



GUIDELINES ON  
**Responsible representation and  
reporting of violence against women  
and violence against children**



## Purpose

*These guidelines promote responsible and effective representation and reporting of violence against women and violence against children for public advocacy purposes, such as media coverage and awareness raising campaigns.<sup>1</sup>*

While the causes, risk factors, prevalence, patterns and consequences of violence against women and violence against children may differ, many of the considerations for ethically, safely and effectively communicating these issues are crosscutting.

These guidelines are intended for media practitioners, United Nations country offices and other development and civil society organisations communicating about violence against women and violence against children.



## About this guidance

This guidance was developed by UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women in the Asia-Pacific region as an output of a joint working group to enhance and prioritise messaging and communications on violence against women and violence against children amid and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

---

<sup>1</sup> When communicating with external audiences and the public, it is best to avoid acronyms and jargon which may confuse audiences less familiar with the subject matter. For that reason, 'violence against women' and 'violence against children' are written in full throughout this guidance note and should be in communications products for public too.

# CONTENTS

Purpose	1
About this guidance	1
<b>OVERVIEW: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN</b>	<b>3</b>
Definitions	4
Causes and manifestations	4
Consequences	5
COVID-19 impacts	5
Do no harm	6
<b>CRUCIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR DEVELOPING COMMUNICATIONS CONTENT ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN</b>	<b>7</b>
1. Ethically engaging with survivors of violence against women and violence against children	8
A. <i>Overarching principles</i>	8
B. <i>Informed consent</i>	8
C. <i>Interviewing, photographing or filming women and children survivors of violence</i>	10
2. Responsibly representing violence against women and violence against children in communications and advocacy content	14
3. Testing messages	22
<b>SUMMARY</b>	<b>24</b>
Additional resources	25
Appendices	27
Appendix A: Sources of referral services for gender-based violence survivors	27
Appendix B: Additional examples of reporting and representation of violence against women	28
Appendix C: Samples of written consent forms	31

OVERVIEW

**Violence against women and  
violence against children**

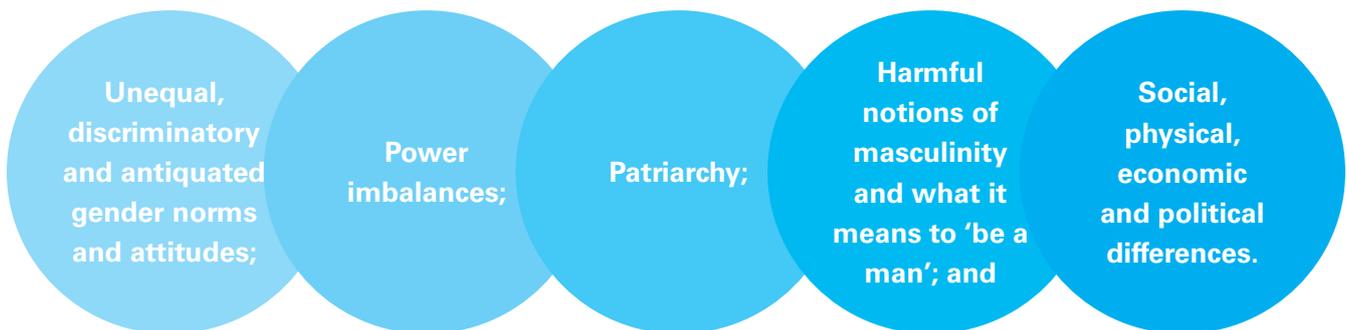


## Definitions

The United Nations defines violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”<sup>2</sup> Violence against children is defined as all forms of physical or mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse. It is the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against a child, by an individual or group, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity.<sup>3</sup>

## Causes and manifestations

Violence against children and violence against women can involve physical, psychological and mental harm inflicted on women and children for myriad reasons, including but not limited to:



In incidents of violence against women and violence against children, the perpetrator takes advantage of historic or current prevailing circumstances to exploit or exert dominance. These issues transcend rural or urban settings, and can be experienced throughout the life-cycle and across all social groups, including wealth quintiles and religious and ethnic backgrounds. Violence against women and violence against children present in varying forms based on local context.

Emerging trends of cyber/online bullying and abuse to both women and adolescent boys and girls indicate violence is a serious threat beyond in-person interactions; now a wide range of digital platforms such as social media and other networking websites and applications, messaging and gaming platforms, and mobile phones facilitate violence too.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations, “Declaration on the elimination of violence against women,” New York, 1993.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations, “Study on Violence Against Children,” 2006, adapted from Article 19 of the “Convention on the Rights of the Child and WHO World Report on Violence and Health,” 2002.

## Consequences

Globally, in their lifetime, an estimated one in three women experience physical and/or sexual violence and one in two children will experience some form of violence.<sup>4,5</sup> The consequences of this violence are both visible and hidden. Violence against women and children can result in long-lasting physical, emotional, spiritual and economic detriments, including death, injuries and disabilities.

Children exposed to violence are at increased risk of mental illness and anxiety disorders; high-risk behaviours like alcohol and drug abuse, smoking and unsafe sex; chronic diseases such as cancers, diabetes and heart disease; infectious diseases like HIV; and social problems including educational underattainment, further involvement in violence, and crime.<sup>6</sup>

Violence against women undermines their health, dignity, security and autonomy. Women who experience violence are at increased risk of the same health consequences as children, as well as birth complications and other reproductive health concerns, and suicide.<sup>7</sup> Women who are subject to economic violence lose access to resources and opportunities – employment, household funds, inheritance and other assets – needed for self-sufficiency.

