

QUICK GUIDE: MEDIA COVERAGE OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)



SAFETY, CONFIDENTIALITY AND DIGNITY IN REPORTING ABOUT GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence is a manifestation of inherent imbalances in power and gender equality.

Human stories about gender-based violence can impact public opinion and policies in a powerful way. Media (including social media) reporting on sexual and other forms of gender-based violence (GBV) in emergency contexts can facilitate advocacy with decision makers and communities to ensure protection of those at risk. In the meantime, covering GBV stories is very sensitive. In many places, being identified as a GBV survivor – and, sometimes, as someone who is helping a survivor – can result in isolation, social stigmatization, re-traumatization, rejection from family and community, and, in some extreme cases, death.

Each survivor is unique, reacts differently to gender-based violence, and has different strengths, resources and coping mechanisms. Each survivor has the right to decide who should know their story and how will it be used.

This guide is intended to help the media professionals covering the content relating to gender-based violence, including the human stories, do this in line with the necessary ethical and safety principles.

Due to the potential threats to safety, security and psychological well-being, all media reporting needs to respect basic ethical and safety principles, in line with the **DO NO HARM** approach that means taking all measures necessary to avoid exposing people to further harm as a result of our actions, as well as, **SURVIVOR CENTERED** approach that entails creating a supportive environment for the survivor by respecting their rights, and treating them with respect and dignity. The **safety, confidentiality, dignity and rights** of survivors, their families and their communities is the **priority**. They have to be protected from further harm or retribution.

DO'S

- ✔ **Research first!** Consult GBV experts and service providers who are familiar with the context
- ✔ Distinguish between what is “in the public interest” and what is “of interest to the public” – GBV stories attract public attention, but the ultimate goal must be the positive impact the story makes
- ✔ Clearly articulate the expected positive impact from the reporting before going ahead
- ✔ Focus on empowerment stories that are gender-sensitive
- ✔ Use the term “survivor”, and not “victim” when reporting on GBV
- ✔ Only use of images that uphold dignity and respect confidentiality
- ✔ When resharing GBV content, use reliable sources and respect diversity
- ✔ Ensure survivors are aware of the risks, including those related to resharing, commenting, misusing and debating the media content
- ✔ Ensure survivors understand the difficult control of information once it goes public
- ✔ Pay attention to where and how the survivor is interviewed - interview locations can hint on the identity of the survivor or service provider which may put them at risk
- ✔ Interview locations should always uphold dignity, confidentiality and empowerment
- ✔ Assume the survivor wants to remain anonymous, unless there is an informed, clear and documented consent on identification
- ✔ Secure informed multi-stage consent from survivors before, during and after they share their story. Survivors can withdraw consent at any point
- ✔ Make sure survivors understand the purpose of the communications and how their story might be used
- ✔ Ensure the survivor reviews the end product before it goes public and consents to the publication
- ✔ Ensure authenticity in transmitting the survivor’s story, avoid editing and changes to make it more attractive to the public
- ✔ Pay attention to the accuracy of terms or phrases when reporting on GBV
- ✔ Highlight the work of women-led organizations in your context, including those led by refugee women and girls
- ✔ Provide information on local support services and organizations that are addressing GBV

DONT'S

- ✘ GBV survivors should not be pressured or sought out for a story
- ✘ Do not interview GBV survivors, unless GBV services are available in the location and you’re aware of GBV safe disclosure and referral pathways
- ✘ Avoid any direct interviews with children and never identify children in your reporting
- ✘ Be mindful not to cause additional distress and potential trauma with the questions
- ✘ Avoid judgmental language and mind your own biases
- ✘ Photos that could enable survivor identification should not be taken, never use images of children
- ✘ Never report details that could put survivors, their family, community or service providers at further risk or harm
- ✘ Facilitating individual interviews between journalists and GBV survivors is not recommended

READ MORE AT:

[GBV AoR media guidelines](#)



[UNFPA, Reporting on Gender-based Violence in Humanitarian Settings: A Journalist’s Handbook](#)



[CARE Communications involving survivors of gender-based violence policy and guidelines](#)



[Responsible representation and reporting of violence against women and violence against children](#)



[GBV IMS podcast on ethical storytelling](#)

