gender.

(2) Adopting Organisations should conduct periodic internal pay reviews to identify and remedy gender-based disparities in remuneration, and should base compensation decisions on objective criteria of experience, role and performance rather than discretionary or informal negotiation.

(3) Adopting Organisations should specify the remuneration or budget range against an advertised role and position in the advertisement.

PART - 3

DIGNITY AND SAFETY AT THE WORKPLACE

8. Anti-Harassment and Complaint Mechanism:-

(1) Adopting Organisations shall endeavour to maintain a workplace free from harassment, intimidation, discrimination, retaliation and gender-based hostility, and comply with the 2010 Act.

(2) Adopting Organisations shall adopt and implement a written anti-harassment policy in accordance with the 2010 Act and shall display that policy prominently and in a language understood by Media Workers, within its physical and, where it has no fixed premises, digital workplace.

(3) The anti-harassment policy shall be communicated and made available to all Media Workers and incorporated into induction and trainings.

(4) The Adopting Organisations shall constitute a functional and trained Inquiry Committee with no fewer than one female member, in accordance with the 2010 Act and shall establish a confidential, accessible complaint mechanism, preserving the confidentiality of the parties, consistent with Article 14 of the Constitution of Pakistan and the 2010 Act, as required under Applicable Laws.

9. Protection against Retaliation:- (i) Adopting Organisations shall protect a complainant who raises a harassment or discrimination complaint, from retaliation, in accordance with the 2010 Act, including from demotion, reassignment, termination, exclusion from assignments, or reputational reprisal, whether such retaliation originates from the respondent or from the Adopting Organisation's own management.

(ii) Where one of its Media Workers becomes the subject of a claim of defamation arising from a complaint of harassment or from reporting undertaken in the course of their duties, the Adopting Organisations should strive to make available to that Media Worker information about legal aid resources and, where its own resources permit, institutional support,

provided that nothing in this clause shall be read as expressing any view on the merits of any particular proceeding, present or future, or as fettering the right of any person to seek legal redress.

(iii) Adopting Organisation should ensure that internal disciplinary and editorial decisions are not used as a substitute for, or means of circumventing, the Inquiry Committee process required under the 2010 Act.

10. Field and Digital Safety:- (i) Adopting Organisations as far as is practicable and in proportion to their size and resources, should endeavour to adopt safety protocols for field assignments, night shifts and travel, applied equitably and without using safety concerns as a pretext to restrict access of Media Workers to particular assignments.

(ii)Adopting Organisations should recognise online harassment, doxxing, coordinated trolling and image-based abuse directed at its Media Workers as a workplace safety issue, and should take requisite steps to make their Media Workers aware of the remedies available under relevantApplicable Laws.

(iii) Adopting Organisations should not dismiss online harassment merely as an inevitable consequence of public-facing journalism.

(iv) Adopting Organisations should have particular regard to the additional and intersecting risks faced by transgender and gender-diverse Media Workers, and by Media Workers reporting from conflict-affected or in socially conservative settings.

(v) Adopting Organisations should, subject to their resources, facilitate access to psychosocial support for Media Workers affected by harassment, workplace-related trauma, or online abuse.

(vi) Adopting Organisations should maintain and periodically update, a referral list of legal aid, medical and psychosocial support resources available to its Media Workers.

11. Rapid Response for Threats and Emergencies:-

(i) Adopting Organisations, as far as is practicable and in proportion to their size and resources, should endeavour to establish a rapid response protocol for acute, gender-targeted threats which should at a minimum address:

(a) a designated first point of contact, available outside standard hours, for a Media Worker experiencing an acute threat;

(b) a pre-identified escalation pathway, including contact points at the relevant press club or other emergency and protection networks including among lawyers and other human rights defenders and civil society networks, and, where applicable, establish trust-and-safety teams for takedown of harassing or doxxing content on digital platforms;

(c) temporary measures available on request, such as a byline pause, publication delay, relocation, or increased digital security support, without treating the request for such measures as a reflection on the Media Worker's professional standing; and

(d) a post-incident review, conducted with the affected Media Worker's consent and participation, to identify whether the Adopting Organisation's own editorial or security practices contributed to the exposure and whether they should be revised.