## COVID-19 impacts

The lockdowns in response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic have exacerbated incidents of violence against women and children across the globe. Many women and children's helplines are reporting a significant increase in the number of calls for support, while others are reporting decreased demand, likely due to mobility restrictions, school closures and other barriers to accessing services.

It is therefore critical to ensure these issues are communicated about to the public through appropriate and accurate media coverage, public awareness campaigns and other advocacy efforts. Strategic communications can help:

- ◆ Pressure governments and lawmakers to immediately introduce or strengthen legal and safety measures, as well as services that support survivors' emotional well-being;
- ◆ Inform survivors and supportive members of their communities about available resources and where women and children experiencing violence can find services and help;
- ◆ Spotlight and bring public awareness to underlying harmful social and gender norms and practices that enable and cause violence against women and violence against children; and
- ◆ Show donors and governments the urgent need for support to violence against women and violence against children prevention and response programming.

---

4 World Health Organization, "Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and nonpartner sexual violence," Geneva, 2013.

5 World Health Organization, "Global status report on preventing violence against children," Geneva, 2020.

6 Ibid.

7 World Health Organization, "Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and nonpartner sexual violence," Geneva, 2013.



© UN Women/Mohammad Rakibul Hasan

## Do no harm

It is essential that communications on violence against women and violence against children improve the situation rather than cause further harm, such as re-traumatising survivors or confusing those who urgently need help. This principle is known as 'do no harm.' The following guidance aims to enhance understanding of the crucial role that carefully designed messaging and specifically targeted communications can play in efforts to address violence against women and violence against children. This guidance also intends to enhance the quality, and thus the impact, of violence against women and violence against children messaging, media coverage and communications products. In doing so, it better enables communications specialists<sup>8</sup> to do no harm in the process.

---

<sup>8</sup> Throughout this guidance note, the term 'communications specialist' refers to anyone undertaking communications activities, whether journalists, staff at UN agencies or civil society organisations, etc.

**Crucial considerations for developing  
communications content on violence against  
women and violence against children**



# 1. Ethically engaging with survivors of violence against women and violence against children

The following section explores best practices for those creating communications content about particular incidents of violence against women and violence against children, including using survivors' real-life experiences in, or to inform, communications content. It places particular emphasis on appropriate engagement with survivors, including interviews and documentation of their stories.

## A. Overarching principles

- ◆ Protect the best interests of each woman and child over any other consideration, including advocacy for children's/women's issues and the promotion of children's/women's rights.
- ◆ When trying to determine the best interests of a child, give due weight to the child's right to have their views taken into account in accordance with their age and maturity.
- ◆ Survivors who speak out are often at greater risk of further harm or retribution. Also, survivors of violence may present symptoms of post-traumatic stress in recounting circumstances of their abuse. Therefore, a violence against women or violence against children service provider should be involved at the outset and throughout communications activities which engage survivors of violence. This will help protect their rights and well-being, including making referrals to other support services if desired by the survivor and addressing any other needs or issues that may arise. Ideally no interview with a child about abuse should occur without the presence of a social welfare officer or other professional who is supporting the welfare of the child.

## B. Informed consent

The first and most important step when engaging with women and children survivors of violence is to ensure they fully understand everything about how the information they share will be used, the risks involved and potential outcomes, and their rights to refuse engagement. This process – called informed consent – is described here.

Additional information about informed consent procedures can be found in the resource list at the end of this document.

- ◆ **Providing context verbally:**  
Prior to obtaining written consent, the communications specialist should clearly explain the purpose of the engagement – such as a photo/video shoot or interview – to the survivor/story subject. The communications specialist should also describe in detail how, when and where the survivor's image, audio and/or story will be used – and for how

long. This includes the proposed format and language of the story, media platforms and geographic locations; possible virality of content on digital platforms; potential for images, video footage or quotations to be used outside the context of the original story (though doing so is discouraged);<sup>9</sup> potential negative consequences the survivor may experience as a result of the publicity; and their right to refuse participation in the engagement at any time. It should be made clear that the survivor's participation in the communication engagement has no bearing on any services, benefits, etc. they may be receiving from anyone or any entity. To verify the survivor/story subject fully understands this information, ask them to summarise it in their own words before proceeding. Be sure that the survivor has considered the potential consequences to their physical safety, emotional well-being, social acceptance and employment status as a result of speaking publicly or sharing their story.

- ◆ **Obtaining written consent, when possible:**

Once the communications specialist is confident that the story subject understands and is comfortable with the above information and has agreed to move forward with the communications engagement (e.g. a photo/video shoot or interview), written consent should be obtained. This gives the communications specialist and the organisation(s) they represent permission to use the story, image, voice, video, etc., as defined by the communications specialist and the consent form. The information presented verbally should be summarised in the written consent form, which the subject signs, if they are able. Many organisations have standardised written consent forms for consistent use in all communications engagements with survivors of violence and other sensitive cases. For samples of written consent forms that could be adapted, please see Appendix C.

- ◆ **Alternatives to written consent:**

When written consent is not possible, e.g. for literacy or logistical reasons, verbal consent captured by video or audio can serve as an alternative. In such cases, the person's name and location, as well as the date the interview or interaction occurs, should be stated. The subject should clearly affirm that they understand the purpose of the interaction and give their permission for their story to be shared with assurances of privacy and confidentiality, if desired and agreed upon.

- ◆ **Consent language:**

Verbal consent procedures and written consent forms should be provided in the subject's native or preferred language to prevent confusion and/or exploitation, and therefore may require translation. Use language that will be easily understood by the subject. Language should also be child-friendly, gender responsive<sup>10</sup> and gender sensitive.<sup>11</sup>

---

9 If the survivor's story will be used in communications products about issues other than the originally discussed topic, e.g. child marriage or HIV, informed consent must be re-obtained since potential risks and outcomes to the survivor may change. See 'Representing violence' section later in this document.

