UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND
ARAB STATES REGIONAL HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE HUB

REPORTING ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN HUMANITARIAN SETTINGS

A JOURNALIST'S HANDBOOK

SECOND EDITION

Journalism is among the most powerful tools for social justice, particularly in the global fight against gender-based violence. Journalists have the power to amplify the voices of women and girls, to shed light on the forms of violence that target them, and to help communities worldwide address the harmful social norms that underpin gender-inequality and gender-based violence.

— NATALIA KANEM, UNFPA Executive Director

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"Before you report, I want you to place yourself in the shoes of the individual or group on whom you are reporting. How would you feel if you were portrayed in the same way?

— NADINE NIMRI, Jordanian journalist and media trainer

UNFPA is the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency. Our mission is to deliver a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled.

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"If we cannot trust journalists to tell our stories with conscience, what hope do we have? They are supposed to be speaking up for us when we cannot do it ourselves.

— BATOUL, a survivor of domestic violence living in Domiz 1 camp, Iraq

Covering gender-based violence (GBV) is one of the most difficult tasks a journalist is likely to face throughout their career.

INTRODUCTION

By not adhering to rigid standards of professionalism, journalists can unwittingly become part of the problem, causing further trauma to survivors and allowing perpetrators to evade prosecution.

"When I speak to journalists, many times it feels as though they don't understand what we go through as women in this camp," says Amal, a Syrian refugee from Qamishli who had gone out of her way to communicate with journalists on the issues impacting Syrian women and girls. "It is a daily struggle and we are powerless amidst the traditions, rules and laws that make it much easier for men to take advantage of us. We pour our hearts out, but we rarely see our issues being discussed."

For women and girls like Amal, many of whom grapple with various forms of gender-based violence on a daily basis, journalism constitutes one of the few available avenues for their stories to be heard. This function becomes even more critical during humanitarian crises, such as those currently taking place in numerous countries in the Arab region, including Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Palestine, and others.

For a journalist, covering the topic of gender-based violence (GBV) is a challenging undertaking. Not only is the topic itself widely misunderstood, but it is also increasingly complex and has many contributing factors, making coverage all the more difficult. More importantly, journalists need to be aware that their coverage — if not conducted under strict, professional standards — can be harmful to survivors in a multitude of ways. Between insensitive interviewing techniques, inaccurate reporting, personal biases and perceptions about gender and sexuality, and a lack of understanding of the legalities of criminal cases, journalists can unwittingly become part of the problem, re-traumatising survivors and allowing perpetrators to escape prosecution.

These challenges can often drive journalists to avoid reporting on GBV altogether, further compounding the problem by perpetuating a culture of impunity in which perpetrators are seldom held accountable.

While effective journalism is often the result of years of experience and diligent practice, building upon internationally-accepted ethical principles and approaches minimises the potential for harm.

This handbook was developed to help journalists report on GBV with greater ease and awareness. It provides essential information on the definition and root causes of GBV, in addition to a simple set of guidelines and best practices that facilitate the process and help journalists deliver stronger, more impactful stories on this essential topic.

> Sexual violence is an epidemic that thrives in times of conflict and during emergencies, once the rule of law and criminal justice systems collapse and, far too often, rape is wielded as a weapon of war.
>
> — NATALIA KANEM, UNFPA Executive Director

GBV WORLDWIDE

*More than **one in three women worldwide** has experienced either physical and/or sexual violence.* [1]

*A total of **87,000 women were intentionally killed** in 2017. More than half of them (58 per cent) were killed by intimate partners or family members, meaning that 137 women across the world are killed by a member of their own family every day.* [2]

*Worldwide, **more than 700 million women alive today were married as children** (below 18 years of age), and of those, more than one in three were married before 15 years of age.* [3]

***More than 200 million girls and women have experienced some form of female genital mutilation** (FGM) in the 29 countries in Africa.* [4]

DEFINING GBV

Gender-based violence is a sensitive subject with numerous underlying factors and consequences. As such, understanding the subject is essential, particularly when reporting on it.

What is gender-based violence?

In many cultures, gender-based violence is seldom openly discussed, which drives the subject underground and further propagates many of the misconceptions surrounding it. As such, understanding GBV and its causal and contributing factors is of paramount importance when reporting on it.

Gender-based violence (or GBV) is an umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed differences between males and females. It includes acts that inflict physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion, and other deprivations of liberty.

Gender-based violence can be broadly defined into five categories: **sexual violence** (rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment), **physical violence** (hitting, slapping, beating), **emotional violence** (psychological and verbal abuse), **economic violence** (restriction of movement, denial of resources), and **harmful traditional practices** (child marriage, female genital mutilation, so-called "honour" killings).

Who is at risk?

The term "gender-based violence" is most commonly used to refer to violence perpetrated against women and girls.

While women, men, boys and girls can be at risk of gender-based violence, women and girls continue to be the overwhelming majority of survivors and victims due to the deeply-entrenched patriarchal beliefs, attitudes and social norms that prevail in numerous communities throughout the globe. This gives women and girls a perceived subordinate status, cultivating an environment that is conducive to deprivations of liberty and abuse. This is often reinforced through various socio-cultural institutions, such as educational, religious and legal institutions.

In the words of Avan, a 17-year-old Yazidi girl who is a survivor of sexual violence, "being a girl is like being born into a prison. No place is safe, not even your own home, and you are always at risk of being harassed, abducted, raped or forced into marriage even when you don't want to."

GBV is also used by some people to describe the "gendered dimensions of certain forms of violence against men and boys, particularly sexual violence committed with the purpose of reinforcing socially constructed ideas of what it means to be a man and male power." [5]

What are the consequences?

Gender-based violence has serious, immediate and long-term consequences on the sexual, physical and psychological health of survivors, in addition to having a wider impact on a societal level. In addition to causing a variety of psychological disorders among survivors, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), GBV can have a wide range of health consequences that include severe physical injuries, unwanted pregnancies, complications from unsafe abortions, sexually transmitted infections, and death from complications arising from these conditions.

Survivors of GBV may suffer even further because of the stigma associated with this type of violence. When ostracised by their family or community, survivors are affected both economically and socially. This stigmatisation not only places them at greater risk for exploitation and violence but can endanger their lives, particularly when male members of the family/community retaliate with physical violence or so-called "honour" killings.

Not only is GBV a violation of individual human rights, but the impunity enjoyed by perpetrators and the fear generated by their actions poses a serious and far-reaching risk to all women and girls and on the fabric of society as a whole. Gender inequality and GBV can also contribute to the disintegration of inherent protection mechanisms that safeguard civil liberties, freedom of expression, social justice, and social progress. Moreover, societies in which GBV is accepted tend to limit the contributions women and girls can make to development and peacebuilding, which can considerably compromise the countries' resilience to geopolitical, economic and humanitarian emergencies.

What are the causes of GBV?

The root causes of gender-based violence are simple. **Deeply-rooted beliefs of male supremacy place women and girls at particular risk of discrimination and marginalisation, making them more at risk of gender-based violence.** This risk is further exacerbated during humanitarian crises, when even the most basic protection mechanisms and social networks are disrupted or absent.

Gender discrimination often results in the unequal distribution of power between men and women, combined with socially prescribed gender roles and stereotypes that also play a part in causing, perpetuating and accepting gender-based violence.

1. World Health Organisation, Department of Reproductive Health and Research, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, South African Medical Research Council (2013). *Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence*, p.2. For individual country information, see UN Women Global Database on Violence against Women.

2. United Nations Office on Drug and Crime, *Global Study on Homocide: Gender-related Killing of Women and Girls*, 2018, accessed at https://bit.ly/2PmxYPM.

3. Unicef, *Ending Child Marriage: Progress and Prospects*, 2013, accssed at https://uni.cf/3caeJTw.

4. World Health Organisation, *Female Genital Mutilation*, 2020, accessed at https://bit.ly/3c5dPYj.

5. Global Protection Cluster, Inter-Agency Standing Committee, *Guidelines for Integrating Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action: Reducing Risk, Promoting Resilience, and Aiding Recovery*, 2012.

COMMON MYTHS

About Gender-Based Violence

In most cultures, GBV is not openly discussed. As a result, several myths about GBV remain in circulation. Inaccurate perpetrator profiles, and a focus on the behaviour of GBV survivors can also influence access to justice. The media has a role to play in counteracting these inaccuracies.

Myth: GBV only affects certain kinds of people

GBV can affect anyone. It cuts across class, race/ethnicity, religion, educational level, or personal history. Negative assumptions about GBV survivors make it difficult for them to reach out for help.

Myth: Sexual assault is usually committed by strangers

According to World Health Organisation estimates, almost a third of all women who have been in a relationship have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner, and up to 70 percent of sexual assaults are committed by an intimate partner.

Myth: Perpetrators of violence are 'monsters' or 'sick outsiders'

Perpetrators come from all walks of life. As a result, when survivors report violence perpetrated by their partner, an influential figure in the community, or someone who does not conform to the stereotype of a perpetrator, they are often not believed.

Myth: A woman's choice of clothing and her behaviour puts her at risk

Abusers often blame their victims in order to make excuses for their behaviour. This is in itself abusive and shifts the focus away from the perpetrator. It is important that abusers take full responsibility for their actions, and that reporters challenge any attempt to blame those who are abused.

Myth: Poverty and conflict are the cause of attacks on women

There are many men living in conditions of poverty or conflict who are not violent towards women, just as there are many individuals in wealthy countries and in times of peace who are violent towards women. While some studies have found poverty and violent conflict to increase the likelihood of certain kinds of GBV, it is seen as a global problem.

Myth: A person who has been raped or abused will be visibly upset when discussing her ordeal

Each person reacts differently to GBV. It is important to be aware of the wide range of reactions to such traumatic events; some survivors choose to never speak about what happened to them or they may do so after several months or even years, while others will choose to disclose immediately. Expecting or compelling survivors to follow a shared behavioural pattern is not only potentially harmful to their recovery but can also shift the focus away from perpetrators, further compounding the problem.