(ii) Adopting Organisations may further seek to develop an 'Online Safety and Gendered Abuse Protocol' addressing, threats; coordinated harassment; sexualised abuse; impersonation; doxxing; malicious publication of personal information; stalking; non-consensual dissemination of intimate material; gendered disinformation; and other forms of technology-facilitated abuse in accordance with their internal policies and frameworks.

(iii) Where a Media Worker faces serious threats or coordinated gender-based online abuse arising from professional activity, the Adopting Organisations may

endeavour to provide reasonable institutional support, including, security advice; escalation protocols; documentation and evidence preservation; platform reporting assistance; legal referral, where appropriate, and psychosocial support, where feasible proportionate to its size and resources.

12. Privacy, Surveillance and Data Protection:- Adopting Organisations should respect the privacy and dignity of employees, sources, interviewees and subjects and may seek to ensure that:

a. Workplace surveillance is proportionate, lawful and justified by a legitimate organisational purpose;

b. Employees are informed, in accessible terms, about workplace surveillance systems and their legitimate purpose;

c. Surveillance is used as a tool for gender-based monitoring, intimidation or retaliation; and

d. Personal data collected for gender audits or institutional monitoring is handled confidentially and reported, wherever possible, in aggregated form.

PART - 4

GENDER SENSITIVE AND PLURALISTIC CONTENT AND EDITORIAL PRACTICES

13. Adopting Organisations shall endeavour to ensure that their editorial practices reflect the diversity of the society they serve.

14. Editorial decisions should not systematically privilege one gender as the default authority; the principal expert; the principal political actor; the principal decision-maker; or the default voice on matters affecting society.

15. Gender Sensitive Coverage:- Adopting Organisations , in the exercise of their own editorial judgment should:

(a) avoid confining coverage of women's and gender-diverse persons' lives to victimhood, and give due prominence to their contributions, expertise and achievements;

(b) Pay particular attention to women and gender diverse persons' representation as, experts; analysts; political actors; professional authorities; academics; community leaders; technical experts; and sources on subjects not traditionally associated with women and gender diverse persons;

(c) refrain from language, imagery or framing that objectifies, sexualises, trivialises or stigmatises any person on the basis of gender;

(d) refrain from glamorising, sensationalising or minimising violence or abuse on the basis of gender;

(e) consider whether gender is relevant to the analysis of a story and, where relevant, whether the story accurately reflects the different effects of the issue on different genders.

(f) use gender-neutral and gender-inclusive language for roles and occupations as Gender shall not be made a defining feature of a person's identity in reporting, save where Gender is editorially relevant to the story.

Provided, in this case, they shall exercise particular caution in reporting from jurisdictions or contexts in which such disclosure may endanger the subject.

16. Language, Portrayal and Terminology:- (i) Adopting Organisations in reporting on transgender and gender-diverse persons, should strive to use terminology consistent with fundamental rights and other Applicable Law such as, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018, and shall ask a subject directly how they wish to be identified and which pronouns they use, wherever practicable.

(ii) The Adopting Organisations should avoid derogatory, outdated or clinical terminology inconsistent with Article 14 of the Constitution and the decency and fairness requirements of the Press Council's Ethical Code of Practice.

17. Source Diversity and Monitoring:- (i) Adopting Organisations should aim to make progressive efforts to diversify their sources and experts and encourage their Media Workers to avoid habitual reliance on the same predominantly male networks of experts, commentators and institutional sources.

(iii) Adopting Organisations should endeavour to maintain or develop diverse expert directories or liaison with diverse civil society or other networks to facilitate access to women and gender-diverse experts.