10 Gender-responsive language conveys an understanding of gender roles and inequalities, with an effort to encourage equal participation and equal and fair distribution of benefits between genders (Gayle Nelson, "Gender Responsive National Communications Toolkit", UNDP, 2015).

11 Gender-sensitive language attempts to redress existing gender inequalities (UN-INSTRAW/UN Women Training Centre eLearning Campus, "Glossary of Gender-related Terms and Concepts", accessed 21 October 2020 from <https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/glossary/print.php?id=36&mode=&hook=ALL&sortkey=&sortorder=&offset=-10>).

- ◆ **Consent file retention:**

Protocols for consent storage (how long and the manner in which written, audio and video files are kept) and destruction of consent files should follow the organisation's institutional policies and schedule for retention and destruction of sensitive records. All files with identifying information about a survivor must be kept in a password protected or otherwise locked file management system, separate from non-sensitive files. More information about UN retention and disposal of records is included in the resource list at the end of this document.

- ◆ **Special protocols for children:**

When interacting with a child below the age of 18, including interviews and taking photos/videos, first obtain written permission from a supportive, entrusted adult who is responsible for the child's well-being. This might be a guardian, parent, teacher, school principal or other authorities.

## C. Interviewing, photographing or filming women and children survivors of violence

When interviewing, photographing/filming or otherwise engaging survivors about their experiences for communications purposes, the following practices will help make the engagement ethical, safe and more comfortable for survivors.

### PRIVACY, CONFIDENTIALITY AND RIGHTS

- ◆ Adhere to and respect subjects' rights to privacy and confidentiality, to dignity, to have their opinions heard, to participate in decisions affecting them, and to be protected from harm and retribution.
- ◆ Every individual has the right to refuse being interviewed or engaged at any point during the interaction, and the communications specialist should end the engagement if the story subject feels uncomfortable or wants to stop. Allow subjects to interact as they deem comfortable. Do not press for information if they appear uncomfortable sharing it and do not influence their responses or narrative in any way, including through provision of incentives. Bribery in any form is unacceptable.
- ◆ Remove any digital trace of interaction with the subjects by removing call histories and messages, and ensure any necessary written or digital records of the meeting are kept secure (see earlier point about informed consent file retention).

- ◆ Involve only necessary and trusted people who the survivor is comfortable with in engagements such as interviews or photoshoots. Otherwise, the fact that they are a survivor or someone seeking help for violence could be revealed to people the survivor does not want to know this information.
- ◆ It is advised to exclude explicit details of violence in communications products; therefore, specifics of incidents disclosed in interviews should generally not be recorded. This is especially important if the details could lead to identification of survivors and violate their rights to privacy and confidentiality.
- ◆ Ensure that survivors cannot be identified/recognised (e.g. survivor's photo, video, voice, name, exact location where services were provided, school, ethnicity, etc.). For imagery, this can be done by positioning the camera with the subject facing away and at a distance or by blurring the subject's face. Imagery should not show the subject in an uncomfortable or compromising position. If an adult survivor wants their image, voice or name to be published, the communications specialist should first confirm that the survivor has discussed the potential impact with a gender-based violence service provider in addition to the communications specialist.<sup>12</sup>



*Above: example of how to obscure someone's visual identity in a photograph for confidentiality.*

- ◆ Always obtain informed consent before taking voice recordings, photos or videos (see 'Informed consent' section above).

<sup>12</sup> For more details, see Global Protection Cluster, "Media Guidelines for Reporting on Gender-based Violence in Humanitarian Contexts"; n.d., available from <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5c3701d27.pdf>.

## COMMUNICATING WITH SURVIVORS

- ◆ Provide the option of being interviewed by someone of the same gender. And remember to keep the communications team, including the interviewer, photographer or videographer, as small as possible to enhance the survivor's comfort and for confidentiality reasons, as discussed earlier.
- ◆ At all times regardless of the age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, etc. of the person(s) being interviewed, treat them with respect, value their views and make no attempt to influence them in any way. Strive to understand the subject's experience, perspective and story within the context in which they live.
- ◆ Use language that can be easily understood by the subject during interviews, including the earlier points about child-friendly and gender responsive/sensitive language.

## SUPPORT FOR SURVIVORS

- ◆ Reinforce the guiding principles of gender-based violence response, including a survivor-centred approach,<sup>13</sup> and use language which invites the survivor to ask about available services and promotes their right to make decisions about if and how to seek support.
- ◆ It is critical for communications specialists to assess the risk, and to come prepared with and offer updated information, contacts and referrals to locally available, quality support resources and services, prevention programmes, and safety planning tools. This is especially essential if for some reason a violence against women or violence against children service provider has not already been engaged in the process (see earlier point in the 'Overarching principles' section about the role of service providers in developing communications content). If no services are locally available, the communications specialist may arrange a phone call with a service provider who is located elsewhere and who speaks the same language as the survivor to discuss safety planning and protection risks; otherwise, the interaction with the survivor and communications activity should not occur. This step is important even if survivors do not disclose that they are currently experiencing violence. For examples of Asia-Pacific regional and global gender-based violence response services, see Appendix A.

---

<sup>13</sup> A survivor-centered approach creates a supportive environment in which survivors' rights and wishes are respected, their safety is ensured, and they are treated with dignity and respect (Gender-based Violence Area of Responsibility, "The Interagency Minimum Standards for Gender Based Violence in Emergency Programming", 2019, available from <https://www.unfpa.org/minimum-standards>).