Myth: False reporting is widespread or used by women in order to access services and resettlement

Overall, false reporting is rather rare, with under-reporting being a more widespread and serious problem. Research published in the American Journal of Epidemiology indicates that only around 7 percent of survivors in developing countries officially report incidents of GBV, and research suggests that the fear of losing out on housing and other services, or losing custody of children, prevents many GBV survivors from coming forward to report incidents. [2]

1. World Health Organisation, Global and Regional Estimates of Violence Against Women, 2013, bit.ly/1oTfGVG
2. Tia Palermo, Jennifer Bleck, and Amber Peterman, Tip of the Iceberg: Reporting and Gender-Based Violence in Developing Countries, American Journal of Epidemiology, 2013.

"Men frequently tell us that it is a woman's fault if she is harassed or assaulted, because she dresses and talks a certain why, and yet every woman and girl I know is being harassed every day, regardless of what she does.

— LAMA, a refugee living in Duhok, Iraq

Each person reacts differently to GBV. It is important to be aware of the wide range of reactions to such traumatic events; some survivors choose to never speak about what happened to them.

GBV IN HUMANITARIAN SETTINGS — ARAB STATES

A humanitarian crisis, geopolitical conflict, or natural disaster inevitably increases the risk of gender-based violence. Covering GBV in these settings requires additional care to prevent harm.

SYRIA

In Syria, nearly a decade after the crisis erupted in 2011, **women and girls report that GBV continues to be a daily reality**. Additionally, online harassment, revenge pornography/sextortion, and sexual violence are all trends that were more frequently reported in 2019, while forced puberty, forced pregnancy and denial of economic opportunities emerged as new trends. [1]

YEMEN

In Yemen, which is arguably facing one of the worst humanitarian crises of our time, numerous forms of GBV have been reported since the onset of the crisis, including harrasment, child marriage, sexual violence and domestic abuse. Nearly 27 percent of women displaced from Yemen are below age 18, putting them at greater risk of exploitation or of negative coping mechanisms such as child marriage or survival sex.

IRAQ

In Iraq, GBV continues to be scourge on the lives of women and girls, with restriction of movement, sexual harassment, and forced marriage identified as common trends. UNFPA estimates that 10 percent of girls aged under 14 could have undergone female genital mutilation in 2018, with the average age of cutting being five years old.

LIBYA

Libya continues to reel from the consequences of a protracted humanitarian crisis. Sexual violence, including sexual torture, is still widespread in Libya. Sites of sexual violence include official detention centers, clandestine prisons, in the context of forced labor and enslavement, during random stops and at checkpoints by armed groups, in urban settings by gangs, and in private homes.

SOMALIA

In Somalia, severe climatic conditions, clan and communal conflicts, and widespread poverty continue to expose women and girls to a multitude of risks. Women and girls are harassed as they journey back and forth to do petty trading or to seek cash paying domestic chores. Girls in particular are persistently harassed in IDP camps and host communities as they attempt to cover their basic needs, such as fetching water from nearby sources. Child marriage, female genital mutilation, intimate partner violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, and emotional violence were all identified as trends over the past years.

1. UNFPA, Overbiew of Gender-Based Violence in Syria, 2019.

"As a general best practice, journalists working in humanitarian settings are always encouraged to seek out the assistance of reputable organisations responding to GBV in humanitarian settings."

What makes humanitarian settings different?

As women and girls become separated from their families and protective communities, norms that govern social behaviour are disrupted. This presents an array of protection concerns that uniquely impact such settings.

Mass displacement leads to increased violence by causing further disruptions in community networks and creating environments where lawlessness can thrive. However, the underlying causes of GBV are associated with attitudes, beliefs, and structures in which there is gender discrimination and an inherent imbalance of power between genders.

In recent decades, efforts have been made to address sexual violence in emergencies. At the same time, there is growing recognition that populations affected by conflict and natural disaster experience different forms of GBV. Domestic violence, early marriage, and sexual exploitation are increasingly recognized as major concerns in such environments, particularly given the expected disruptions in basic services, livelihoods, and various protection mechanisms.

It is estimated that more than 37 percent of Arab women and girls have experienced some form of violence in their lifetime, with indicators showing that the percentage is likely higher due to underreporting as a result of fear, shame or social stigma. Moreover, given the cultural and contextual similarities between different countries in the region, gender-based violence appears to follow similar patterns, with restriction of movement, sexual harassment, sexual violence, child marriage and female genital mutilation being among the most common trends observed, according to UNFPA's programme data.

In humanitarian settings, reporting in general, and on gender-based violence issues in particular, becomes even more challenging. Not only do journalists assume risks to their personal safety, but the potential for harmful reporting increases. As a general best practice, journalists working in humanitarian settings are always encouraged to seek out the assistance of reputable organisations responding to GBV in humanitarian settings, such as UNFPA or its partner NGOs.

There are common areas of concern facing women and girls in humanitarian settings:

Access to support

In some places, services for GBV survivors either do not exist at all or are very limited, and survivors are reluctant to report GBV due to fear of stigma, social exclusion, so-called "honour killings," and other reprisals. This prevents many survivors from seeking life-saving support.

Harassment and Restriction of Movement

Humanitarian conflicts often see the movement of women and girls curbed significantly. Many women and girls have limited movement outside the home due to fear of sexual violence and harassment. In some cases, extremist armed groups may place additional restrictions on women and girls, including strict dress codes, denial of access to education and employment, and limitations on engagement in public life. While freedom of mobility was somewhat limited for many women and girls prior to displacement, increased fear of sexual assault and harassment has placed even further restrictions on displaced women and girls.

Domestic Violence

Women and girls in the Arab States region report that violence in the home has increased as a result of displacement and conflict. According to UNFPA's programme data, domestic violence continues to be one of the most frequently reported trends across several countries. It is also important to note that child and forced marriage have been observed to increase the risk of domestic violence.

Child Marriage

Child marriage of girls is a relatively common practice in the Arab states region, but humanitarian conflicts have contributed to girls getting married younger and under different conditions. For example, girls are increasingly being married to older men not known to the family of the bride, or are entered into serial marriages in order to generate income for the family. Economic insecurity, the perception that marriage will provide protection for girls in an unstable environment, and lack of alternative opportunities are all factors contributing to this issue.

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

Accessing humanitarian aid can carry increased risks of sexual exploitation and abuse by individuals charged with delivering humanitarian aid, or by those in positions of relative economic or political power in their own communities. It is not uncommon to hear of women or girls being engaged in "special friendships" with leaders in camps, religious leaders, community leaders, employers, landlords, and others. These often include being asked for sex or an agreement to marry, and sometimes involve men working in community organisations and distributing goods. [1]

Sexual Violence

Sexual violence can be used a weapon of war. For instance, certain parties might commit sexual violence when performing house searches, as well as at checkpoints and in detention centres. For example, women may be detained, tortured and physically abused, with the actions perpetrated against having a clear gender component. Upon release from detention and after house raids, women who are believed to have been sexually assaulted can often be alienated from their families, putting them at further risk of abuse or neglect. Viewed as "unfit for marriage," some may have been divorced or killed. The fear of sexual violence and its consequences is also a trigger in the displacement of many families.

1. IRC, Are We Listening? Acting on Our Commitments to Women and Girls Affected by the Syrian Conflict, 2014, bit.ly/1rZSkJO

THE ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

Even for the most experienced journalist, filing a story about GBV is likely to be one of the most challenging assignments.

There are a number of ethical principles of which journalists need to be aware when attempting to adopt a survivor-centered approach and adhering to a "do no harm" strategy. These principles are based on the general ethics of journalism; however, in order to avoid harming survivors and successfully using journalism to effect positive change, additional care is required on behalf of any journalist reporting on this far-reaching form of violence.

Duty to Inform

When reporting on GBV, it is important to distinguish between what is "in the public interest" and what is "of interest to the public." Some GBV stories feature high-profile figures and contain lots of personal detail: this tends to treat the subject in a sensationalist way, with no useful information given for GBV survivors.

Accuracy

Getting the facts right should be at the core of all journalism, and this is especially true when covering gender-based violence. While journalists' interviews should be sensitive, they should also ensure that their reporting is factually correct. Journalists should be specific when mentioning gender-based violence and not attempt to report on criminal proceedings unless they understand the legal processes involved. Some reporters try and use euphemistic language (e.g. "had his way with her") rather than accurate language (e.g. "he raped her"). This approach often leads to misleading reports.

Fairness

Journalists should always be fair and honest with interviewees. When speaking to people who have experienced gender-based violence, journalists have the additional responsibility of protecting potentially vulnerable sources. In this context, the concept of "informed consent" is particularly important: this means that the person you interview should be made fully aware of the consequences of appearing in the media.

Many GBV survivors who have spoken "on the record" have later faced a range of problems resulting from being identified, including attacks and community rejection. For your interview to be fair, you need to inform your interviewee of these potential risks.

Impartiality

When reporting on gender-based violence, it is of paramount importance that journalists remain aware of their own biases on the subject and the stereotypes we harbour about women, girls, sexuality and violence. It is crucial that the subject is approached from a completely objective and fact-based perspective.

It is not the job of a responsible journalist to judge or discriminate. It is particularly important to ensure that reporters do not mention details that can be interpreted as blame on the gender-based violence survivor. For example, if a journalist mentions the clothes worn at the time of an attack or other aspects of a survivor victim's appearance, it can be perceived by some audiences as an implication of judgement. This can be particularly true when writing features: some journalists may attempt to add unnecessary detail to colour their narratives, which can unintentionally shift the focus of blame away from the perpetrator.

Respecting Privacy

Principled and ethical journalism means respecting the privacy of both gender-based violence survivors and their bereaved families. Journalists should be wary of what is referred to as "jigsaw identification" when granting anonymity. This happens where audiences can piece together details, such as location, age, clothing or family members, even when journalists don't name the survivor or show their face.