(iv) Adopting Organisation should maintain their editorial practices of seeking comment from and offering a fair right of reply to a person or institution that is the subject of adverse reportage, in accordance with ethical journalistic standards and policies.

(v) Adopting Organisations should commit to monitoring and undertaking periodic reviews of content to ensure gender balanced and diverse coverage and to undertake periodic gender audit of programming and the voices being featured in their programmes, as far as is practicable and in proportion to their size and resources

18. Gender Sensitive Reporting:- Adopting Organisations should ensure that their Media Workers, report matters involving gender,

with accuracy, fairness, context, dignity and proportionality. In particular, they should avoid presenting gender stereotypes as facts or reinforcing assumptions regarding women's capabilities; men's authority; caregiving; sexuality; family roles; professional competence; leadership; violence; or social behaviour.

19. Gender Sensitive Visual Representation:- (i) Images, thumbnails, video, captions, illustrations and other visual elements should comply with the principles of accuracy, dignity, relevance and non-stereotyping.

(ii) Adopting Organisations should avoid, sexualised images unrelated to the subject matter; images that unnecessarily expose victims or survivors; stereotypical depictions of women or men; visual representations that reinforce gendered power hierarchies; misleading or manipulated imagery and imagery designed principally to generate clicks through humiliation, sexualisation or sensationalism.

(iii) Adopting Organisations should comply with the same principles of dignity, accuracy, relevance and non-sensationalism in visual content involving gender diverse persons

20. Ethical Reporting on Gender-Based Violence:- (i) Adopting Organisations should seek to adopt and apply editorial guidelines for reporting on gender-based violence, sexual harassment and sexual offences that protect the identity, privacy and dignity of survivors and complainants, consistent with Article 14 of the Constitution of Pakistan,other Applicable Laws and with the Press Council's Ethical Code of Practice.

(ii) Adopting Organisations and their Media Workers should not identify a survivor of sexual violence, or publish information reasonably likely to lead to their identification, without their informed and freely given consent, and shall have particular regard to the position of minors and gender diverse or vulnerable persons in this regard.

(iii) In reporting sexual violence cases, the Adopting Organisations should strive to ensure that the sexual history, clothing, marital status, lifestyle or other irrelevant personal

characteristics of a survivor are not presented in a manner that implies responsibility for the offence and particular care shall be exercised when reporting on children and vulnerable persons.

(iv) Adopting Organisations should further aim to avoid unnecessary disclosure of private or intimate information; sensationalism and gratuitous detail. They shoulddistinguish allegation from established fact and protect the identity of victims where required by law or where disclosure creates a foreseeable risk of harm; provide appropriate context and avoid portraying violence as inevitable or normal.

(v) Adopting Organisations should seek to ensure that language used for reporting is accurate, non-pejorative and proportionate to the facts and reporting on interim court orders in cases of sexual and gender-based violence should avoid creating misleading perceptions about merits of a case or the loss or victory of any one party, until the final determination of the matter by the competent Court.

21. Gender-Responsive Reporting on Elections, Conflict and Crisis:-
(i) Adopting Organisations should aspire to correct gender imbalance in elections, candidate coverage, questioning and airtime, as far as is practicable and should seek to apply particular scrutiny to gendered disinformation and online abuse directed at women and gender-diverse candidates.

(ii) In conflict, disaster and humanitarian reporting, Adopting Organisations should endeavour to apply their conflict and gender-sensitive editorial guidelines to account for the differentiated risks and needs of women, men and gender-diverse persons affected by crisis.

22. Countering Gendered Mis- and Disinformation:- Adopting Organisations should strive to apply their ordinary editorial and fact-checking standards with particular vigilance to mis- and disinformation that targets individuals, and in particular women in public life and gender-diverse persons, on the basis of gender, and should avoid amplifying such disinformation through uncritical repetition.

23. Artificial Intelligence, Algorithms and Automated Content:- (i) Adopting Organisations recognise that artificial intelligence and algorithmic tools in news gathering, content generation, translation, image selection, headline optimisation, and content recommendation can reproduce or amplify gender bias at a scale and speed that outpaces manual editorial review.

