



# 10 ESSENTIALS FOR GENDER AND AGE-SENSITIVE MEDIA REPORTING OF VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS

## KEY PRINCIPLES



Uphold children's rights, gender equality and human rights principles when reporting on gender-based violence against girls, including by situating it as a violation of girls' rights in the context of discriminatory norms and unequal power relations grounded in **both** gender and age dynamics.



Adhere to established guidelines and standards around 'do-no-harm' survivor-centred representation, including by protecting the victim's/survivor's privacy and providing relevant information and resources for other victims/survivors and those who may wish to support them.



Avoid perpetuating gender and or age-blind reporting by ensuring that violence against girls is not conflated with violence against **women**, nor narrowed to violence against **children**.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS

### MEDIA PRACTITIONERS (JOURNALISTS AND EDITORS)

### 1

#### Textual framing and sourcing practices:

- Avoid making reference to any alleged actions or behaviors of the victim/survivor that might lead to victim-blaming. Never refer to 'romantic' or 'intimate' relationships between a girl victim/survivor and an adult perpetrator, and never use framing language that wrongly suggests any form of consent.
- Emphasize the actions of perpetrators, including by using active rather than passive language when framing acts of violence.
- Never speculate on the motives of the perpetrator(s), and avoid relying on law enforcement or associates of the perpetrator for context. Instead, pursue sourcing practices that prioritize consulting with, and obtaining quotations from, gender-based violence and child protection specialists.

### 2

**Visual framing:** Avoid using photographs or visual imagery that might sensationalize the violence or sexualize the victim/survivor, including in ways that suggest she is/was an adult. In cases of femi(ni)cide,<sup>1</sup> never publish photographs of cadavers, even if a body is covered or the image is blurred.

### 3

**Situate cases within the broader context** of violence against girls in the country or region, including by referencing relevant national laws (e.g. around the age of consent), data or statistics, and any other recent cases that may help generate greater understanding of the systemic rather than 'exceptional' nature of the problem. Consult with gender-based violence and child protection specialists.

### 4

**Include relevant information and resources** for victims/survivors and those who may wish to support them, such as helpline numbers (but never disclose locations of shelters or safe houses).

### 5

**Apply an intersectional lens** that highlights dynamics relevant to the case and particular context. This requires elaborating on power differentials between the perpetrator and the victim/survivor as a consequence of gender and age, **and also** on any racial, ethnic, caste, class, sexuality, disability or other important dimensions of the case.

<sup>1</sup> Broadly speaking, femi(ni)cide refers to the gender-motivated killing of women and girls, which is often followed by impunity. 'Femi(ni)cide' is used to acknowledge that there are various legal frameworks and feminist and women's movement preferences pertaining to the use of 'femicide' or 'feminicide'. See: Fuentes. 2022 (Forthcoming). "Femi[ni]cide and Space: Theorising the Socio-Spatial Scripts of Femi[ni]cide." In The Routledge International Handbook on Femicide/Feminicide. M. Dawson and S. Mobayed (Eds.). London: Routledge.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MEDIA INDUSTRY

### NEWS MEDIA AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

- 6 **Mainstream training and capacity building on gender- and age-sensitive reporting** across the media agency/ organization. Ideally, such training should be carried out on a yearly basis so that journalists, assignment editors and editors understand their sphere of influence when it comes to reporting on violence against girls. Move beyond ‘awareness-raising’ approaches: discuss how to overcome barriers to action, and explore strategies for incentivizing uptake of and adherence to core guidelines and standards that focus on broad buy-in across the agency/organization. Training should include examples of gender- and age-sensitive reporting to clearly establish a horizon of good practice for practitioners to aspire to.
- 7 **Provide resources and support to networks of gender editors or feminist journalist networks**, which are more likely to prioritize gender representation and inclusion both in terms of organizational personnel and in terms of the types of stories that are reported and how they are reported. To ensure that the pipeline for feminist and women journalists grows, media outlet leadership could commit to providing grants and mentorship opportunities to student journalists interested in covering stories related to gender equality and children’s rights.
- 8 **Dedicate fixed spaces for human-rights-related news, stories and messaging** among press, digital and broadcast formats to ensure that cases of violence against girls are not overshadowed by or shelved in favour of stories considered more ‘sellable’ or ‘newsworthy’.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

### UNITED NATIONS AND OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS AGENCIES

- 9 Partner with feminist journalist networks and associations, as well as in-country women’s and children’s rights advocates and movements, to **expand public messaging on the elimination of violence against girls as part of a strategy to create more ‘noise’ and audience interest** around the subject, and thus catalyse more resources for reporting. Where possible, leverage the windows of opportunity opened by ‘high-impact’ cases that attract more national attention than is usual; this should include efforts to elevate the voices of survivors to ensure they are meaningfully engaged in the process.
- 10 **Invest in strategic collaborations** with mainstream media outlets, relevant ministries, feminist journalist networks and associations, and in-country women’s rights and feminist movements to strategize on how best to incentivize the implementation/uptake of relevant guidelines and standards for responsible representation of violence against girls given the opportunities and constraints in a given context. In addition, **develop a streamlined set of global standards of practice for news media reporting on violence against girls, which can be adapted by relevant stakeholders.**

### RELEVANT GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS

CARE, [Gender Sensitization Manual on Media Reporting on Gender-Based Violence](#)

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, [Reporting on Violence against Women and Girls: A Handbook for Journalists](#)

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the International Federation of Journalists, [Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media](#)

United Nations Children’s Fund, UN Women and United Nations Population Fund, [Responsible Representation and Reporting of Violence against Women and Violence against Children](#)

United Nations Global Protection Cluster, [Media Guidelines for Reporting on Gender-Based Violence in Humanitarian Contexts](#)

UN Women, [The Big Conversation: Handbook to Address Violence against Women in and through the Media](#)

UN Women, [Guidelines for Gender and Conflict-Sensitive Reporting](#)