© UNICEF ROSA/ThomasNybo2015

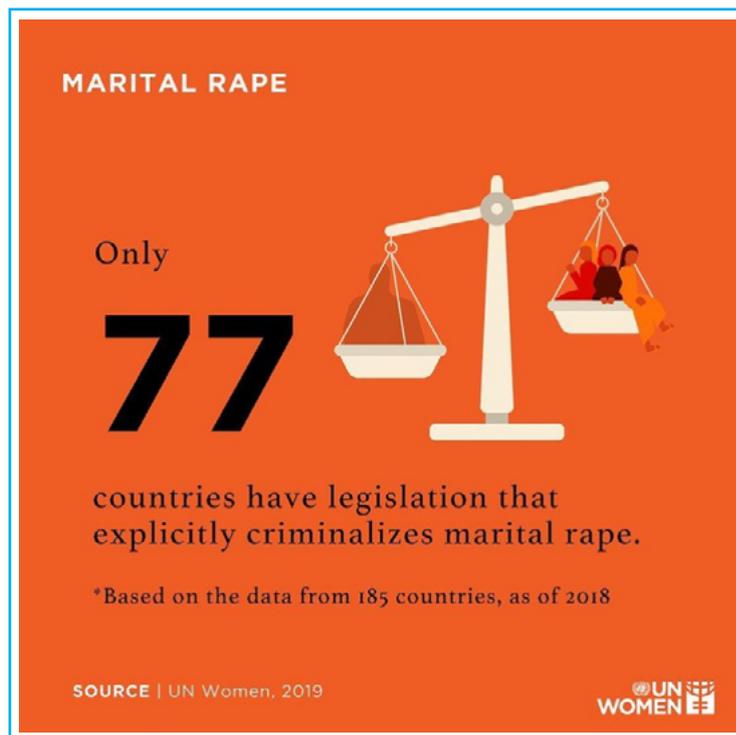
### SPECIAL PROTOCOLS FOR CHILD PROTECTION/SAFEGUARDING

- ◆ For children under 18, ensure interviews and photo/film shoots are done in the presence of a supportive, entrusted guardian and in a private space.
- ◆ When interviewing a child, avoid actions and behaviours that may seem intimidating or cause them discomfort.
- ◆ Regularly check that the child is comfortable to continue with the communications engagement, and ensure the child understands they can opt out of the interview at any time.
- ◆ Ensure that a social welfare officer or other professional who is supporting the welfare of the child is present when interviewing children about abuse.
- ◆ If during the course of an interaction with a child they disclose any information about abuse, whether recent or in the past, the information must be immediately referred to and checked by a social worker or social welfare officer if one is not present or otherwise involved (see point above) to ensure the interaction does not cause the child distress. The communications specialist is strictly discouraged to intervene on their own and should act only if ordered by the social worker or social welfare officer.
- ◆ Be aware of local laws. Some countries have mandatory reporting requirements for disclosures of child abuse.

## 2. Responsibly representing violence against women and violence against children in communications and advocacy content

### DUE DILIGENCE

- ◆ When publishing photos, videos, quotations or information that is copyrighted or already published by another agency or individual, request permission for re-publication and mention the original source.
- ◆ When citing secondary information, always fact check that it is accurate and verifiable from multiple sources before including or reporting it. Avoid seeking verification from a source which may have a conflict of interest.



Above: example of information, education and communication (IEC) content that provides a data source so viewers know where the information originates. This also helps to prevent the spread of misinformation.

## USE OF LANGUAGE

- ◆ Content should be produced in the languages of the people it is created for, and alternatives to text should be considered in low-literacy and multilingual settings.



Above: (left) example of information, education and communication (IEC) content in local language; (right) English version.

- ◆ Unless the subject has specified their gender and gender is relevant to the context, avoid the use of gender-specific pronouns such as 'he' or 'she.' To be inclusive, use the pronoun 'they' instead.<sup>14</sup>
- ◆ Do not use language which could potentially demean or offend any ethnic or other groups and communities of people and avoid perpetuating stereotypes. For groups which are under-represented and/or have been made vulnerable due to historic/systemic discrimination or oppression, provide context regarding the status of the group as vulnerable or marginalised. Referring to a particular group as vulnerable or marginalised without providing context can indirectly reinforce stereotypes about the group being inherently vulnerable as opposed to vulnerable or marginalised due to power dynamics and perceptions which exist in the larger society.

<sup>14</sup> Increasingly in many countries, intersex and transgender or gender-fluid individuals prefer to be referred to as 'they' or 'them' instead of 'she' or 'he.'

## REPRESENTING VIOLENCE

- ◆ Do not publish a story, image or video that might put individual children, their siblings or peers at risk, even when their identities are changed, obscured or not used.
- ◆ If repurposing a violence against women or violence against children survivor's story from its original use case, only do so in communications products on the same issue as what the survivor originally consented to. For example, do not use a violence against children survivor's story in a campaign to end harmful practices (e.g. child marriage) or HIV (unless the survivor has experienced those issues in addition to violence and provided informed consent for their story to be used in advocacy materials on those issues too).
- ◆ Avoid sensationalising violence by depicting violent acts in detail, in all types of content (visual, audio and written). Instead, name the type of violence experienced, such as emotional abuse, and move on with the story.



