



THE BIG CONVERSATION

Handbook to Address
Violence against Women
in and through the Media



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



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FOREWORD

Violence against women remains one of the greatest human rights issues of our time. One in every three women will experience some form of physical or sexual violence (not including sexual harassment) in her lifetime. The Beijing Platform for Action, a global blueprint for the achievement of gender equality nearing its 25-year review, reminds us that there is still much work to do to stem the scourge of this epidemic. It also reminds us of the importance of media to this agenda. Television, film, radio, print and social media surround us on a daily basis, providing information, entertainment and ever-increasing channels of communication. These platforms, and the content they deliver, present both unrelenting challenges and incredible opportunities for the achievement of gender equality and the elimination of violence against women and girls.

The discriminatory social norms that drive gender inequality and violence against women and girls have often been perpetuated through the stereotypical portrayals of men and women, not only along gender lines, but also other personal identities, such as race, language group, disability and social and economic status, among others. At the same time, media have powerfully contributed to opening up our imaginations, demonstrating the richness of our diversity and holding promise for a world with more respectful relationships and greater harmony. It is this power that we seek to harness and support.

UN Women and UNESCO are pleased to have collaborated on the production of this handbook, which is one in a series of handbooks being developed to advance implementation of *A Framework to Underpin Action to Prevent Violence against Women* (UN Women, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, OHCHR and WHO, 2015). This handbook provides guidance, tools and promising practices from countries across the globe for those working with and within media. It is our intention that this handbook provides entry points for accelerating progress towards gender equality in the systems and structures of organizations. We hope that it leverages what we know works in order to promote the values of diversity, equality and non-violence in the content that media produces.



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS 1

1 INTRODUCTION 3

1.1 Why is it Important to Work with Media? 3

1.2 What are the Ways to Engage Media? 4

2 INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL FRAMEWORKS 5

2.1 Human Rights Frameworks 5

2.2 Policy Instruments 7

3 GUIDING PRINCIPLES 9

3.1 Adhering to Ethics and Safety. 9

3.2 Refraining from Social and Cultural Bias 9

3.3 Maintaining a Human Rights Based and Gender Equality Lens 9

3.4 Adopting an Intersectional Approach 10

3.5 Ensuring Representation 10

3.6 Planning for Increased Help-seeking by Survivors of Violence 10

3.7 Aiming for Internet Universality 11

4 STRENGTHENING THE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT 12

4.1 Regulatory Frameworks 12

4.2 Research and Monitoring 16

4.3 Media and Information Literacy 20

4.4 Networks 27

4.5 Awards and Recognition 32

5 PROMOTING POSITIVE INSTITUTIONAL APPROACHES 34

5.1 Mapping and Assessment 34

5.2 Gender Parity 36

5.3 Policies, Protocols, Codes of Conduct 38

5.4 Training 46

5.5 Safety of Journalists 47

6 ENGAGING IN SOCIAL NORMS CHANGE 53

6.1 Entry Points for Social Norms Change 58

6.2 Framing and Messaging of Media Content 60

6.3 Exploring Opportunities through Media Content 63

6.3.1 News and Current Affairs 63

6.3.2 Advertising 68

6.3.3 Entertainment and Creative Media 70

6.3.4 Social Media and ICTs 77

6.4 Campaigning 81

6.5 Community Mobilization 83

ANNEX: 10 ESSENTIAL ACTIONS 86

REFERENCES

KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Gender: the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female, the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialisation processes. They are context/time-specific and changeable (UN Women, 2015).

Gender diversity: in the context of this toolkit, refers to gender roles, expressions or behaviours that differ from traditional gender norms. Gender-diverse people may define themselves as different from, and behave in ways that may not be typically associated with, their biological sex.

Gender equality: the concept that all human beings, regardless of sex or gender identity, are equal in dignity and rights and free to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and make choices without discrimination and the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles and prejudices.

Gender inequality: the gender norms, roles, cultural practices, policies and laws, economic factors and institutional practices that collectively contribute to and perpetuate unequal power relations between women and men. This inequality disproportionately disadvantages women in nearly all spheres of life across all societies.

Gender mainstreaming: the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in

all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetrated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality (UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, UN Women, 1997).

Gender stereotypes: generalized views or preconceptions about attributes or characteristics that are or ought to be possessed by, or the roles that are or should be performed by, women and men (OHCHR).

Intersectionality: a concept that seeks to capture both the structural and dynamic consequences of the interaction between two or more forms of discrimination or systems of subordination. It specifically addresses the manner in which racism, patriarchy, economic disadvantages and other discriminatory systems contribute to axes of inequality that structure the relative positions of women and men, races and other groups. Moreover, it addresses the way that specific acts and policies create burdens that flow along these intersecting axes actively contributing to create a dynamic of disempowerment (UN, 2000).

Media: refers to a variety of communication institutions (in print, audio, visual and online) used to produce and disseminate information, ideas or messages pertaining to, for example, news, entertainment and/or advertising. References to "the media" in this publication should not be taken as generalisations about each and every media institution.

Prevention: refers to halting abuse before it occurs and stopping it from recurring. The focus of this toolkit is on preventing violence by targeting the social norms, practices and structures that underpin or endorse violence against women and girls. Prevention requires a range of interdependent and mutually reinforcing interventions that are also accompanied by support services for survivors and perpetrator accountability.

Social norm: a norm is a social construct. It exists as a collectively shared belief about what others do (what is typical) and what is expected of what others do within the group (what is appropriate). Social norms are generally maintained by social approval and/or disapproval (Heise, L. & Heise & Manji, K, 2016).

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG): is defined as ‘any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women (or girls), including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.’ Such violence is perpetrated against women and girls specifically because they are women and girls. It exists in multiple, interrelated and sometimes recurring forms, and is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women (UN A/RES/48/104, 1993).

1. INTRODUCTION

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is widely recognized as one of the most pervasive human rights violations in the world. It acts as both a cause and consequence of gender inequality, impacting the health, safety, productivity and overall well-being of women and girls, and impeding the realization of their rights. Despite increased efforts to address it, rates of VAWG remain alarmingly high. Global data shows that one in three women has experienced physical and/or sexual violence at some point in her lifetime, with this figure being as high as 7 in 10 in some countries (WHO, 2013). The most significant challenge remains the persistence of attitudes, beliefs, practices and behaviours in society that perpetuate negative stereotypes, discrimination and gender inequality, as root causes of VAWG. Addressing this challenge lies at the core of prevention work.

UN Women, in partnership with the ILO, OHCHR, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, WHO and other relevant stakeholders, including civil society, has developed a first ever framework on prevention (*A United Nations Framework to Underpin Action to Prevent Violence Against Women*, 2015). The Framework reflects the growing evidence that a comprehensive approach to prevention is needed, bringing together interventions that are multi-component and mutually reinforcing at all levels of society (individual, relational, communal and institutional). The Framework highlights the need to squarely address the underlying practices, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours across society that perpetuate and tolerate abuse. It identifies eleven 'entry points' of intervention to prevent VAWG, including: schools, workplaces, sports organizations, male-dominated institutions, health, justice, security and transport

services, within communities, at local and national government levels, and through the media.

This Handbook provides guidance to UN and other entities working with media organizations to advance gender equality and prevent violence against girls and women. There are two main domains for achieving these goals, including: working with media as entities that can promote gender equality from within and working with media as channels to promote values of diversity, equality and non-discrimination externally through the content they produce. The handbook is structured to provide more specific guidance on:

- 1) Strengthening the enabling environment
- 2) Promoting positive institutional approaches
- 3) Engaging with media for changing social norm

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