Protecting Sources

Journalists should always protect their sources and ensure that they extend this protection to their fixers, translators, drivers, interviewees and others helping them with their story. Some communities have been known to shun those who have spoken openly about gender-based violence, and in some cases, so-called "honour crimes" have been carried out in retribution for speaking out.

Speaking to a journalist carries many risks for survivors and their families and could have serious negative repercussions for them and their families. For example, if a survivor mentions the name of a third party in the course of narrating their story, it is the responsibility of the journalist to safeguard the privacy and safety of that individual.

Never Paying for Interviews

Some journalists may be tempted to pay money or offer gifts in exchange for interviews. However, payment for this kind of interview is considered ethically inappropriate, as not only is it likely to influence the nature of the interview, it can also make it harder for other journalists to get an interview. Offers made in cash or kind can also put undue pressure on survivors to speak to the media.

It is recommended that journalists contact organisations working on GBV issues in the first instance before attempting to secure an interview. Officials at local and international NGOs may be able to talk more freely about GBV, and are likely to have a useful overview of the topic. Rather than paying an interviewee directly, reporters may feel that a discreet donation to an organisation working with GBV survivors is appropriate.

A Surivor-Centred Approach

A survivor-centred approach seeks to empower survivors by putting them at the centre of the reporting process. It recognizes that each survivor is unique, reacts differently to gender-based violence, and has different strengths, resources and coping mechanisms. It also recognizes that each survivor has the right to decide who should know their story and what should happen next.

Gender-based violence is a manifestation of inherent imbalances in power and gender equality. If people around survivors who are in a position of power (such as reporters and service providers) impose their perspective, they can unintentionally create another experience where the survivors feel further disempowerment and shame. Dealing with gender-based violence survivors in a survivor-centred manner involves prioritizing their best interests and applying the guiding principles of safety, confidentiality, respect, and non-discrimination. Not only does this help prevent re-traumatisation, but it is also the safest way to effectively leverage the power of journalism to GBV while doing no harm in the process.

> **Unfortunately, while we are certainly seeing an increase in the quantity of reports on gender-based violence, we still need to place greater emphasis on quality.**
>
> — JOUMANA HADDAD, Lebanese journalist, activist and writer.

HIGHLIGHT

THE CASE FOR ETHICAL JOURNALISM

SHERIZAAN MINWALLA, ESQ.
DR. JOHANNA FOSTER

"If the purpose of reporting on conflict-related violence, including rape, is to draw attention to atrocities, assistance, and eventual justice, then putting the safety and protection of the sources first should be paramount."

In 2014 ISIS launched genocidal attacks against the Yazidi people, a small religious minority community in the Ninewa Plains of northern Iraq. ISIS killed thousands of men and boys and elderly women, abducted younger women and girls who militants trafficked and brutally raped, forced children into military camps, forced thousands of men, women and children to convert from the Yezidi faith to become Muslim. These attacks displaced close to half a million people, most of whom are still unable to return home while thousands more fled Iraq, believing it will never be safe for their people.

"Despite the many crimes ISIS committed against the Yazidis, the one story that peaked journalists' interest was the rape of women and children."

Despite the many crimes ISIS committed against the Yezidis, the one story that peaked journalists' interest was the rape of women and children. In 2014 and 2015 many Yezidis escaped and were rescued from ISIS and journalists from Iraq and around the world flocked to the camps in the Kurdistan Region to interview them. Journalists interviewed many survivors multiple times, and the narrative that emerged from this genocide was almost singularly focused on horrific reports of sexual violence, often perpetrated against young girls.

In our research, we explored how Yezidi women themselves felt about the ways in which journalists gathered and reported on their stories.[1] Overall, a majority of our respondents described experiences with, or perceptions about, reporters that suggested a patterned breach in ethics among journalists gathering these stories who appeared to disregard the extent to which interviews and published reports might negatively impact highly traumatized and stigmatized survivors.

Eighty-five percent of the Yazidi women we interviewed described incidents that could be defined by the UN Global Protection Cluster Guidelines for Reporting on Gender-Based Violence in Humanitarian Contexts as evidence of unethical reporting practices, including promises of money or aid, pressure to reveal details of their traumatic experiences, or the disclosure of identities without informed consent.

For example, 80 percent of all respondents, and 90 percent of the survivors, felt that journalists' disclosure of photos and other identifying information put them and their relatives still in ISIS captivity at risk for further violence and retaliation. One survivor stated, "With photos, even with my face covered, I did not feel safe. They [ISIS] know everything about me. They can know me from my eyes. Even I know them when they are covered and just by their eyes."[2]

Equally concerning is the fact that 54 percent of respondents overall, and almost 70 percent of survivors, felt that women who had escaped ISIS experienced strong negative emotional and physical responses during the interviews with journalists, and half of the survivors described having flashbacks, as well as feelings of sadness, fatigue, crying, self-flagellation, and fainting during or after interviews. "It is difficult," said another survivor, "and when they come here, each time we tell them our stories, we go back to them, like a flashback. We just go back again to ISIS. I remember everything."

"Eighty-five percent of the Yazidi women we interviewed described incidents that could be defined ... as evidence of unethical reporting practices, including promises of money or aid, pressure to reveal details of their traumatic experiences, or the disclosure of identities without informed consent."

Yet, despite the emotional difficulty and challenges reported, the majority of the women (75 percent) reported that engaging with journalists was worthwhile. Thirty-one percent of the survivors specifically reported positive feelings or emotions after interviews, such as this survivor who said, "When we talk to media we feel comfortable and we feel relaxed. When we speak to the media they make us comfortable because we said our story and when people talk, they feel more relaxed."

Equally concerning is the fact that 54 percent of respondents overall, and almost 70 percent of survivors, felt that women who had escaped ISIS experienced strong negative emotional and physical responses during the interviews with journalists.

Our findings reinforce the need for a survivor-centered approach to reporting on conflict related sexual violence in all aspects of gathering information and traumatic storytelling. Taking steps to ensure that survivors give consent freely and after being fully informed of how their information will be used is essential to empowering survivors in the reporting on their trauma. It is also critical to portray survivors in a dignified way, and tell a more holistic story about their lives that go beyond singular narratives of rape.

It is important to understand how people are affected by trauma to minimize the risk of re-traumatization, and to avoid probing and insensitive questions about gender-based violence that could trigger symptoms associated with post-traumatic stress disorder. Understanding the context in which journalists report on conflict related sexual violence will help to safeguard against publishing information that negatively impacts survivors and their relatives.

"Our findings reinforce the need for a survivour-centred approach to reporting on conflict-related sexual violence."

Consulting experts on gender-based violence and those with expertise in conflict settings is an important part of safely reporting on conflict-related violence in which people continue to face multiple risks in their families, communities, and countries.

If the purpose of reporting on conflict related-violence, including rape, is to draw attention to atrocities, assistance, and eventual justice, then putting the safety and protection of the sources first should be paramount.

"Consulting experts on gender-based violence and those with expertise in conflict settings is an important part of safely reporting on conflict-related violence.

— SHERIZAAN MINWALLA, ESQ.
Minwalla is a human rights lawyer and activist currently based in Iraq.

1. Johanna E. Foster, Sherizaan Minwalla, *Voices of Yazidi women: Perceptions of journalistic practices in the reporting on ISIS sexual violence*, 2018, accessed at: https://bit.ly/3aDJ8aW
2. Ibid.

GENERATING IDEAS

Interviewing survivors is not the only way route to a good story on GBV. There are a multitude of ways in which journalists can effectively tackle the subject without putting survivors at risk.

In practice, this means that journalists covering GBV are likely to have to work harder when generating story ideas and finding creative angles to tackle the subject matter. They will also need to think creatively about sources, details and the overall message of their reporting in order to produce the kind of news and features items that will yield positive change and remain relevant for their audiences.

Giving Stories Depth

Upon examining the vast majority of stories published on GBV, most have one thing in common: they often approach the subject in the form of isolated incidents and seldom tackle the issue as a human rights phenomenon. As a result, audiences are rarely given the opportunity to connect the issue to social norms, gender stereotypes, and human rights, but are instead given isolated reports of rape, domestic assault, child marriage, and other types of GBV. Issues such as gender, gender norms and the rights of women and girls are also seldom discussed.

Even when writing news stories, journalists should endeavour to present their findings as part of a well-researched, thoroughly documented narratives, preferably ones that explore gender-based violence as a prevailing social phenomenon. Such stories should try delving beyond the individual acts of violence being inflicted upon women and to explore the causal factors underlying the violence. These can take numerous forms: for example, it can be a feature exploring GBV in refugee communities and the social inequalities that underly it; an investigative report on child marriage from the lens of culture, religion or other relevant institutions; or a story that sheds light on survivors of gender-based violence and the personal achievements they have made on their road to recovery.

Where to Begin

Personal experience and observation is an obvious starting point and journalists are likely to hear stories from friends, neighbours, even shopkeepers and taxi drivers. Whether journalists are based in countries where a humanitarian crisis is taking place or one where displaced individuals are actively seeking refuge, developing stories on the plight of women and girls in conflict can help to address the misinformation and myths that inevitably crop up during such events. Rather than ignoring or simply repeating these, journalists should seek to explore whether these are actually true or if there are greater depths to these stories that audiences may want to be informed about.

Contact Official Sources

When it comes to official sources, the resources section (pages 32-33) of this handbook is a good place to begin, although journalists are of course encouraged to cultivate their own contacts. There are a number of local and international NGOs and UN agencies working to respond to humanitarian crises, many of whom are listed in the resources section. Places like the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) data portal can be a useful resource for updated, factual information. The humanitarian response network in the region is a fairly broad alliance that includes NGOs, UN agencies, governments, civil servants, community organisations, and leaders. It is, therefore, a good idea to cultivate a range of sources.

