Power to the People?

(Con-)Tested Civil Society in Search of Democracy

Edited by Heidi Moksnes and Mia Melin
Power to the People?

(Con-)tested civil society in search of democracy
Women of Pakistan:
Giving voice to the voiceless in Swat

Tasneem Ahmar

Abstract
In my paper, I introduce gendered participation in civil society within the context of Pakistan’s conflict areas. I then explore initiatives in which women are trying to create a space for themselves in a male dominated media scenario by bringing forward case studies and oral testimonies of the women, whose voices may never have been heard outside the four walls of their houses. Taking these unheard voices and untold stories to millions of listeners is not only extremely courageous; I argue that it is a step towards bringing social and cultural transformation based on gender equality and equity.

The paper also focuses on three case studies from one area, Swat, in the northern region of Pakistan. It discusses whether the inroads made possible by women producers, working with various radio production houses and FM channels in Pakistan, can have as great an impact on the minds of women as did the notoriously infamous Fazlullah aka ‘Maulana Radio.’

I conclude with recommendations on what kind of space and power is required for women to make change happen – for themselves and for others – in this conflict-ridden area.

Author affiliation
Uks Research Centre, Pakistan