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# GUIDELINES

## for Gender and Conflict-sensitive Reporting



UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide. UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.

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UA: Public Broadcasting Company is the first Ukrainian independent broadcasting company that serves and is solely accountable to the civil society. Our mission is to secure freedoms of Ukraine, and provide credible and balanced information about Ukraine and the world. <https://suspihne.media>

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# Media plays a key role in shaping public attitudes, including perceptions about women and men.

Despite being comprised of an almost equal number of women and men, the world seen in the news media reinforces stereotypes about masculinity and femininity – women are only the subject of approximately a quarter of all reporting, and more often than not their stories reflect strong gender stereotypes. In the media at large, women are often used as an instrument to meet the «male demand», as seen in the regular commodification of women in advertising.

Gender-sensitive reporting shuns stereotypes that limit and trivialize women and men to present an accurate portrait of the world and its possibilities. Although it is challenging to resist the pervasive, casual stereotypes that see women as child carers or sexual objects, it is critical for journalism

to produce complete and diverse coverage that accurately mirrors our societies. Stereotypes reflect a mental block not only in terms of what society may expect from women and men, but also – more seriously – in terms of what women and men may expect from themselves.



# The 5Ws of Gender-Sensitive Journalism

**Who** Traditional outlets – newspapers, radio, TV – and new media alike. Bloggers, reporters, editors, editors-in-chief, photographers, managers, editorial board.

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**What** To portray and treat women fairly in news reports, with an attentive approach to avoid inequalities, stereotypes, and discrimination as well as in their multi-faceted roles.

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**Why** Fair gender portrayal is a professional and ethical aspiration, similar to respect for accuracy, fairness and honesty. It can importantly contribute and co-create more gender balanced and inclusive societies.

Because a man's world does not reflect the actual composition of society, it fails to show the variety of human experiences, making the female part of our societies relatively invisible.

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**Where** Across media outlets as a whole – from the managerial department setting the editorial line to the field where information is gathered, to the newsroom where the story is packaged.

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**When** At every stage of the news gathering process.

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**How** Gender-sensitive selection of topics and sources and stories, use of gender-fair language, and promoting gender equality within media outlets.

## Five Key Principles of Gender-Sensitive Reporting

- | Balance the presence of women and men in media coverage to mirror the society, human experiences, actions, views and concerns.
- || Avoid gender stereotypes that do not mirror the world and its possibilities and perpetuate a bi-dimensional portray of the society.
- ||| Weigh the representation of women and men, making sure to give equal voice to women, including as experts, in often male-dominated areas – such as politics and government, economic and business, war and conflicts, science and technology, sports.
- |√ Use gender-sensitive language.
- √ Cover gender equality issues and discussions as an important and integral part of the media’s role as a watchdog of society.

## Practical Tips

### I. Ensure an equal range of speakers

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- Seek women’s and men’s voice equally. Treat them equally as well.
- Consult a variety of sources, representing a broad spectrum of views.

- Include women as experts, also in often male-dominated areas – such as politics and government, economic and business, conflicts, science and technology, sports.
- If you cannot find female experts, ask yourself why.
- Solicit the views of gender-focused organisations and agencies.

## II. Tell the story in a gender-sensitive way

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- Ensure that the coverage reflects a holistic and realistic view of women
- Avoid reinforcing stereotypes, whether blatant or subtle. Challenge stereotypes instead.
- Treat all subjects with dignity. Avoid belittling women’s experiences and concerns.
- Provide adequate context and balance and analysis, which includes going beyond the event to raise the underlying issues.
- Be aware of and make reference to the legal and policy frameworks that govern gender issues in Ukraine, and the status of their implementation.

## III. Language

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- Use language that is inclusive of men and women, (e.g. gender-neutral terms used instead of gender-biased terms).
- Use adjectives that are objective and relevant, instead of ones that convey biases or stereotypes. Ensure that the language shuns stigma and discrimination?
- Provide relevant gender disaggregated data.

- Portray women as «survivors» rather than victims, and as being active rather than passive.
- Use physical description when relevant to the story, and apply it equally to men and women.