Generally, a constructive first step is to speak with official contacts on a regular basis. Such official contacts may be able to arrange field visits to conflict locations or camps, where access to stories might be easier. It is also important to remember that the majority of refugees and displaced individuals do not live in camps or other humanitarian settings but tend to reside in host communities. This, in itself, is an angle that may be worth exploring as audiences are used to seeing images of refugees in camps.

Engage with People

Journalists should also speak to refugees and displaced people themselves: it is only by giving them a voice that we can ensure that their stories are told with compassion and humanity. This will involve building a certain level of trust, as some journalists report that many survivors or refugees are reluctant to be interviewed for the fear of being targeted, or because of mistrust of the media. According to Maurice Aaek, a reporter from Lebanon who has extensively covered the Syria crisis, "Syrian refugees are often reluctant to speak to journalists. They were more open when the conflict began as they were trying to raise their voices. But now, many are disappointed and think that the media is using them. They've become more defensive."

This further highlights the importance of being extra careful when interviewing refugees, survivors or other individuals who are at a disadvantage or power disparity. More often than not, the actions of a single journalist can affect how refugees and survivors view the media industry as a whole, further underscoring the importance of adhering to professional guidelines at all times.

Desk Research has its Place

Whilst journalists should not rely on it, desk research is an integral component of the writing process. Knowing what other media organisations are producing on this topic and keeping up-to-date with the wires and social media can be useful, as can keeping track of blogs and Facebook pages created by refugees and displaced people themselves. Many organisations produce reports, surveys, and campaigns that can be a useful source of data and story ideas; many also have mailing lists. There are also a number of participatory programmes involving refugees themselves; these include photography, theatre, and video projects. While also providing an interesting angle, journalists may be able to source images and footage this way.

Find a Hook

When thinking about ideas for GBV features, journalists are encouraged to think about "news pegs," i.e., items already on the news agenda to which they can "peg" their stories. This will help when journalists are pitching their stories or convincing their editors to include the item.

INFORMED CONSENT

In the context of interviewing a gender-based violence survivor, "informed consent" occurs when someone, without coercion, fully understands the consequences of their decision to speak, and consents freely. For this to happen, a journalist must avoid putting pressure on a survivor to agree to an interview, as well as explaining what will be kept confidential and the limits of confidentiality, the objective of the interview, and the potential risks and benefits of speaking out. There is no consent when agreement is obtained through deception or misinterpretation, or if the power dynamic between the interviewer and interviewee means that the right to decline or refuse any part of the interview is in any way limited.

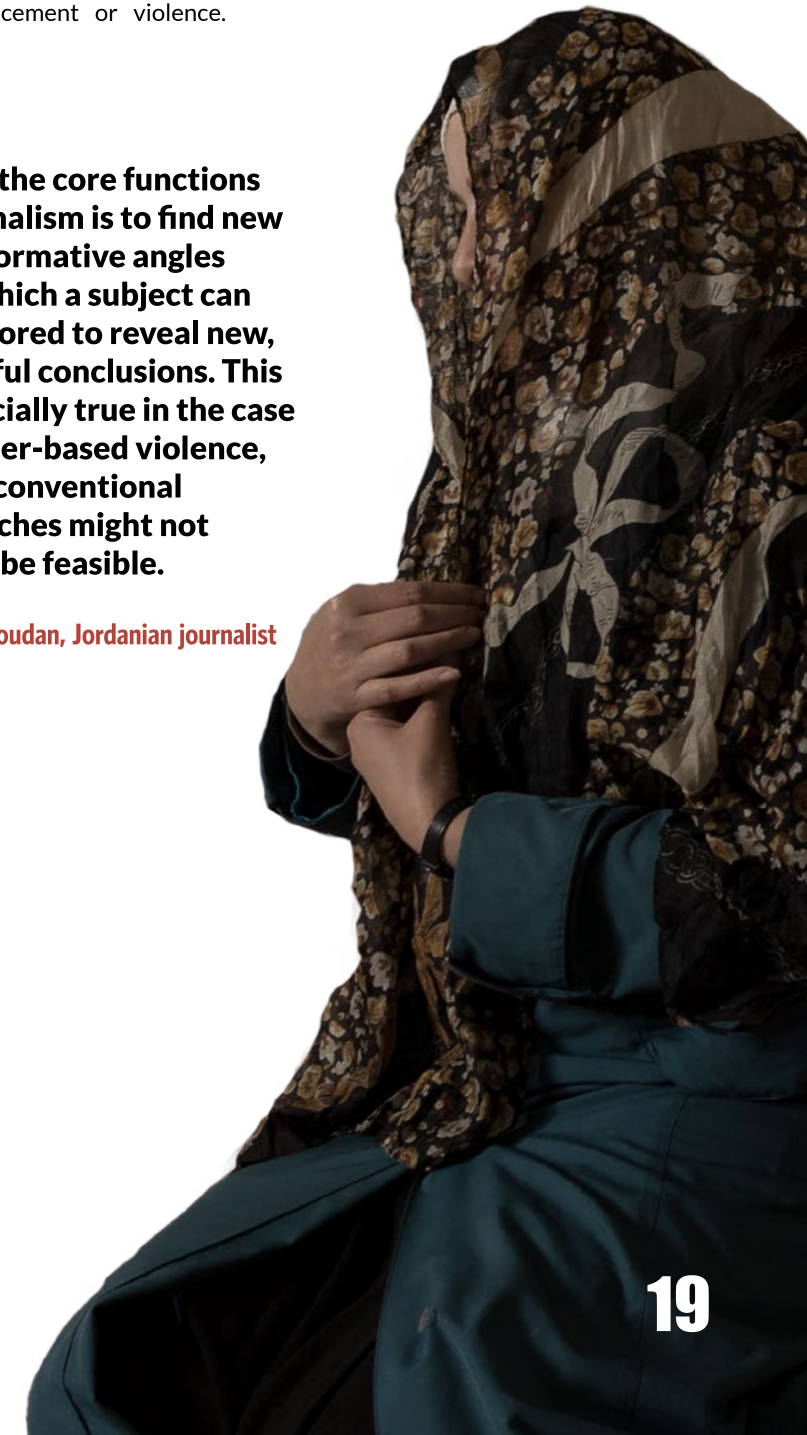
Journalists are also encouraged to think about new themes as opposed to those that have already been covered extensively. Early pregnancy and marriage, for example, have frequently appeared in many media outlets.. In some countries, there has been a greater focus on sex work and trafficking, which has led to an assumption amongst some men that certain segments of the population (e.g. refugees) are sexually available, further placing these communities at greater risks of sexual harassment and assault.

Follow-up features and "diary stories" allow for in-depth analysis of GBV issues. For example, journalists could write a feature on the anniversary of the start of a given conflict, or make a package in advance of a planned event, such as the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence campaign in November, or International Women's Day in March. Inevitably, these will be features rather than "hard news" items. Such planned items give journalists the advantage of extra time in which to carry out research or record additional interviews. Some editors welcome such pre-prepared "behind-the-news" material on their running orders and pages, and in some cases, these can be used later in a bigger news story on the intended day of publication or broadcast.

However, there are other GBV topics which have somewhat been overlooked by the vast majority of journalists. These include issues like domestic violence, privacy issues faced by refugees living in cramped conditions, access to services, the role of men in combating violence, unemployment, and poverty and its impact on GBV. In addition to approaching alternative subjects within the scope of GBV, media coverage of GBV can be improved by exploring the issue from different angles. Journalists can explore the issue from a survivor perspective or by examining its impact on families, whilst approaching the topic from a legal or health perspective is likely to lead to a more informational piece.

And finally, unusual or quirky stories can put a human face to a humanitarian crisis. These may not be directly about GBV but more about the representation of girls and women during humanitarian crises. For example, these can be highlights that show how refugee communities are making real-life contributions in development, peacebuilding, art or other fields. Stories could also focus on a particular segment (e.g. adolescent girls) and highlight their resilience in the face of displacement or violence.

> **One of the core functions of journalism is to find new and informative angles from which a subject can be explored to reveal new, insightful conclusions. This is especially true in the case of gender-based violence, where conventional approaches might not always be feasible.**
>
> **— Etaf Roudan, Jordanian journalist**



CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS

Interviews with survivors are generally discouraged. In rare instances where they are necessary, there are a number of considerations for journalists to keep in mind in order to avoid causing harm.

In the course of developing stories on gender-based violence, it may be a journalist's first instinct to interview survivors. To many journalists, forming a clear understanding of a given subject requires interviewing people who are fairly knowledgeable in it or, even better, have first-hand experience with it.

Unfortunately, when dealing with human rights issues, this clearly raises a number of ethical dilemmas. When is it appropriate to interview a GBV survivor? How detailed should the questions be? If the interviewee becomes upset, should the interview be stopped?

Below are some helpful guidelines to help journalists get started. It is important to remember that each survivor is unique and reacts to trauma in different ways, so the journalists are encouraged to be mindful and take their cues from the interviewee at all times.

Research First

The interview process should begin with extensive research, such as by speaking to GBV service providers in the area to acquire a more in-depth understanding of the context. If possible, journalists should seek out counsellors or case managers who have handled survivor cases. Interviewing such individuals often spares survivors the need to be interviewed themselves and can offer plenty in terms of usable materials, such as direct but anonymous quotes, descriptions of events, and others. Once the background information is fully available, the decision to proceed with the interview becomes much easier.

Be aware of the risks

Journalists should be fully aware of the potential risks to the person that is being interviewed: will they become victims of revenge attacks for speaking out publicly? Will their community shun them for doing so? Will the interview be traumatic for the survivor?

The interviewee may not fully appreciate these risks. **Consequently, before proceeding with the interview, informed consent i.e., consent with full knowledge of the consequences of the interview, must be obtained.** This includes **requesting informed consent** on whether their real name should be used. Moreover, **explicit permission** is always required when taking photographs, videos, or voice recordings, and journalists need to clearly explain how these will be used.