*“For the last five days, I have been attending to a severe marital rape case through the telephone. The perpetrator has already been reported and is under police custody,” she explained. “Today, my client has called me over seven times, and I am a bit worried. I want to visit her so I am applying for a movement order from the COVID-19 taskforce.”*

*Above: example of a story that focuses on the psychosocial services available to survivors of gender-based violence in Bhutan rather than the details of violent acts, as to not sensationalise violence.<sup>15</sup>*

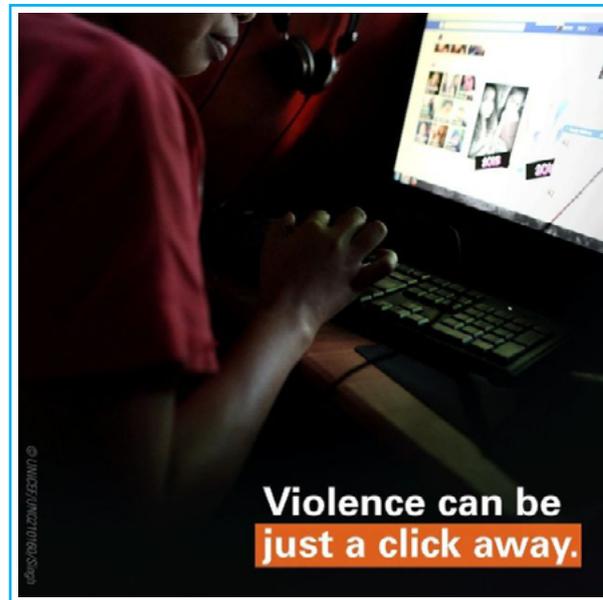
15 UNFPA, “Pandemic and rising tide of violence increase demand for mental health, psychosocial care,” 2020, available from <https://www.unfpa.org/news/pandemic-and-rising-tide-violence-increase-demand-mental-health-psychosocial-care>. Story and image obtained with informed consent.

- ◆ Never portray individuals who have experienced violence against women or violence against children as helpless victims, including in imagery. Instead, show that they are survivors who decided to speak up.
- ◆ The term 'survivor' is recommended over 'victim,' but when communicating about individual instances of violence, consult the story subject about how they prefer to be referenced.
- ◆ Highlight the actions of the perpetrator in descriptions of violence. Avoid making the perpetrator invisible; instead place the responsibility on them. For example, avoid "xx women were victims of homicide"; instead highlight "xx women were killed by a partner." When the perpetrator is less visible in descriptions of violence, it takes the onus off them. Instead, focus on holding perpetrators accountable for their actions by using language that makes clear who committed the crime.
- ◆ Avoid 'victim-blaming' or suggesting that survivors are responsible for causing or provoking violence. Avoid depictions which raise questions or cast responsibility on the survivor for why the violence occurred, why they remained in the situation or what motivated the actions of the perpetrator. Instead, focus on the causes of violence described in the 'Causes and manifestations' section of this document's 'Overview.'



*Above: example of a social media card that helps viewers understand why women may not leave violent situations.*

- ◆ Avoid reinforcing stereotypes such as physical violence being the only serious form of violence. Sexual, emotional and economic violence are also serious forms of violence and should be given equal consideration, emphasis and coverage in communications content.



*Above: example of a social media card showing another form of violence, online bullying.*



*Above: example of a social media card highlighting multiple forms of violence without graphic depictions that reinforce stereotypes.*

- ◆ Visual representations should show positive behaviour over representations of violence. Visual representations should not reinforce gender inequalities, biases and stereotypes about gender roles or violence, such as female subordination. For example, it is best to avoid images of scary men or their shadows towering over women or children.



© UNFPA Afghanistan

### SPECIFIC MESSAGING ON VIOLENCE

- ◆ This guidance note provides tips on how to create communications content on violence against women and violence against children appropriately, and while specific key messages are not elaborated here, some examples of notes include:

Stresses that arise from challenging situations like COVID-19 can lead to an increase in violence against women and violence against children. But this is not causing the violence or an excuse for it; violence should never be accepted. The drivers of violence against women and violence against children include inequitable gender norms and attitudes, power imbalances, patriarchy and harmful notions of masculinity, among others (see the 'Causes and manifestations' section earlier).

Violence can happen anywhere, including within the home.

The role of bystanders, friends and family members is crucial in supporting survivors through provision of information on obtaining help and reporting violence.

- In cases of adults experiencing violence, communications with bystanders should emphasise that where possible, the decision to report violence should be led by the survivor's choice. In circumstances when the adult survivor is observed as being in immediate danger, ensure bystanders who witness violence know how to report violence safely.
- In circumstances involving violence against children, report the violence immediately to the most appropriate responder(s).

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS WHEN COMMUNICATING VIOLENCE

- ◆ All content should have clear calls-to-action so those who the communications intend to reach can take appropriate action. This might include, for example, information about locally available support services for survivors or information about what individuals engaging with the content can do to prevent, offer help or otherwise respond to violence.



Above: example of a call-to-action in a campaign urging the Thai public to call the Government's Helpline 1300 if they suspect any forms of violence against children.

- ◆ Communications products as part of awareness raising campaigns should be attractive, memorable and easy to understand. The format of the products should match the context in which they will be used; for example, social media cards should contain minimal words and should be the standard sizes for social media platforms.



Above: example of a social media card that conveys an important message in an easy-to-understand format.



Above: example of a clear, memorable ending to a video raising awareness about a women's protection helpline – 1938 – in Sri Lanka, providing information about where women can get help.

## MAINTAINING OBJECTIVITY

- ◆ Avoid perpetuating stereotypes, including openly sexist interpretations of the characteristics and roles of women and men in society. Try not to make any gender-based assumptions, including in the depiction of traditional feminine/masculine characteristics or roles.
- ◆ Be unbiased in the selection of subjects and promote diversity in depictions of violence. Do not discriminate in choosing subjects based on sex, age, religion, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, educational background or physical and mental abilities.
- ◆ Adopt a context-specific approach in communicating about survivors of violence that shows the diverse experiences of discrimination and violence. Not all women or children are discriminated against in the same way, while different groups of women or children (with different economic, social, political and cultural statuses and physical or mental disabilities) may face multiple forms of discrimination. A sound understanding of the multiple forms of discrimination faced by different groups of women or children in different settings and contexts should inform communications.
- ◆ When reporting information provided by interview subjects, do not distort or influence it with personal biases. The information provided should be reported exactly as it was told by the survivor.
- ◆ When communicating about violence, do not generalise information received from a limited number of subjects. Remember that individual opinions do not capture the wide array of realities or perspectives that exist. As applicable, make clear in reports or documents how information was collected and from how many subjects.