(ii) Adopting Organisation and their Media Workers who use generative artificial intelligence tools in content production should review outputs for gender-stereotyped framing, imagery or language before publication to machine-generated content as they do to human-authored content in accordance with their editorial and Gender Plural Policy.

(iii) Adopting Organisation or their Media Workers who use algorithmic content-recommendation or headline-optimisation systems should, as far as is practicable, periodically review whether those systems systematically deprioritise stories featuring women or gender-diverse sources and subjects, or amplify sensationalised or stereotyped framing of gender-related stories for engagement purposes.

(iv) Adopting Organisation should endeavour not to use automated tools to generate or moderate content in a manner that circumvents the editorial requirements on reporting gender-based violence or the use of gender sensitive terminology, and should aim to ensure that human editorial oversight remains the final safeguard for any published content, whatever its manner of production.

PART - 5

AUDIENCE DIVERSITY AND MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY

24. Audience Gender Diversity:- Adopting Organisations shall have regard to the gender diversity of its audience in its content strategy and shall seek to produce content accessible to, and reflective of the interests and information needs of, audiences of all genders, including in under-served regions and languages, consistent with Article 19-A of the Constitution of Pakistan.

25. Media and Information Literacy Initiatives:- (i) Adopting Organisations should, where feasible, contribute to Media and Information Literacy among its audience by developing editorial and audience practices that enable audiences to recognise gender stereotypes; distinguish reporting from opinion; identify misleading framing; recognise gendered misinformation and disinformation; critically assess sources; understand how headlines, images and algorithms may shape perceptions; recognise manipulated or decontextualised content and engage responsibly with media and information.

(ii) Editorial teams should consider gender when evaluating user-generated content, social-media trends, viral material and audience submissions.

(iii) Adopting Organisations shall apply its ordinary editorial and fact-checking standards with particular vigilance to mis- and disinformation that targets individuals, and in particular women in public life and gender-diverse persons, on the basis of gender, and shall avoid amplifying such disinformation through uncritical repetition.

(iv) Where appropriate, news organisations should produce explanatory or educational content addressing media literacy and gender bias.

Provided that MIL initiatives shall not be used to patronise audiences or dictate legitimate political or social viewpoints. Their purpose shall be to strengthen critical engagement, information integrity and informed participation.

26. Audience Feedback and Correction Mechanisms:- Adopting Organisations should provide an accessible complaints mechanism through which its audience may share or submit concerns about gender-insensitive, harmful or inaccurate portrayal and where such an error is established, the Adopting Organisations should provide an appropriate correction in line with their corrections policy, in a reasonably prominent and transparent manner.

Provided that the existence of a complaints mechanism shall not prevent recourse to a statutory regulator, court or other lawful forum.

27. Gender Pluralism Action Plan:- (i) The Gender Focal Point of Adopting Organisations should, in proportion to the size and resources of the Media Outlet, seek to establish a Phased Gender Pluralism Action Plan identifying the objectives; baseline position; priority interventions; focal and representative persons; resources allocated for implementation; indicators; timelines; internal review and gender audit mechanisms.

(ii) The Action Plan should distinguish between:

(a) Immediate measures (actions capable of implementation within twelve months);

(b) Medium-term measures (actions requiring one to three years) and

(c) Gender Transformative measures (longer-term structural reforms)

(iii) Adopting Organisations should strive to conduct an initial gender assessment, preferably within one year of adoption of this Charter, in proportion to its size and resources and thereafter, periodically conduct Gender Audits in line with its Gender Plural Policy, subject to its organisational capacity.

(iv) The Gender Audit should seek to examine, as appropriate, gender composition; gender diversity in leadership; recruitment; retention; promotion; remuneration; assignment of beats; training; leave and care support; workplace safety; harassment redressal mechanisms; technical and digital roles; editorial content; sources and experts; representation in content; gender-sensitive language; online safety; and institutional accountability.