Be mindful of power disparities

Journalists should involve the interviewee in decisions about the interview. Journalists should be aware that, in an interaction with a journalist or a UN/NGO communications officer, there may be **a power differential** between a reporter and a GBV survivor. They may feel compelled or otherwise pressured into speaking, even if this is not something with which they feel entirely comfortable. Journalists and communication personal **must ensure that survivors are given full autonomy over their stories and experiences.**

This does not suggest that journalists should never interview GBV survivors: many have given powerful testimonies that have brought the issue to public attention.

However, journalists may be able to produce an equally effective story by speaking to local organisations working with GBV survivors, or UN agencies. **It is good practice to find out about the local medical, legal, and psychosocial support services available for GBV survivors,** and to share this information with your audience as well as with the people you contact for an interview.

During the Interview

There are a number of preparatory steps that journalists can take to ensure that the process is conducted professionally and with the least possible harm. **You should discuss with the survivor where the interview should be conducted and who will be present**; for example, they may wish to have a friend, family member, or a social worker present. **A female reporter and interpreter should carry out interviews with female GBV survivors.** Given that ensuring safety and confidentiality are key priorities, it is important that everyone involved understands and agrees on the sensitive nature of the process. This includes explicit warnings provided to interpreters, fixers, security teams, and any production crew.

Moreover, journalists are advised to beware of the effects of questioning that can reactivate the pain and grief associated with a survivor's exposure to GBV: survivors have been through traumatising experiences, so **interviewers need to be mindful not to intentionally cause additional trauma with their questions.** The interviewee has the right to decline answering any question being asked, and may choose to end the interview early.

> "Survivors have been through traumatising experiences, so interviewers need to be mindful not to intentionally cause additional trauma with their questions."

There can be a high level of mistrust amongst GBV survivors. You will need to explain why you are carrying out the interview, and to treat your interviewee with respect. Explaining when and where an interview will appear is part of this process.

Be specific and accurate in your language, and avoid euphemistic language or expressions whilst remaining respectful in your manner. Ask open rather than closed questions and remember to allow plenty of time for this type of interview. It would clearly be disrespectful to "rush" GBV interviewees. As such, you will need to plan your time effectively, taking into account travel time, which in some areas can be unpredictable owing to security reasons.

Payment for this type of interview, whether in cash or gifts of any kind, is considered poor ethics; not only is it likely to make it harder for other journalists to cover the story, but it will also cloud the content of the interview. It could also put potentially vulnerable GBV survivors in a position of reliving traumatic in exchange for money.

> **Everybody reacts differently to violence and trauma. It is important to remember this when interviewing survivors, because no two reactions will be the same. If you are looking for the "classic victim" response, you will find that it does not exist, and you might miss out on the importance of a story because your interviewee does not conform to your idea of which emotions are "appropriate" to the situation.**
>
> — BBC, iLearn guide to sensitive and traumatic interviews

SOME HELPFUL TIPS

Emphasize the confidential nature of the interview and the fact that the survivor has the full right to decide what happens to the story, even after the interview is conducted.

Listen intently and refrain from making unnecessary follow-up remarks until the survivor has finished speaking. You are there as an objective informant and not as a therapist. Avoid displays of emotion or affection that go beyond professional interactions.

Carefully reflect on each question in the context. If a survivor has already touched upon the topic you are about to broach, consider moving on to the next question. Forcing survivors to repeat details can be re-traumatizing.

Keep the focus on the facts throughout the interview. Avoid directing the discussion toward emotionality or conjecture.

If a survivor struggles or shows any signs of discomfort, consider ending the interview immediately, or defer to any specialists present on the best course of action.

HIGHLIGHT

COVERING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE | THE EXPERTS WEIGH IN

Rana Husseini, Joumana Haddad, Milia Eidmouni and Lina Ejeilet have been covering women's rights and gender-based violence for many years. When asked about the role of journalism in transforming harmful social norms, they all agreed: continuous and survivor-centred reporting on GBV is essential.

"When you are attempting to shatter the culture of shame and fear surrounding gender-based violence, you need to expect some resistance at first," explains Rana Husseini, an award-winning Jordanian journalist, author, and human rights activist who has been influential in bringing so-called honour crimes against women to public attention and encouraging changes in the law in Jordan to bring stronger penalties for these types of crimes.

> "It took some time for me to build my network – to cultivate a growing number of sources."

"If you are considering actively covering gender-based violence, there is definitely a learning curve involved, but the value of the work is unquestionable," adds Husseini. "It took some time for me to build my network – to cultivate a growing number of sources and to build sufficient trust so that my reporting not only became impactful but also began changing long standing perceptions about women, girls and violence within the community."

A Place to Start

Husseini began reporting in 1993, back when issues surrounding women's rights, social norms and gender-based violence were seldom openly discussed in the public sphere. As a staunch activist for equality, Hussaini began leveraging the power of journalism to raise awareness on the issues impacting women and girls. By adopting a straightforward and fact-based approach, her reporting quickly began having an impact.

"I wanted to investigate the stories I heard on a daily basis from family members, neighbours, and colleagues, all of which showed a growing pattern of abuse," recalls Husseini. "Later, my investigations took me to a variety of other sources, including forensic experts, lawyers, former judges, and social workers, all in an attempt to illustrate as accurately a picture as possible for my readers."

This gave Husseini more insight into the phenomenon of so-called "honour" crimes, in which women and girls were being murdered in the name of preserving or "cleansing" the family name. She reported on the subject frequently to ensure that it remained a part of public discourse, making sure that criminal proceedings were also covered extensively.

From there, women's rights and issues became her area of expertise, launching a career that inspired countless other reporters to break through the walls of silence on gender-based violence.

Quantity vs. Quality

"We can clearly see the impact that courageous journalists throughout the region have had in raising awareness on gender-based violence," explains Joumana Haddad, renowned Lebanese journalist, editor and author. Haddad's writing has significantly impacted the women's rights movement in Lebanon, challenging numerous social norms and broadening the limits of freedom of speech. "Unfortunately, while we are certainly seeing an increase in the quantity of reports on gender-based violence, we still need to place greater emphasis on quality."

> "What I would like to see from journalists is greater consistency in quality."

According to Haddad, coverage of women's issues and gender-based violence in the Arab States region still gravitates toward sensationalism, which in many cases can cause harm to the survivors themselves or their families. "What I would like to see from journalists is greater consistency in quality, particularly when it comes to adhering to the basic principles of accuracy, objectivity and thoroughness. Journalists are also encouraged to explore the subject in a multitude of approaches, including long-form features that allow for greater exploration of the root causes and contributing factors."

> "As a journalist, you cannot come to a story with any preconceived notions or beliefs."

In her reporting, Haddad emphasizes the need for boldly challenging taboos, particularly those that work to restrict freedom of speech or discourage challenging accepted patriarchal social norms on gender and gender-based violence. "We need courageous thinkers who are able to look beyond customs, rituals and laws and to call out injustice wherever it thrives."

Dismantling Stereotypes

When the crisis in Syria erupted in 2011, geopolitical and cultural limitations meant that only a handful of journalists were actually able to access the frontlines to report on the issues impacting women and girls. One such reporter was Milia Eidmouni, who also co-founded the Syrian Female Journalist Network in an effort to increase coverage of gender justice and women's rights. The network also had another key objective: to enact a professional code of conduct that helped to break stereotypes surrounding women in media.

"What I saw was that conventional media was depicting Syrian woman according to rigid, one-dimensional stereotypes: the victim, the widow, the wife of a prisoner, the hostage, the most vulnerable – all of which failed to capture the individualized humanity of these women and the remarkable strength they have" explains Eidmouni. "I wanted to highlight how women, both on the frontlines and behind the scenes, are shaping the future of Syria and helping entire generations recover from the worst of the crisis."

> "I wanted to highlight how women, both on the frontlines and behind the scenes, are shaping the future of Syria and helping entire generations recover from the worst of the crisis.
>
> — MILIA EIDMOUNI, Syrian journalist and co-founder of the Syrian Female Journalist Network

When asked what advice she has for aspiring journalists in the field, Eidmouni said: "Be objective. As a journalist, you cannot come to a story with any preconceived notions or beliefs. You have to be completely objective to be able to explore the issue from a human rights perspective."

Eidmouni also called upon journalists to perform exhaustive research when attempting to discuss issues like gender-based violence. "The lack of adequate knowledge or understanding of the subject and its various nuances can be harmful to both the journalist and the survivor, so journalists need to ensure that they have consulted official organisations, gender specialists, psychologists, and other key experts to strengthen their narrative."

A Harmonious Voice

Eidmouni's sentiments are echoed by Lina Ejeilat, a prominent Jordanian journalist and co-founder of the independent online magazine, 7iber (Arabic for Ink). According to Ejeilat, 7iber was established with the objective of promoting a society that upholds values of accountability, rule of law, human rights, and pluralism through in-depth multimedia journalism. This included having the courage to deconstruct issues such as gender and gender-based violence and to approach their analysis from an unbiased, evidence-based and intersectional human rights perspective.

"Being bold in tackling certain topics is admirable, but being consistent in professionalism and quality is another challenge entirely, particularly when facing more challenging stories and deadlines," explains Ejeilat. "More often than not, a good story requires significantly more time for the subject to be explored from multiple angles, and to be supported by facts, quotes, and background information that goes beyond the obvious."

When it comes to gender-based violence, this entails touching upon the many factors surrounding the violence itself, such as inherent socio-economic inequalities, legal biases,, and others, all of which intertwine to disenfranchise women and girls and justify the violence being perpetrated against them.

> "It is integral for editors and journalists to be on the same page when it comes to these issues."

Ejeilat also emphasized the importance of organisations adopting clear guidelines that encapsulate their editorial identities, which she explained remains lacking throughout the regional media industry. This, she added, puts journalists in challenging situations as they often tread unexplored territories without the necessary support from editors and organisations.