© UN Women/Mohammad Rakibul Hasan

### 3. Testing messages

Content, messages and visuals that are meant to prompt a specific behaviour or(re)shape an attitude – particularly among large segments of the population – should be pre-tested with representatives of the participant groups who the communications are intended for. This is especially relevant for social media campaigns, videos, advertisements, informational products, etc.

Message testing helps to:

- ◆ Ensure clarity and correct understanding of the messages and content;
- ◆ Ensure messages and content are memorable;
- ◆ Ensure the intended result or impact is achieved; and
- ◆ Avoid inadvertently causing harm or reinforcing negative stereotypes or misinformation.

Content, messages and visuals can be tested in formal and informal capacities, depending on budget and timeframe (e.g. surveys, focus groups, key informant interviews, etc.).

Content, messages and visuals should be adapted and re-tested, as applicable, reflecting feedback from testing. Periodic testing should occur over long-lasting campaigns.

For detailed guidance on message testing, see the resources list at the end.

# Summary



# Summary

These guidelines are meant to promote responsible, ethical and safe representation and reporting of violence against women and violence against children. These guidelines highlight many basic, sometimes common sense approaches that are all too often ignored. Real-life situations may be even more complex than the circumstances presented here. Hence, these guidelines should raise awareness about the sensitivity of reporting on and communicating about violence against women and violence against children. The desired result is better informed media and communications practitioners; more empowering messages, visuals and communications content; and a way of working with survivors as subjects who have agency while doing no harm and benefitting all involved.

# Additional Resources

- ◆ UNFPA webpage on gender-based violence: [unfpa.org/gender-based-violence](https://unfpa.org/gender-based-violence)
- ◆ UNICEF webpage on violence against children: [unicef.org/end-violence](https://unicef.org/end-violence)
- ◆ UN Women webpage on violence against women: [unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women](https://unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women)
- ◆ Developing Key Messages for Communities on GBV & COVID-19 | Gender-Based Violence AoR Global Protection Cluster: [https://gbvaor.net/sites/default/files/2020-04/GBV\\_AoR\\_key\\_messages\\_Covid\\_%26%20GBV%281%29.pdf](https://gbvaor.net/sites/default/files/2020-04/GBV_AoR_key_messages_Covid_%26%20GBV%281%29.pdf)
- ◆ Media Guidelines for Reporting on Gender-based Violence in Humanitarian Contexts | Global Protection Cluster: <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5c3701d27.pdf>
- ◆ Reporting on Gender-based Violence in Humanitarian Settings: A Journalist's Handbook | UNFPA Arab States Regional Humanitarian Response Hub: <https://www.unfpa.org/reporting-gbv-humanitarian-settings>
- ◆ Media Guide for Reporting on Gender-Based Violence in Ukraine | European Union, UNDP, UN Women: <http://www.un.org.ua/images/documents/4691/Media%20Guide%20for%20GBV%20reporting-ENGpdf.pdf>
- ◆ The Big Conversation: Handbook to Address Violence against Women in and through the Media | UNESCO, UN Women: <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2019/thebigconversation-mediahandbook-compressed.pdf?la=en&vs=5819>
- ◆ Media coverage of gender-based violence - Handbook and Training of Trainers | UN Women: <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2017/09/media-coverage-of-gender-based-violence—handbook-and-training-of-trainers#view>
- ◆ Tips for reporting on violence against women and their children (includes recommendations for informed consent) | Our Watch: <https://media.ourwatch.org.au/resource/tips-for-reporting-on-violence-against-women-and-their-children/>
- ◆ Conducting Safe, Effective and Ethical Interviews with Survivors of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence | WITNESS: [library.witness.org/product/guide-to-interviewing-survivors-of-sexual-and-gender-based-violence](https://library.witness.org/product/guide-to-interviewing-survivors-of-sexual-and-gender-based-violence)

- ◆ How to support survivors of gender-based violence when a GBV actor is not available in your area | GBV Guidelines Reference Group Joint Working Group: <https://gbvguidelines.org/en/pocketguide/>
- ◆ Safety planning for violence against women during the COVID-19 pandemic | UN Women Asia and the Pacific: <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/05/safety-planning-for-violence-against-women-during-the-covid-19-pandemic>
- ◆ How to test your communications | PIRC & ILGA-Europe: <https://publicinterest.org.uk/TestingGuide.pdf>
- ◆ United Nations Content Retention Schedules | United Nations Archives and Records Management Section: [archives.un.org/content/retention-schedules](https://archives.un.org/content/retention-schedules)
- ◆ United Nations Disposal of Records | United Nations Archives and Records Management Section: [archives.un.org/content/dispose](https://archives.un.org/content/dispose)
- ◆ kNOwVAWdata: Asia-Pacific violence against women prevalence data hub | UNFPA Asia Pacific Regional Office: [asiapacific.unfpa.org/knowvawdata](https://asiapacific.unfpa.org/knowvawdata)
- ◆ <https://www.unicef.org/media/files/BehindClosedDoors.pdf>
- ◆ [https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Violence\\_in\\_the\\_lives\\_of\\_children\\_and\\_adolescents.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Violence_in_the_lives_of_children_and_adolescents.pdf)
- ◆ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-children>

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Sources of referral services for gender-based violence survivors