(v) Feedback from Media Workers should be collected in a manner that protects confidentiality and minimises fear of retaliation.

PART - 6

FINAL PROVISIONS

28. Nature and Legal Status of the Charter:- (i) This Charter is a voluntary, self-regulatory instrument and does not derogate from, override or substitute any obligation imposed on an Adopting Organisation by the Constitution or any statute, rule, regulation or judicial order of Pakistan, and shall in all respects be read subject to such law.

(ii) Nothing in this Charter shall be construed to limit, restrict or condition the editorial independence of any Adopting Organisation, or to authorise any form of prior restraint, censorship, or interference with the free exercise of journalism protected under Article 19 of the Constitution. This Charter operates exclusively through the voluntary undertakings of Adopting Organisations.

29. Severability:- If any provision of this Charter is held by a competent court, or is otherwise determined, to be invalid, unlawful or unenforceable, that provision shall be severed, and the remaining provisions of this Charter shall continue in full force and effect.

30. DM Cohort Charter Committee: - (i) The DM Cohort shall, upon finalisation of this Charter, establish a Charter Committee, which shall include representatives from Adopting Organisations to support interpretation of this Charter, share good practices, or consider any other matter referred to it under this Charter.

(ii) The Charter Committee should consist of two members (one senior managerial person and one Media Worker) from each Adopting Organisation nominated by the Adopting Organisation for a period of [five] years, save where such a member resigns or is dismissed or removed by the Adopting Organisation, in which case, they shall appoint a suitable replacement to the Committee within a reasonable time after the date of such resignation, dismissal or removal.

(iii) The Charter Committee shall not exercise any adjudicative, disciplinary or regulatory function over an Adopting Organisation; its role is facilitative, interpretative and advisory

and it shall do so in accordance with Article 34 and 35 of this Charter.

31. Review and Revision:- (i) This Charter may be formally reviewed by the Digital Media Cohort and may be amended by the majority of Cohort, to ensure that it remains responsive to developments in Pakistani law; digital journalism; emerging forms of gendered online abuse; changes in terminology and accepted journalistic practice; technological developments, including artificial intelligence; evolving international standards and evidence generated through implementation experience and Gender Audit.

(ii) Any revisions shall be undertaken through a participatory process through the DM Cohort Charter Committee, that shall provide secretarial services for and during such review or revision, and may also determine the process and terms for such review and/or revision.

(iii) Any amendment shall be communicated in writing to all organisations that are part of the DM Cohort and shall take effect, on the date specified in the amendment, for those Organisations that adopt or endorse the Amendment.

32. Knowledge and Experience Sharing:- The Digital Media Cohort Committee may convene, preferably, once every two years for sharing knowledge and experience of implementing this Charter and consolidating best practices, with each other, or convene otherwise as and when it may deem appropriate, either online or in person.

33. Effective Date, Duration and Withdrawal:- This Charter takes effect, in respect of each Adopting Organisation, as provided in Article 1(3), and shall remain in force until withdrawn by that Adopting Organisation on not less than sixty days' written notice to the DM Cohort Committee or until superseded by a subsequent version of this Charter, if any, under Article 31 of this Charter.

34. Rules of Interpretation:- (i) This Charter provides a voluntary, self-regulatory framework with shared commitments to principles, standards and mechanisms for gender plural newsrooms, content and audience.

(ii) Where this Charter uses “shall”, the relevant commitment is treated, for the purposes of this Charter as a baseline undertaking; where it uses “should”, the commitment is treated as aspirational and resource-contingent. This distinction governs only the internal weighting and creates no additional legal obligation of any kind on the Adopting Organisation, save for what the Applicable Law already prescribes.

(iii) This Charter shall be interpreted purposively, in light of the Purpose and Objectives stated in Article 1(4) and with the Guiding Principles in Article 3 of this Charter. It shall be interpreted purposively in a manner that advances, substantive equality; gender pluralism; dignity; safety; inclusion; freedom of expression; editorial independence; information integrity and democratic participation.