"It is integral for editors and journalists to be on the same page when it comes to these issues, and to ensure that all policies and regulations are conducive to a free and constructive exploration of gender, violence and other core issues," added Ejeilat.

The Impact of Journalism

In August 2017, the Jordanian Parliament voted to abolish the controversial Article 308 of the Jordanian Penal Code, which allowed sexual assault perpetrators to escape punishment if they married their victims. Activists and journalists alike had campaigned for years to abolish the law, demonstrating the impact that journalism can have in promoting equality. That same year, parliaments in Tunisia and Lebanon also passed landmark laws, one to criminalise all violence against women and another revoking a similar law to the one abolished in Jordan. In all three cases, change followed years of public discussion and consistent coverage by journalists across multiple platforms, further underscoring the importance of quality reporting in the fight for social justice.

When taken in isolation, these achievements may seem small, however they are indicative of larger tectonic shifts taking place on a fundamental sociological level. This is where journalism stands to make the greatest impact – by slowly and gradually shifting perspectives, biases and long-held beliefs, and by holding people across all spheres accountable for their actions or their silence.

COMMON MISTAKES

When reporting on gender-based violence, these are the most common pitfalls in which journalists find themselves.

Bringing individual biases into the narrative

The job of the journalist is to inform. As such, allowing personal beliefs and attitudes, including cultural, religious or other biases to colour the narrative is considered blatantly unethical. This includes judging — either directly or indirectly — the appearances, demeanour or actions of a GBV survivor, and including any additional details that may be interpreted as such.

Focusing on details of GBV victims / survivors

When reports focus on details such as the dress, personal habits, or physical appearance of GBV survivors, the focus tends to shift away from the perpetrator; at worst, this can result in blaming the survivor, which contributes to an atmosphere where it becomes more difficult for women to report GBV crimes or access services, and easier for perpetrators to go unpunished.

Inappropriate language

Using vague or euphemistic language (see page 8) leads to inaccurate journalism, which is misleading for your audience. Have a look at the glossary (see page 38) in order to understand the terminology used when describing GBV. Choice of vocabulary is particularly important when covering this topic.

Identifying details of GBV survivors

There will be many occasions when you will speak to GBV survivors, and it will be inappropriate to publish or broadcast their name or any other detail that can reveal their identity. Putting interviewees at further risk can have damaging consequences; you should avoid details that could enable "jigsaw" identification.

Lack of research

From your initial story idea, through to reporting during criminal proceedings and following up on stories, journalists need to research GBV thoroughly. This means speaking to experts, carrying out desk research, and understanding the medical, legal, and social angles to GBV.

Insufficient understanding of criminal proceedings

Reporting on criminal proceedings in any case requires a thorough and solid understanding of the law. Journalists are encouraged to carefully review the legal nuances of any case they are covering and to consult attorneys and official organisations when necessary to verify their understanding.

TERMINOLOGY AND ITS IMPORTANCE

Language is both incredibly adaptable and highly relative. When reporting on sensitive issues, more often than not, meanings can be either unintentionally either diluted or lost in the narrative due to the use of inappropriate terminology.

When it comes to reporting on gender-based violence, the use of clear, objective and accurate language is of paramount importance, as the proper use of various GBV-related terminologies. This not only results in a more reader-friendly and impactful story but can also help ensure that information is not distorted during delivery.

In many cases, the use of inaccurate terms or phrases when reporting on GBV can inadvertently alleviate the weight of a crime, further contributing to the environment of impunity enjoyed by perpetrators.

Journalists may also inadvertently use problematic language that may compromise the impartiality of the narrative or reinforce harmful associations or preconceptions.

For example, it is preferable to use the term "survivor" rather than 'victim' in most contexts, because this implies resilience and empowerment. The term "honour killing" assigns a positive connotation to murder, and is neither accurate nor impartial. Whilst a range of alternatives has been suggested (including "family femicide", "shame killings", and "patriarchal killings"), none has become dominant. A common solution is to add a prefix, quotation marks, or both (as in so-called "honour killing").

The use of inaccurate terms or phrases when reporting on GBV can inadvertently alleviate the weight of a crime, further contributing to the environment of impunity enjoyed by perpetrators.

The use of euphemistic terminology to describe GBV acts is often confusing and inaccurate: for example, "He forced himself on her" is vague, and could be used to describe a wide range of assaults. The term "rape" has a far more specific meaning, i.e., non-consensual penetration. This handbook includes a full glossary of terms on pages 34-35.

Ultimately, journalists will need to tailor their narrative to ensure that language used is simple, clear and understood by the target audience. This includes avoiding the use of potentially confusing phrases and taking the time necessary to explain terminologies that the journalist feel their readers may be unfamiliar with.

It is considered good newsroom practice to agree on a form of words for certain key terms, particularly if they are used often. Larger media organisations have a style guide —sometimes as part of editorial/producers' guidelines — to ensure conformity of language. Such guides can serve as a valuable tool in improving output generally and not just for defining words related to GBV.

> **Journalists are encouraged to put themselves in the shoes of survivors and to tailor their reporting accordingly. Empathy is the best starting point for ethical reporting.**
>
> —NADINE NIMRI, Jordanian journalist and activist

GBV AND THE LAW

Writing about GBV requires a clear understanding of certain aspects of criminal, civil, and traditional law. These vary greatly from country to country and journalists are encouraged to carry out their own research in their area of operation and, where possible, to seek further advice from their organisation's legal team.

"Writing about GBV requires a clear understanding of certain aspects of criminal, civil, and traditional law."

It is also helpful for journalists to have lawyers amongst their contacts, as this can benefit all aspects of journalism, even beyond reporting on GBV. Laws relating to GBV are changing and journalists need to keep up with these changes, as this in and of itself can be approached as a story. For example, when Lebanon rectified its Law on Protection of Women and Family Members from Domestic Violence in 2014, the first convictions relating to the new law provided a solid follow-up story and allowed for a greater exploration of how changes in the legal framework can bring about positive changes on the societal level.

"It is also helpful for journalists to have lawyers amongst their contacts, as this can benefit all aspects of journalism."

Negative attitudes and practices of police and judicial staff towards GBV survivors prevent many from seeking legal redress. There is often a lack of resources to pursue legal action, further compounded by challenges in providing corroborating evidence from witnesses for crimes relating to GBV.

Controversial legislation exists throughout the Arab States region, which can impact the proceedings of various GBV cases and contribute to further impunity by perpetrators. While many Arab countries have introduced positive legislative reforms that promote gender equality and protect women from violence, guaranteeing equality before the law remains a persistent challenge across the region based on the results of an extensive study of gender justice and the law that explored the legal framework in 18 countries in the region.[1]

Legal gaps in many countries continue to deny women equality before the law. For example, the constitutions of several countries do not guarantee gender equality, and penal codes in at least five countries still exonerate a rapist from punishment if he marries his victim in at least 5 countries. Penal codes in 11 countries also allow for mitigating circumstances, such as adultery, to decrease penalties or exonerate perpetrators of so called "honour" killings, while none of the countries included in the study explicitly criminalizes marital rape.

"Legal gaps in many countries continue to deny women equality before the law."

Moreover, in most countries in the region, the legal age for marriage is 18 for both boys and girls, but courts can allow boys and girls to be married earlier: as early as 13 years for girls in some countries. In Lebanon, for example, there is no standard minimum age of marriage as this depends on the individual's religion, which demonstrates the need for journalists to accurately reference the law.

1.UNFPA, UNDP, UN Women, ESCWA, Gender Justice and the Law in the Arab States Region, 2018, accessed at: https://arabstates.unfpa.org/en/publications/gender-justice-and-law-arab-states-region

USE OF IMAGES

Whether a journalist works online, in the print media, or for a TV station, it is likely that a striking image will significantly boost coverage of their GBV story, particularly if an original image (as opposed to stock photography) is used. This presents an ethical dilemma. Without informed consent, you should not identify the GBV survivor; therefore, you should beware of filming details that might identify.

Be careful about using conventional privacy tactics, such as pixilation, scrambling voices, or filming into light, as these techniques are not always failproof. Anything distinctive, such as a headscarf, wedding ring, furniture in a home, or a family member, can easily reveal the identity of an anonymous source and cause a problem. When images are used, clear labelling is vital to prevent misinterpretation.

You will need to be creative in your solutions: for example, photographs or video of a busy marketplace or public area are less likely to be associated with a GBV survivor than shots of their home or street.

CASE STUDY: CHILD MARRIAGE

Child marriage is among the most common negative coping mechanisms in humanitarian crises and can have lasting ramifications for the protection of adolescent girls.

"Some people may say that marrying off a young girl can help resolve some of her problems," explains May, an adolescent girl from Shatila Camp, Lebanon. "Even some naïve girls themselves may think so, and get excited at the prospect of having their own house and family. But the truth is that girls my age know nothing about life, responsibilities, and what it takes to run a home or raise a family. They'll wind up escaping one set of problems and falling into new ones. There is no way that child marriage resolves anything, and more girls need to be told that."

"The truth is that girls my age know nothing about life, responsibilities, and what it takes to run a home or raise a family."

Children and young people often suffer in times of conflict; they form a vulnerable group whose rights are frequently violated with impunity. Part of the reason for this is that they are not listened to: often, adults don't believe children and young people when they are victims of violence; this can lead to a culture of silence. They are often powerless, and it can be much easier to ignore, for example, child sexual abuse within a community than it is to face up to it and deal with the problem.

"Child marriage in refugee communities in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Turkey, and Egypt is one of the main GBV concerns in the area. "

In some countries, parents encourage children, and girls in particular, to get married at a young age in the hope that marriage will benefit them both socially and economically. In reality, this has serious repercussions on the lives of children who experience it. For example, the risk of maternal death for mothers aged under 15 years in low- and middle-income countries is double that of older females.