- ◆ **List of national helplines in Asia and the Pacific:** <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/focus-areas/end-violence-against-women/shadow-pandemic-evaw-and-covid-response/list-of-helplines>
- ◆ **List of global helplines:** <https://www.endvawnow.org/en/need-help>
- ◆ **Asian Network of Women's Shelters:** <https://shelterasia.org/our-members>
- ◆ **Global Network of Women's Shelters:** <https://gnws.org>



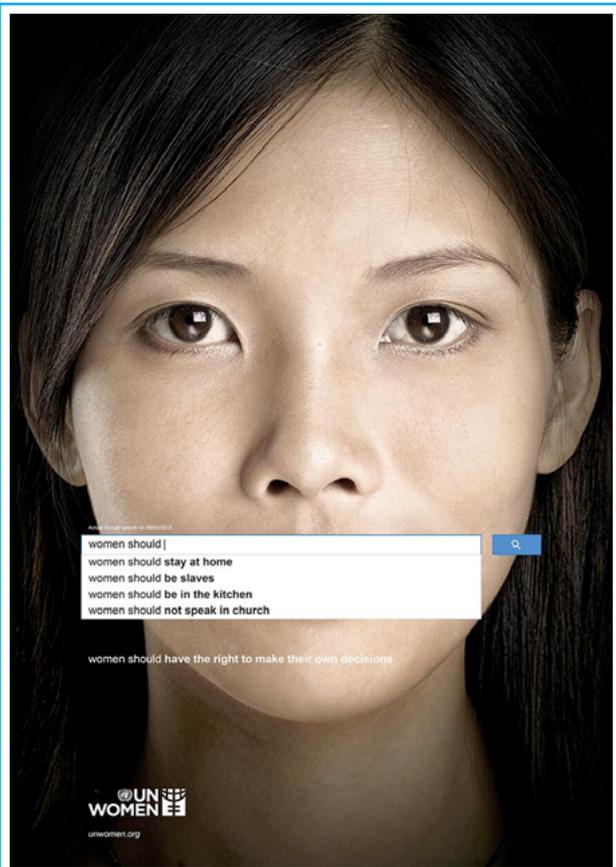
The Thai Ministry of Social Development and Human Security's 1300 Social Assistance Centre and 24/7 interpretation service for migrant workers and domestic abuse reports.

The flyer is created by IOM, ILO, UN Women and the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC).

## Appendix B: Additional examples of reporting and representation of violence against women

The Autocomplete Truth advertising campaign: popular perception should be different and women should be seen as equal.

A recent Google search shows just how much prejudice and discrimination towards women and gender equality persist. Autocomplete Truth builds on the international viral success of the print/web “Autocomplete Truth” advertising campaign from UN Women, developed by Memac Ogilvy & Mather Dubai, which first revealed the depth of that discrimination.



## Examples of gender-blind media reports and entertainment posters

An exclusionary way of addressing women champions in sports



Examples of news headlines which can harm communities and at-risk individuals. The below example does not offer readers available resources and services that can provide help. The below headline stereotyped a male-dominated career in military as violent and harmful and distributed photos of crime scenes.

*Headline reads:*

*"Jealous patrol military officer, 27, kills 41-widow to death and ends own life."*



Headline reads:

*“Briton gal sexually harassed.” Big red letters read: “A farang cries foul of getting raped.”*

*This is an example of victim-blaming, and the woman in the photo could potentially be identified despite her eyes being blurred.*



The original photo above was more revealing but to avoid perpetuating harm, the survivor's face has been further obscured.

*A popular series called “Sinful Bitches”*



Silver screen film poster of “Dao Phra Suk” popularising rape culture and romanticising rape in films that are watched by many Thais and broadcast at prime times during family meals.

## Appendix C: Samples of written consent forms



### CONSENT FORM FOR THE USE OF FOOTAGE/PHOTOGRAPHS

I, the undersigned, \_\_\_\_\_ [name] residing at \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ [address] by full consent and enjoying all legal capacities, acknowledge the following:

1. I hereby irrevocably and unconditionally give my consent to being filmed and/or photographed by \_\_\_\_\_ [name of filmer/photographer] for the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), to film and/or to photograph \_\_\_\_\_ [describe what will be filmed/photographed, e.g. documentary about a certain project] on \_\_\_\_\_ [date], at \_\_\_\_\_ [place].
2. Please check one of the following:
  - I hereby give consent to the use of the footage and/or images depicting me (the Footage/Photos) but without any other personal identifiers including my name; or
  - I hereby give consent to the use of the footage and/or images depicting me (the Footage/Photos) and my name and all other personal identifiers
3. I understand that I will not receive compensation for the use of the Footage/Photos in any form.
4. I acknowledge that all right, title and interest, including copyrights, in the Footage/Photos shall be vested exclusively in UN Women, and I shall without further consideration assign, whether as works for hire or otherwise, the same to UN Women. UN Women shall have the exclusive and perpetual right to exploit the Footage/Photos by any means or methods now known or hereafter devised for the full period of copyright and any and all extensions and renewals thereof and thereafter insofar as possible in perpetuity, without payment being due to me in respect thereof. The foregoing shall include but not be limited to the sharing of the Footage/Photos with a principal or subsidiary organ of the United Nations established in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and other partners of UN Women.
5. I release and discharge UN Women from any and all claims and demands that may arise out of or in connection with the use of the Footage/Photos, including without limitation any and all claims for libel or violation of any right of publicity or privacy.