#### IV. Visual representation of women in the media

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- Represent women and men equally.
- Use a range of images that portrays women and men in all their diversity. Remember that men and women do not constitute two homogeneous groups; rather, they are also divided by many other factors, including race, class, ethnicity, socio-economic status etc.
- Avoid using images that emphasise/ exaggerate physical or sexual aspects.
- When selecting an image, ask yourself whether using a different image conveys a better sense of the gender relations, roles and responsibilities of men and women.
- Avoid images that degrade the dignity of women.

#### V. Who tells the story?

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- Ensure that both women and men report on gender and women's issues, not only women.
- Build gender awareness and sensitivity into all reporting requirements.
- Recognise gender as an important factor, and ensure that it includes both women's and men's concerns.
- Ensure that sub-editors are sensitised to gender as regards editorial issues.

# Women, Peace and Security

The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) and its 7 subsequent resolutions remain the seminal normative framework that comprehensively addresses that women, peace and security agenda. The UNSCR 1325 is defined by four pillars.

- | Prevention focuses on preventing all forms of violence against women and girls in peacetime, conflict and post-conflict situations. It involves various measures including creating prosecutions for perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence, addressing impunity, increasing surveillance for women's security and safety and challenging discriminatory gender norms, attitudes and behaviour.
- || Participation aims to ensure women's equal participation in peace and security decision-making processes at national, local, regional and international levels. It affirms the importance of including a gender perspective in peace negotiations, peacekeeping, post-conflict peacebuilding and governance. It includes appointing more women as negotiators, mediators, peacekeepers, police and humanitarian personnel as well as support for local women's peace initiatives.
- ||| Protection seeks to ensure that girls and women's rights are protected and promoted in conflict-affected situations or other humanitarian crises, including protection from gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual violence. The pillar also affirms the imperative to ensure that governments, regional organisations, continental bodies and peace support operations and humanitarian missions to establish mechanism that protect women from sexual and GBV and provide comprehensive care to victims as well as psycho-social, legal and institutional support. It also emphasises the specific protection needs of refugees or internally displaced women and girls during the various stages of displacement.



- IV Relief and Recovery intends to ensure that girls and women's specific relief needs are met, specifically in conflict and post-conflict contexts, and that their capacities to act as agents in relief and recovery are reinforced. These needs include repatriation and resettlement, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programmes (DDR), the design of refugee camps, support to internally displaced persons (IDPs) and in the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

## Conflict-sensitive reporting

The news coverage of armed conflicts is profoundly gendered and largely men-dominated. Men are asked to explain and interpret the conflict in many different roles: as combatants, warlords, experts, and politicians. Women's opinions, on the other hand, are rarely asked and if they are, it is usually from the perspective of victims.

Integrating a gender lens into conflict reporting is a complex process. It involves

respecting the key standards of journalistic professionalism which impartially presents verified information in a fair and balanced context, it gives voice to marginalised actors, and shuns gender stereotypes. Conflict reporting also suffers from other imbalances as it often focuses on specific, violent events and lacks background, contexts, and analysis.

## Five principles of conflict-sensitive reporting

- | Explores backgrounds and contexts of the conflict, presenting causes and options on every side so as to portray the conflict in realistic and transparent terms.
- || Give voice to the views of all parties involved, not merely the leaders of two antagonistic sides.
- ||| Air all voices, balancing men and women in their different roles. In conflict and post-conflict phases gender-sensitive reporting can compel societies to adopt more apt gender-transformative processes where women's human rights are respected and gender equality is perpetuated.
- |V Avoid bias. Expose cover-up attempts on all sides and reveal excesses committed by, and suffering inflicted on, peoples of all parties.
- V Pay attention to peace stories and post-conflict developments.

## Practical Tips

### I. Words Matter

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- Report all sides of the story – not just the two sides in the conflict. Find the missing voices.
- Go beyond the elites: find out what «ordinary people» (women, men, boys and girls) from all groups are saying.