(iv) Where two provisions appear to conflict, they shall, to the extent reasonably possible, be interpreted harmoniously.

Provided that nothing in this Charter shall be interpreted to require unlawful discrimination, compromise journalistic accuracy or suppress legitimate public-interest reporting.

(v) Nothing in the Charter shall prejudice any right, remedy, obligation or liability arising under any Applicable Law.

35. Interpretation Mechanism: (i) A question as to the interpretation or application of this Charter, of an Adopting Organisation or as between Adopting Organisations shall be referred to the DM Cohort Charter Committee.

(ii) The Committee shall deliberate on the interpretation to arrive at a collective interpretation and record it in writing to communicate it to all Adopting Organisations.

(iii) The Committee may refer to any drafts, dialogues, materials, resources, studies, laws, rules or documents to aid the interpretation of the terms of this Charter, as they may deem appropriate.

(iv) For the avoidance of doubt, this Article does not create, and shall not be construed to create, any cause of action, right of complaint, or remedy enforceable by a Media Worker or any other person against an Adopting Organisation before any court,

tribunal or authority; statutory remedies for harassment, discrimination or unsafe working conditions remain governed exclusively by the Applicable Law, including the 2010 Act and this Charter's interpretation mechanism is confined to organisational or inter-organisational questions of Interpretation of Adopting Organisations interpretation arising out of this Charter.

36. Adoption and Signatory Mechanism:- (i) An organisation becomes an Adopting Organisation by signing the Instrument of Adoption in Schedule I of this Charter, executed by its authorised representative and witnessed by two others and depositing it with the DM Cohort Charter Committee.

(ii) Post adoption, the Adopting Organisation shall, communicate the Charter internally; designate a gender focal person or committee; designate representatives to the DM Cohort Charter Committee, develop a Gender Pluralism Action Plan,undertake a baseline gender assessment of its existing policies, practices, content and personnel; identify baseline indicators and undertake any other reasonable implementation measures in proportion to its size and resources in accordance with this Charter, and participate in sector-wide learning and review, when convened under Article 32 of this Charter.

SCHEDULE I

INSTRUMENT OF ADOPTION

We, _____, being an independent digital news organisation operating in Pakistan, hereby affirm our commitment to the principles and standards contained in the Gender Pluralism Charter for Independent Digital Media in Pakistan.

We recognise that meaningful gender pluralism requires institutional equality, safe and dignified workplaces, equitable opportunity, diverse leadership, inclusive editorial practices, responsible representation and accountability.

Accordingly, we undertake to:

1. respect equality, dignity and non-discrimination;
2. promote equitable participation and leadership;
3. maintain safe and harassment-free working environments;
4. adopt transparent and fair employment practices;
5. promote gender-sensitive and accurate journalism;
6. broaden the diversity of sources, experts and voices;
7. represent gender-diverse persons with accuracy and dignity;
8. strengthen online safety for journalists;
9. incorporate Media and Information Literacy into relevant editorial and audience practices;
10. implement this Charter, as far as is practicable and in proportion to our size and resources, and
11. periodically review our progress against these commitments.

Name of Organisation:
_____

Name of Authorised Representative:
_____

Designation of Authorised Representative:_____

Signature:
_____

Date:
_____

Official Seal (if applicable):
_____

Witness 1:	**Witness 2:**
Sign _____	Sign _____
Name _____	Name _____
Designation _____	Designation _____
CNIC _____	CNIC _____

IRADA

IRADA is a registered civil society organization aiming to advance democratic transformation through Law, Information, and Technology.

We work to strengthen fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression, access to information, political and ecological rights, and cultural inclusion.

Our approach combines research, advocacy, and capacity-building to catalyze participatory reforms and enable citizens' equitable access to justice, technology, and knowledge.

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