Child marriage in refugee communities in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Turkey, and Egypt is one of the main GBV concerns in the area. The issue has received a lot of media attention during the past few years, with mixed consequences.

The coverage has helped focus attention on the problem, and has contributed to efforts of the humanitarian community to mobilize resources and to establish services to work on the issue.

However, this media attention has also perpetrated the idea that any Syrian girl is ready to get married very young. Syrian girls and their families reported feeling that the media contributed to a negative perception of Syrian women and girls, and sometimes reacted by increasing isolation and control over young women in particular.

"This media attention has also perpetrated the idea that any Syrian girl is ready to get married very young."

Furthermore, because of the perception that child marriage is not a "real" form of GBV, some journalists have been unscrupulous in sharing details, including pictures of young brides, potentially placing them at risk of possible retaliation by other members of the community.

SOME FACTS ABOUT CHILD MARRIAGE

Child marriage (sometimes called "early marriage") is defined as marriage before an individual reaches the age of 18 years.

Despite near-universal commitments to end child marriage, one in three girls in developing countries – excluding China – will probably be married before they are 18 years of age.

One out of nine girls will be married before their 15th birthday. Most of these girls are financially underprivileged, less-educated, and living in rural areas.

In the next decade, 14.2 million girls aged below 18 years will be married every year. This translates into 39,000 girls married each day.

"I've seen girls as young as fourteen years become mothers. I've seen them forced to marry, sometimes beaten into it, and I have also seen some of them die giving birth.

— UM RAAD, a midwife Damascus, Syria

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE PROGRAMMING

PREVENTION & RESPONSE

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"It is also helpful for journalists to have lawyers amongst their contacts, as this can benefit all aspects of journalism."

Negative attitudes and practices of police and judicial staff towards GBV survivors prevent many from seeking legal redress. There is often a lack of resources to pursue legal action, further compounded by challenges in providing corroborating evidence from witnesses for crimes relating to GBV.

Controversial legislation exists throughout the Arab States region, which can impact the proceedings of various GBV cases and contribute to further impunity by perpetrators. While many Arab countries have introduced positive legislative reforms that promote gender equality and protect women from violence, guaranteeing equality before the law remains a persistent challenge across the region based on the results of an extensive study of gender justice and the law that explored the legal framework in 18 countries in the region.[1]

Legal gaps in many countries continue to deny women equality before the law. For example, the constitutions of several countries do not guarantee gender equality, and penal codes in at least five countries still exonerate a rapist from punishment if he marries his victim in at least 5 countries. Penal codes in 11 countries also allow for mitigating circumstances, such as adultery, to decrease penalties or exonerate perpetrators of so called "honour" killings, while none of the countries included in the study explicitly criminalizes marital rape.

"Legal gaps in many countries continue to deny women equality before the law."

Moreover, in most countries in the region, the legal age for marriage is 18 for both boys and girls, but courts can allow boys and girls to be married earlier: as early as 13 years for girls in some countries. In Lebanon, for example, there is no standard minimum age of marriage as this depends on the individual's religion, which demonstrates the need for journalists to accurately reference the law in their coverage.

UNFPA'S GBV INTERVENTIONS – ARAB STATES

UNFPA works to ensure quality life-saving services are available to GBV survivors throughout the Arab States region. UNFPA works with partners, civil society, and governments to establish strategies to prevent and mitigate the risks of GBV.

UNFPA supports Safe Spaces in the region, where women and girls can access psychosocial activities as well as other GBV response services. It works closely with ministries of health and other health providers to ensure the availability of survivor-centered post-rape treatment.

UNFPA, in collaboration with other agencies, is also the lead of the GBV coordination groups in the region, providing strategic direction, and technical expertise.

For more details about UNFPA's strategy on GBV, please see the UNFPA Regional Strategy on Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence in the Arab States (https://bit.ly/38EnPWn).

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE DATA

How common is gender-based violence? When reporting on this sensitive topic, statistics and data have their place, but can sometimes detract from the core focus of the message.

Obtaining prevalence data on GBV is a challenge. This is particularly true during humanitarian emergencies, where service limitations, security and access constraints can make it difficult to get accurate data. More generally, the stigma associated with GBV often prevents people from coming forward.

"The stigma associated with GBV often prevents people from coming forward."

Data on GBV usually reflects only reported incidents, which are considered to be a small proportion of the total. A recent study indicated that only 7 percent of survivors in developing countries actually report to a service, and less than half (46 percent) of all GBV survivors even tell anyone, including family members or friends. Most evidence about the scope and nature of GBV in emergencies derives from qualitative assessments, studies, and service delivery statistics. These mostly suggest that many forms of GBV increase during emergencies. The need to "provide some figures" around GBV can lead to flawed estimates being widely circulated, or statistics being shared without context.

Given the challenges around GBV data collection and interpretation, consulting a GBV specialist on how to interpret the data and figures is likely to be useful. For example, an increase in reported GBV cases may be the result of a new women's centre opening in a particular region, or a campaign encouraging women to come forward rather than a rise in actual incidents of gender-based violence.

"Consulting specialist on how to interpret the data and figures is likely to be useful."

There are many reasons why there is an under-reporting of GBV worldwide. Many survivors think that they will not be believed, that they will be blamed, that they will be ostracised by their family, or that they will be rejected by their husbands. Social stigma, fear of repercussions by perpetrators, and of losing child custody, homes, or financial support are amongst the reasons given.

Being bold in tackling certain topics is admirable, but being consistent in professionalism and quality is another challenge entirely, particularly when facing more challenging stories and deadlines.

— LINA EJEILAT, Jordanian journlaist / editor

Why is GBV underreported?

- *Survivors fear losing their homes*
- *Negative financial consequences*
- *Social stigma*
- *Fear of repercussions by perpetrators*
- *Fear of losing child custody*
- *Lack of information*
- *Lack of confidence in the police*
- *Lack of support services*
- *Fear of deportation*
- *High cost of legal action*
- *Violence against women not being legally criminalised in numerous countries*

REPORTING SELF-TEST

Before handing in your story, consider reviewing the following points to ensure that your reporting will do no harm.

1

Have you made every effort possible to avoid conducting an interview with the survivor?

In the course of developing your story, have you conducted all the necessary research and consulted the proper official sources/authorities?

Have you checked with any of the organisations providing GBV support services for additional information and possible quotes?

2

In carrying out your interviews, have you been sympathetic to the trauma suffered by a GBV survivor?

Have you made sure that a GBV specialist / professional care provider is present during the interview?

Have you made every effort to interview without causing re-trauma? Have you made sure that your interviewee has been made aware of appropriate counselling and support services?

Have you pointed them in the direction of appropriate support services in this region? Do you know what help is available?

3

Have you protected your sources/interviewees?

Have you made sure that your interactions with the survivor have been entirely discreet and that there will be no negative repercussions from said interactions?

Have you acquired informed consent? Remember that "informed consent" means that the person you speak to should understand the implications of "going public' with a story, and you have a duty of care in these cases. Also, bear in mind that 'jigsaw identification" can be a problem; a false name or 'blurred screen' may not be enough to prevent identification.

4

Have you been specific in your terminology, and avoided vague or ambiguous euphemisms?

For example, "the guard molested her" has a different meaning from "the guard raped her." This is because terms like "molest," and "sexual activity" are vague, while rape is a specific crime that tells us what happened.

If you are covering a court case, have you referred to the specific alleged crimes and sentence as they relate to the law? For example, 'He was found guilty of rape which carries a death sentence under Jordanian law.'

Have you avoided prejudicial descriptions of the victim? For example, 'She was wearing make-up at the time of the attack' (this description is not relevant, and could imply judgment of the person who has suffered from an attack).

5

Where appropriate, have you made sure that you have quoted all your "expert sources," and included a direct link to the relevant page of any organisation you have mentioned?

For example, if you mention a particular NGO working with GBV survivors, have you linked to their material? If you work for a radio station, have you given details of how people can access services?

Have you avoided 'single source' journalism? For example, if you have quoted a government official talking about GBV, have you also spoken to a local NGO about the issue?

6

Have you used plain language that the audience can understand and explained unfamiliar language?

The glossary (see pages 32-33) explains some of the terminology used by people who work on GBV issues: you are likely to have to explain or rephrase some of these terms in plain language for a general audience. Print and web journalists may need to explain to sub-editors, the reasons for specific terminology used in a particular article; more generally, you may need to explain to colleagues why you have covered GBV stories in a particular way.

7

If you are hosting a discussion or call-in programme on GBV, have you included any guests with advamced knowledge on te subject, and challenged inaccurate comments made by contributors?

For example, if a caller claims that a woman "did not report an incident of GBV to the police immediately and must therefore be making it up," have you explained the reasons that might be behind this? This is because there are many enduring myths about rape that often go unchallenged. A woman may not report a GBV incident for fear of reprisals from her attacker, because she was disorientated following her trauma, or because of inadequate legal systems. Lack of immediate reporting does not imply she has made up the incident.

APPROACHING ORGANISATIONS

A journalist is much more likely to be successful in producing an effective GBV story if they can show an understanding of the ethics of working with GBV survivors.

A common complaint of people working with GBV survivors is that journalists simply "phone up in order to speak to a child bride" or make similar inappropriate requests. In fact, those field workers may choose not to deal with such requests as they can be harmful for those involved.

"A common complaint of people working with GBV survivors is that journalists simply 'phone up in order to speak to a child bride.'"

"Approaching the story through the proper channels might take more time, but it is by far the most efficient and professional route to take as a journalist," explains Luay Shabaneh, UNFPA Regional Director, Arab States. "For UNFPA, safeguarding the lives and safety of survivors is our priority, and while we are committed to provide timely responses to journalists, responses to stories involving GBV can take longer as we decide the best course of action."

"For UNFPA, safeguarding the lives and safety of survivors is our priority, and while we are committed to provide timely responses to journalists, responses to stories involving GBV can take longer as we decide the best course of action."