- Don't only report on what divides; ask «What unites?»
- Avoid being one-sided in coverage of suffering. Treat all suffering as news-worthy.
- Be careful in the choice and use of terms such as «devastated», «tragedy», «terrorist», «extremist» etc. Use these loaded words only if they are part of a quotation.
- Avoid emotional and imprecise words such as «massacre», «assassination» and «genocide».
- Draw the line between facts and opinions.
- Avoid waiting for leaders to come up with solutions. Seek out solutions from all sources and put them to leaders. Help «set the agenda».
- Analyse and report on the different ways conflict impacts on the lives on women and men, boys and girls.
- Report on the full range of roles women and men are playing in conflict and peace scenarios, including in conflict mediation efforts.

## II. Deciding to publish or broadcast

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- Be conflict-sensitive and ensure that the impact of the publication will not be to incite violence.
- Avoid portraying any stereotypes.
- Ask all the relevant and necessary questions, and be sensitive to their audience and temperate in use of language.

- Ensure that there are diverse sources, including the voices of women, men, boys, girls and relevant minorities.
- Ensure that the article meets the standards set in editorial and ethical codes.

### III. Context awareness

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- Deepen both the journalists' and the audience's understanding of the context (historical, social, political, economic) of the story.
- Consult the relevant legislation and policy framework related to the story.
- Recognise and advance the advisory role of the media and its capacity to assist communities in understanding social and economic problems.

### IV. Conducting gender-sensitive interviews

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- Treat everyone with respect and communicate the message that you are trustworthy, honest and non-threatening. Avoid being judgmental in your language, terminology and tone.
- Provide the bigger picture and contextualize your story to help the reader understand the legal, social, political and economic factors at play.
- Examine the legal implications, and familiarise yourself with the national, regional and international protocols and legal frameworks on violence.
- Ensure that your story incorporates a diversity of voices and perspectives, and not just focus on the voices and perspectives of the elites or those in power.

## V. Choosing images

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- Ensure that the images you use are helpful towards addressing the issues.
- Ensure that readers or viewers will not be offended by the graphic images of the violence.
- Create and nurture a visual language of tolerance, diversity and equality in the media.
- What is the point of publishing this piece? Apart from being interesting to readers, will it bring any public benefit? It is important not only to tell the story, but also to make a clear point that any violence is unacceptable and to direct readers where to go for help if they suffer from violence.
- Do I have enough knowledge of the topic? Consult with GBV experts that work in the social services, gender experts or call the national hotline. Comments of experts can be included in the piece, increasing its public benefit and credibility.
- Have you selected an appropriate and safe place for the interview? It should be a comfortable and private space.
- Have you provided enough information to the individuals being interviewed? The individuals in your stories should know the possible risks (they may not be able to assess these themselves), the context, the content of the story and the media where the piece is to be published.

## VI. Interviews

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Always remember and respect the rights of violence survivors being interviewed.

These include the right to:

- Decline to identify themselves/to publish their names.

- Decline to continue the interview at any time.
- Decline to answer any question.
- Decline to be photographed.

## VII. Ensure the privacy of violence survivors

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- If you are shooting video, protect private information: record faces out of focus, modify the voice, show only the silhouette or hands instead.
- Avoid including personal details, names or locations that could potentially reveal the identity of the survivor.
- Minimize access of others to any material collected during the interview, including colleagues or family members.
- Take the security of your materials seriously: use passwords and erase recordings stored on voice recorders or cameras.

## Before publishing

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- Show the final edited version of your piece to those involved in your piece.
- Be understanding if a GBV survivor does not allow you to publish your piece; in some instances revealing the identity may put the survivor's life in jeopardy. Even if you have invested much work in your story and you think it is beneficial for the public, you may not be fully aware of the risks a GBV survivor is exposed to. Consent for publication is always the most important consideration.
- Publish detailed information on available services where GBV survivors can access help.

## After publishing

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- Be open for further contact in case those involved in your story or people in similar situations wish to contact you.
- In any piece you publish, indicate where men and women can ask for help if they find themselves in a similar situation.