**Read and approved and signed by:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Print name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date (DD/MM/YYYY):** \_\_\_\_\_



**PARENTAL/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM FOR THE USE OF FOOTAGE/PHOTOGRAPHS OF MINOR CHILDREN**

I/We, the undersigned, \_\_\_\_\_ [name of father and/or mother\* and/or legal guardian], residing at \_\_\_\_\_ [address], by full consent and enjoying all legal capacities, acknowledge the following:

1. I/We hereby irrevocably and unconditionally give \_\_\_\_\_ [name of filmer/photographer] for the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) consent to film footage and/or to photograph our minor child(ren) \_\_\_\_\_ [child's name] on \_\_\_\_\_ [date] at \_\_\_\_\_ [place].

2. Please check one of the following:

- I/We hereby give consent to the use of the footage and/or images depicting my child(ren) (the Footage/Photos) but without any other personal identifiers including the names of my child(ren); or
- I/We hereby give consent to the use of the footage and/or images depicting my child(ren) (the Footage/Photos) and the names of my child(ren) and all other personal identifiers

3. I/We understand that I/we or our child(ren) will not receive compensation for the use of the Footage/Photos in any form.

4. I/We acknowledge that all right, title and interest, including copyrights, in the Footage/Photos shall be vested exclusively in UN Women, and I/we shall without further consideration assign, whether as works for hire or otherwise, the same to UN Women. UN Women shall have the exclusive and perpetual right to exploit the Footage/Photos by any means or methods now known or hereafter devised for the full period of copyright and any and all extensions and renewals thereof and thereafter insofar as possible in perpetuity, without payment being due to us or to our minor child(ren) in respect thereof. The foregoing shall include but not be limited to the sharing of the Footage/Photos with a principal or subsidiary organ of the United Nations established in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and other partners of UN Women.

5. I/We release and discharge UN Women from any and all claims and demands that may arise out of or in connection with the use of the Footage/Photos, including without limitation any and all claims for libel or violation of any right of publicity or privacy.

**Read and approved and signed by:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Print name/s:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date (DD/MM/YYYY):** \_\_\_\_\_

\* Please check whether it is customary practice in the relevant country to obtain the consent of both parents.



### CONSENT FORM FOR THE SPEAKER OF AN EVENT

I, the undersigned, \_\_\_\_\_ [name] residing at \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ [address] by full consent and enjoying all legal capacities, acknowledge the following:

1. I hereby irrevocably and unconditionally give my consent to sharing my story and being filmed and/or photographed for the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), to film and/or to photograph during events for 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign on 23 November and 4 December at Bangkok, Thailand.

2. Please check the following, if you agree:

I hereby give consent to the use of my story, footage and/or images depicting me (the Footage/Photos) and my name and all other personal identifiers

3. I understand that media will be present at the event(s) that I will speak, therefore, what I present in the event can be covered by media for a public use.

4. I understand that I will not receive compensation for the use of the Footage/Photos in any form.

5. I acknowledge that all right, title and interest, including copyrights, in the Footage/Photos shall be vested exclusively in UN Women, and I shall without further consideration assign, whether as works for hire or otherwise, the same to UN Women. UN Women shall have the exclusive and perpetual right to exploit the Footage/Photos by any means or methods now known or hereafter devised for the full period of copyright and any and all extensions and renewals thereof and thereafter insofar as possible in perpetuity, without payment being due to me in respect thereof. The foregoing shall include but not be limited to the sharing of the Footage/Photos with a principal or subsidiary organ of the United Nations established in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and other partners of UN Women.

6. I release and discharge UN Women from any and all claims and demands that may arise out of or in connection with the use of the Footage/Photos, including without limitation any and all claims for libel or violation of any right of publicity or privacy.

**Read and approved and signed by:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Print name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date (DD/MM/YYYY):** \_\_\_\_\_



## UNFPA Consent Form

### Individual Consent Form for Media Interviews, Filming or Photographs

I, the Undersigned, voluntarily agree that I be filmed/photographed by a videographer / photographer acting for or on behalf of UNFPA.

I hereby irrevocably grant UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund) permission to freely use, reproduce, broadcast and distribute (or have used, reproduced, published and distributed) the film(s)/photograph(s) in which I appear, in any format and through any medium whatsoever, to promote the activities of UNFPA and the response to addressing human rights and gender based violence, including but not limited to audio-visual materials, news reports, web pages, publicity, promotional, advocacy, fundraising and campaign purposes concerning the same.

By ticking Yes or No at the end of this sentence, I indicate whether or not I grant UNFPA permission to use my voice, story and picture, and use my name in captions that appear with my image:

YES	NO
-----	----

I confirm that the content of this consent form has been explained to me, and that I fully understand its meaning.

(Name) \_\_\_\_\_

(Date) \_\_\_\_\_

(Signature) \_\_\_\_\_

(Address) \_\_\_\_\_

**CONSENT FORM – PHOTO & VIDEO****UNICEF – UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN’S FUND**

By signing this release form, I hereby grant to the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) the right to reproduce, display and disseminate worldwide and in perpetuity, in any traditional or electronic media format, my likeness as shown in the photographs and video described below, which photographs and videos are owned by UNICEF, including in fund-raising partnerships with commercial entities. These latter partnerships may include, but are not limited to, the use of my likeness in advertisements in any media, including on the commercial products of the partner.

The photographs and videos containing my likeness were taken on (date) \_\_\_\_\_ in the (location including town/country) \_\_\_\_\_.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ by (photographer/videographer’s name) \_\_\_\_\_. I further confirm that these images and videos are a true likeness of me and the images and videos were taken with my knowledge and consent.

Name of Subject	Age (if under 18 years)	Date	Signature

Address and other contact information \_\_\_\_\_

***IF SUBJECT IS A CHILD UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE:***

I confirm that I am the legal guardian of the child named above and therefore may grant permission for this commercial model release on behalf of the child:

Name of Legal Guardian / Relationship to Child /	Date /	Signature of Guardian

Name of Witness / Organization Affiliation /	Date /	Witness Signature