Journalists can often shorten their wait times and expedite the process of securing interviews with professionals by investing time and effort in the initial research phase. Journalists need to come to humanitarian organisations with an open mind, learn from the specialists working at these organisations, and understand that these organisations operate under a protection mandate that places the wellbeing of survivors first.

Journalists covering GBV will also need to think closely about who they interview. The UN regional humanitarian coordinator may be an authoritative and trustworthy source; however, they are likely to be too busy to deal with frequent press calls. A press officer for an international NGO might want to talk about the particular initiative they are promoting, rather than the particular issue that you want to cover.

"Journalists can often shorten their wait times and expedite the process of securing interviews with professionals by investing time and effort in the initial research phase."

Officials at local and international NGOs may be able to talk more freely about gender-based violence: they are likely to have a useful overview of the topic. Bear in mind that they may use language and terminology which is unfamiliar to your audience. You should not be afraid of asking your interviewees to explain their language if it will confuse your audience.

UNFPA'S MANDATE

UNFPA aims to deliver a survivor-centred approach in all aspects of our work, including supporting the media in covering gender-based violence. Before we respond to a request to meet survivors, we think about their best interest: can we guarantee the safety, confidentiality, and dignity of survivors, their families, and communities? At times, these requests cannot be accommodated. Usually, UNFPA will provide information and expertise and, where possible, facilitate visits to project sites to ensure that important stories about GBV can be told from different angles.

We must consistently remember that even though we are journalists, we are people first, and need to approach survivors as gently and respectfully as we appraoch other people in need.

— AMIN DABWAN, Yemeni journalist

Without a concerted effort by journalists to ensure that issues such as gender disrimination and violence are imapcting women and girls everywhere, real change will be much harder. We need to encourage stronger standards of reporting today.

— Nibras Al-Ma'amuri, Iraqi journalist and Head of the Iraqi Women Journalists' Forum

ORGANISATIONS WORKING ON GBV

The below table lists some of the main organisations working on GBV response in various humanitarian contexts in the Arab States region. Journalists are encouraged to contact these organisations when attempting to report on GBVin these settings.

Local Organisations

ABAAD Lebanon
www.abaadmena.org

Arab Women Organization (AWO)
www.awo.org.jo

Institute for Family Health / Noor Al Hussein Foundation (IFH/NHF)
www.nooralhusseinfoundation.org

Jordanian Women Union (JWU)
www.jwu.org.jo

KAFA Lebanon
www.kafa.org.lb

Syria Relief and Development
www.srd.ngo

International Organisations

Care International
www.care-international.org

International Rescue Committee (IRC)
www.rescue.org

International Medical Corps
https://internationalmedicalcorps.org/

United Nations Agencies

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
www.unfpa.org

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
www.unhcr.org

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
www.unicef.org

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian in the Near East (UNRWA)
www.unrwa.org

UN Women
www.unwomen.org

GLOSSARY OF REFERENCES

Child Sexual Abuse

The term "child sexual abuse" generally is used to refer to any sexual activity between a child and closely related family member (incest) or between a child and an adult or older child from outside the family. It involves either explicit force or coercion or, in cases where consent cannot be given by the victim because of his or her young age, implied force.

Coercion

Forcing, or attempting to force, another person to engage in behaviours against her will by using threats, verbal insistence, manipulation, deception, cultural expectations, or economic power.

Confidentiality

The right of every survivor to have their identity kept private and unidentifiable. There is an implicit understanding and obligation on those providing services that any information disclosed by a survivor will not be shared with others, unless the person concerned gives explicit and informed consent to do so. Confidentiality involves not only how information is collected, but also how it is stored and shared.

Conflict-related sexual violence

"Conflict-related sexual violence" refers to incidents or (for SCR 1960 listing purposes) patterns of sexual violence, that is rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity, against women, men, girls or boys. Such incidents or patterns occur in conflict or post-conflict settings or other situations of concern (e.g. political strife). They also have a direct or indirect nexus with the conflict or political strife itself, i.e. a temporal, geographical and/or causal link.

Coordinating Agencies

The organisations (usually two working in a co-chairing arrangement) that take the lead in chairing GBV working groups and ensuring that the minimum prevention and response interventions are put in place. Coordinating agencies are selected by the GBV working group and endorsed by the leading United Nations entity.

Domestic Violence

Intimate Partner or Other Family Members: Domestic violence takes place between intimate partners (spouses, boyfriend/ girlfriend) as well as between family members (for example, mothers-in-law and daughters- in-law). Domestic violence may include sexual, physical, and psychological abuse. In any reference to domestic violence, it is important to be clear whether the violence is perpetrated by an intimate partner, or another family member. Other terms used to refer to domestic violence perpetrated by an intimate partner include 'spousal abuse' and 'wife battering.'

Denial of Resources

Denial of rightful access to economic resources/assets or livelihoods opportunities, education, health or other social services. Examples include a widow prevented from receiving an inheritance, earnings forcibly taken by an intimate partner or family member, a woman prevented from using contraceptives, a girl prevented from attending school, etc. "Economic abuse" is included in this category. Some acts of confinement may also fall under this category.

Child Marriage

Child marriage is defined as the marriage of a boy or a girl before the age of 18 years. It is sometimes referred to as early marriage. The preferred UNICEF style is to refer to 'child' instead of 'early' marriage, since the word 'early' does not immediately convey the fact that this practice affects children below a specified age. UNICEF, http://uni.cf/1IVmxcD

Emergency

Generally used to refer to situations of armed conflict or natural disaster, often involving the displacement of populations, sometimes as refugees, other times as internally displaced people (IDPs). For the purposes of these guidelines, humanitarian "emergencies" include the period of instability, which often leads up to an acute crisis and ends at some point after 'return' or 'resettlement.' Emergencies are often cyclical, with periods of stability followed by recurrent violence and/or instability. In some emergencies, populations flee, find refuge that later becomes unsafe, and are thus forced to flee again to another location. This cycle can repeat itself multiple times throughout an emergency.

Female Genital Mutilation

All procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or any other injury to the female genital organs for non- medical reasons.

Forced Marriage

The marriage of an individual against her or his will.

Gender

Refers to the social differences between males and females that are learned, and though deeply rooted in every culture, are changeable over time, and have wide variations both within and between cultures. 'Gender' determines the roles, responsibilities, opportunities, privileges, expectations, and limitations for males and for females in any culture.

Gender-Based Violence

An umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (i.e. gender) differences between males and females. The term 'gender-based violence' is primarily used to underscore the fact that structural, gender-based power differentials between males and females around the world place females at risk for multiple forms of violence.

As agreed in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993), this includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. The term is also used by some actors to describe some forms of sexual violence against males and /or targeted violence against LGBTI populations, in these cases when referencing violence related to gender-inequitable norms of masculinity and/or norms of gender identity.

Host Community

Host community is an area in which many refugees or internally displaced persons (IDPs) reside during displacement, whether in nearby camps, private accommodation, or integrated into households.

Internally Displaced Person (IDP)

IDPs are people who have been forced to flee their homes as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, internal strife, systematic violations of human rights or natural or manmade disasters, and who seek protection elsewhere within their country of origin or residence and have not crossed internationally recognised state borders.

Informed Consent

Refers to approval or assent, particularly and specifically after thoughtful consideration. Informed consent occurs when someone fully understands the consequences of a decision, and consents freely and without any force.

Intimate Partner Violence

Intimate partner violence takes place between intimate partners (spouses, boyfriend/ girlfriend) as well as between former intimate partners (for example, ex-husband or boyfriend). Intimate partner violence may include sexual, physical, and psychological abuse. It is sometimes referred to as IPV.

Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO)

An organised entity that is functionally independent of, and does not represent a government or State. It is normally applied to organisations devoted to humanitarian and human rights causes, a number of which have official consultative status at the United Nations.

Perpetrator

Person, group, or institution that directly inflicts or otherwise supports violence or other abuse inflicted on another against her/ his will. Perpetrators are in a position of real or perceived power, decision-making and/or authority, and can thus exert control over their victims.

Persons with Disabilities

Persons with Disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Psychological / Emotional Abuse

Infliction of mental or emotional pain or injury. Examples include threats of physical or sexual violence, intimidation, humiliation, forced isolation, stalking, harassment, unwanted attention, remarks, gestures, or written words of a sexual and/or menacing nature, destruction of cherished things, etc.

Rape

Physically forced or otherwise coerced penetration—even if slight—of the vagina, anus or mouth with a penis or other body part. It also includes penetration of the vagina or anus with an object. Rape includes marital rape and anal rape/sodomy. The attempt to do so is known as attempted rape. Rape of a person by two or more perpetrators is known as gang rape.

Refugee

A refugee is a person who is outside his or her country of origin or habitual residence, and has a well-founded fear of persecution because of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail himself/ herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution.

Sexual Harassment

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

Sexual Exploitation

The term 'sexual exploitation' means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.

Sexual Violence

Sexual violence is "any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic a person's sexuality, using coercion, threats of harm or physical force, by any person regardless or relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work." Sexual violence takes many forms, including rape, sexual slavery and/or trafficking, forced pregnancy, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and/or abuse, and forced abortion.

Survivor/Victim

A person who has experienced gender-based violence. Whilst the terms 'victim' and 'survivor' are sometimes used interchangeably, 'victim' is a term often used in the legal and medical sectors while 'survivor" is a term generally preferred in the psychological and social support sectors because it implies resilience.

Trafficking in Persons

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation includes that of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude, or the removal of organs."

Adapted from the *Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action*, Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), 2012.

When I speak to journalists, many times it feels as though they don't understand what we go through as women in this camp. We pour our hearts out, but we rarely see our issues being discussed.

— AMAL, a Syrian refugee from Qamishli

REPORTING ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN HUMANITARIAN SETTINGS

A JOURNALIST'S HANDBOOK

SECOND EDITION

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