National Ukrainian hotline: 0-800-500-335, 386 (via cell phone), or police (102).

One can also ask for help at the nearest medical centre or social service centre. Additionally, you may seek out the phone numbers and addresses of regional centers of social services for families, children and youth in your region or municipality.

# Reporting on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

## I. Avoid victimization

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- Do not identify the survivor with any details unless they have chosen to go public with their identity (secure consent through a record).
- Do not insist on taking videos/photos of injuries or scars or describe them; do not include photos/illustrations that depict scenes of violence; choose neutral pictures.
- Do not insist on excessive descriptions, details or circumstances of the violence.
- If a survivor shares more details, think about the possible risks of perpetuating stereotypes in publishing them. For instance, is it important what a survivor of rape wore? How late (s)he was returning home? That (s)he declined to be accompanied or had been drinking? None of these circumstances justify the aggressor's violent actions.

## II. Do not try to defend the aggressor

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- Either intentionally or unintentionally, do not normalize violent behaviour - whether a man or woman was intoxicated, was jealous, served in the army, lost a job, or has a serious health condition. Nothing justifies the violence.

## III. Avoid using the word «victim»

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- Survivors of violence who come forward should be commended not victimized; for example, when reporting on sexual violence, note the difference in wording: «she is a victim of rape» and «she survived sexual violence».
- Report on GBV survivors as people and empowered individuals; the image of a strong woman or man can be conveyed both in text and in a TV or radio piece (without revealing their identity).

## Before publishing

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- What risks does the piece bring to those involved in your story, to their relatives, or the social group they belong to?
- What risks does the piece bring to your editorial office and to you personally? Evaluate the risks and the ways to respond to them, and only then start to work on the material.
- Are photos and videos of survivors and their injuries really necessary for telling the story? If in doubt, do not use them. Under no circumstances use any images of children involved. Pay special attention to the risks related to publishing stories involving children.



# New media and social networks

Internet, new media, and social networks have broadened the space for free expression, thus offering possibilities to enhance dialogue and negotiation. They have promoted the rise of citizen journalism, allowing ordinary people to become generators of information and facilitators of public discourse. It is however a double-edged sword for women's rights. Much as women can claim this space to make their voice count, it is also a space used to fuel violence, conflict, and misogyny.

## Practical Tips

- Use verified accounts on social networks to get information. It is highly likely that they are authentic accounts.
- Use social media tools to cross check and verify the authenticity of information, images or videos. Tools such as TinEye or Google Image Search for example can help users clarify the time and dates a photo was taken as well as where else it has been published online.
- Check the Uniform Resource Locator (URLs) of online news sites and make sure they correspond with the title of the media house or their news page.
- Check news sources used in online news articles. Genuine news articles will usually have reachable news sources that you can research on.
- Limit the sharing of personal information on social media as this can be used to trace you and be potentially put your safety at risk.

# Resources

- Practicing Gender-Responsive Reporting in Conflict Affected Countries in Africa – UN Women Ethiopia, African Union, 2016. Available at <http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/final-wps-reporting-handbook.pdf>
- Media Guide for Reporting on Gender-Based Violence in Ukraine – UN Women Ukraine, 2017.
- 2015 Global Media Monitoring Project. Available at [http://cdn.agilitycms.com/who-makes-the-news/Imported/reports\\_2015/highlights/highlights\\_en.pdf](http://cdn.agilitycms.com/who-makes-the-news/Imported/reports_2015/highlights/highlights_en.pdf)
- Gender, Conflict and Journalism: A Handbook for South Asia – UNESCO, 2006. Available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001439/143925E.pdf>
- United Nations Strategic Results Framework on Women, Peace and Security 2011-2020 – United Nations, 2011. Available at [http://www.un.org/womenwatch/ianwge/taskforce/wps/Strategic\\_Framework\\_2011-2020.pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/ianwge/taskforce/wps/Strategic_Framework_2011-2020.pdf)
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- Peace Journalism: the state of the art – W. Kempf, D. Shinar. Regener, 2007.





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